

EPIPHANY 2022

2. The King — The Conflict — The Peace

Luke 2:33-35

Epiphany is a season in the liturgical calendar of the church that centers on the Gospel accounts of **the manifestation of Jesus to the world as King, Savior and Son of God.**

This morning we're going to explore Luke 2 which takes us back to events that took place in the first month following the birth of Jesus.

There Luke introduces us to two extraordinary people involved in the manifestation of Jesus as King, Savior and Son of God. One was a man named Simeon and the other was a very old woman named Anna. These two individuals are worthy of an entire Bible study. Maybe we'll revisit the passage to see the things that moved them, see how their lives stood out in some really hard times — and see what the great treasure of their hearts really was.

This morning we're going to zero in on what has been called *The Song of Simeon* — or “nunc dimittis” — which is Latin for the opening words of verse 29.

Luke 2:21-35 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in

peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen **your salvation** ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” ³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

It is the identity of this one month old boy that caused Simeon to break out in praise — utter this amazing prayer — and deliver this radical prophecy.

²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke tells us that God the Holy Spirit made it known to Simeon that he wouldn't die before seeing the Messiah / the true and forever King.

Luke then tells us that the Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple at the exact moment the Messiah was going to be presented in the Temple.

²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple,

No small side note — I hope we can see in these two verses the importance of being sensitive to the voice of the Spirit and being obedient and responsive to the leading of the Spirit. One of the spiritual disciplines I'm trying to incorporate in my life is to start the day with kneeling prayer. I'm praying this prayer: *“Spirit, I was made for your presence. May this day be one I spend with you in all that I do. Amen.”*

and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms

Simeon so passionately wanted to see the arrival of the long awaited, promised Messiah. And now, just as the Holy Spirit promised — he saw Him! Not only *saw* Him — Simeon got to hold the Messiah in his arms!

²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;
²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for

DON'T MISS THIS —

for my eyes have seen your salvation

Simeon said that when he laid eyes on this one month old baby boy he was actually looking at the Savior who was first promised by God in Genesis 3 — the Savior who would conquer Satan, rescue us from the power and penalty of sin, reconcile us to God and renew all things.

THIS IS HUGE — Simeon made it known that Messiah is Savior!

That's exactly what the angel told the shepherds a month earlier on the night Jesus was born.

Luke 2:9-11(ESV)** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Then Simeon made a prophetic declaration about the only true King and Savior. His prophecy *seems* to contradict what the angels sang concerning Jesus on the night of His birth.

***Luke 2:13-14 (KJV)** a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

The child in the arms of Simeon was indeed the true and forever King. His coming did indeed mean peace for fallen man and our broken world. Seven

hundred years earlier Isaiah spoke of this King and His Kingdom — *the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end (Isaiah 9:7)*.

Simeon's words don't contradict the angelic pronouncement. The angels proclaimed **what** Jesus came to do — bring peace on earth. Simeon explains **how** Jesus brings peace on earth.

³⁴ “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Who is Jesus? Messiah — the only true and forever King. What did Jesus come to do? Bring peace. How does Jesus bring this peace?

QUOTE: Keller — *Christ came into this world to claim every inch of the physical universe, every inch of the spiritual universe, every inch of the mental universe, every inch of...our lives and hearts, and he has claimed it as his. He stakes it out and he says, “Mine!” Every inch. Therefore, it's very clear he comes to divide. He comes to cause conflicts. He comes to pick a fight.*

Jesus brings peace to men and women — and ultimately to the entire planet by picking a fight.

So let's walk through this.

1. Jesus came to bring peace by polarizing the world.

³⁴ “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (spoken against)

Jesus causes every man and woman to rise or fall. There's no in between. He's divisive! Simeon predicts it — the Bible talks about it.

Why does Jesus polarize people — cause some to rise and some to fall?

First — There's no way you can stay neutral when someone comes and says, *"I own you. You belong to me"*. You can't respond with, *Sure, bro!* Or *Whatever!* You can't be neutral. You have to either reject that person, or else you have to comply! That is what Jesus does.

There are a lot of people who are desperate to invent a Jesus who won't put them in that position. They want a Jesus who will leave them comfortable in the middle — a middle that doesn't actually exist in light of who Jesus claimed to be! Mark's Gospel is the oldest gospel. Most scholars agree it was written around 60AD before the fall of Jerusalem. In Mark's record of the life of Jesus the big issue is, ***"Who is this?"***

"Who is this that the winds and the sea obey him?"

"Who is this that he forgives sins?"

Nowhere in **any** of the Gospel accounts do we find people saying, *"I like some of the nice things He's done and has to say. But I don't care who He is."* Is it even possible to imagine somebody calming storms, raising the dead, claiming that He has the authority to forgive sins without people saying, *"Who is this guy?" Who does He think he is?"*

Look at the claim that He makes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says (I paraphrase) — *"Whether you go to heaven or you're cast down into hell"* — or in the language of [Luke 2](#), *"whether you rise or fall"* — *"totally depends on whether you know me and love me."*

In [John 3:18](#) Jesus says, *"The one who believes in me is not condemned. The one who does not believe in me is condemned already."*

King Jesus leaves no middle ground. He makes absolute claims concerning Himself that repulse and polarize. In [Luke 18](#) there was a guy who was young, rich and powerful. In the value system of fallen culture *young, rich and powerful* puts you on the top of the food chain! Jesus looks at him and says,

“I know you’ve tried to be a good guy — I know you’re a religious guy — I know you have it all together financially and socially — But I’m just going to going to cut to the chase here — “I have to be more important to you than what you possess and all that brings you — or else you’re lost.”

The One who is King, Savior and Son of God says,

“If you have me, you have life itself — If you don’t have me, you have nothing and no matter how much weight you might carry in the eyes of man you’re nothing more than the chaff that the wind blows away.”

Jesus polarizes and Jesus causes many to speak against Him because He demands adoration, demands absolute allegiance. **That’s why** Simeon said, *“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.*

When it comes to Jesus, you will either rise, or you will fall. You will find that Jesus repulses you — or you will embrace Him.

Question — IF Jesus is so repulsive/so polarizing, **why** would anyone find himself drawn to Him and elevated by Him? How could anyone embrace Jesus in light of the absolute claims He made about Himself?

Here’s the answer: The one who picks a fight with every man and woman; the one who makes absolute claims of divinity; the one who demands absolute loyalty and adoration is absolutely humble — absolutely and beyond comprehension merciful / compassionate and absolutely filled with grace and truth.

There are those who say that **THAT** Jesus is pure myth. They say that the descriptions of His moral beauty are exaggerated accounts written way too long after His life and death to be reliable. Guys — That’s just not true! Mark was written within 30 years after His death and resurrection. Thousands of people were still alive who actually saw Jesus and knew Jesus

— which made it virtually impossible to circulate a written account that was filled with exaggeration and fabrication.

Others argue that the Gospels paint Jesus in that light because they were written by those who loved and admired Jesus. That is absolutely true! But you have to ask the question: What could have made Jewish men and women — who were **fiercely** monotheistic and had been taught from their youth to believe that God could never and would never come in human flesh — worship Jesus as God incarnate?

There's no shortage of those who are totally opposed to Jesus and opposed to those who proclaim Jesus. Though they might make life difficult for Christians we have to concede that there's a consistency between what they believe about Jesus and the way they live.

There are also men and women who have come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is everything He claims to be — He really is the King of kings, who by His very nature is worthy of their submission and worship. They have made Jesus the ultimate fact of their lives — they place Jesus at the very center of who they are, what they do, the decisions they make.

There are a lot of people who are trying hard to place themselves in the middle ground. If Jesus came to polarize, how can that be? Here's the answer: Those people think that they can be somewhere in the middle concerning Jesus because they don't know who the real Jesus is. The real Jesus would confront them! The real Jesus would cause them to rise or fall! But the Jesus that they're comfortable with is the product of their own imagination. The Jesus they believe in is a myth. But there is no such historical evidence for the Jesus they believe in.

1. Jesus came to bring peace by polarizing the world.

2. Jesus not only divides and polarizes people — He also reveals what's in the hearts of individuals.

³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon was talking to both Mary and Joseph. But Joseph would die early on in the life of Jesus. Mary lives through all of Jesus' life. Simeon is predicting that Mary is going to have a lot of pain in her life because of her son! She would experience decades of scandalous rumors that portrayed her as sexually immoral and portrayed Jesus as illegitimate. She would experience the agony of watching Jesus die on the cross! Her soul would be pierced as she watched the Roman soldiers pierce His hands and feet, and then thrust a spear through His side.

But there is a way in which Mary is representative of all who would truly come to love Jesus. Follow me here! If you love Jesus, if you stand with Jesus and for Jesus — a sword will pass through your heart as well. When you become a Christian there a peace that comes into your life. It's a peace that's unlike any peace the world can offer. But along with that peace comes a conflict. I know that seems a total paradox, but that peace and that conflict are related.

First — That peace, peace with God, comes after the sting of discovering you're a sinner — the sting of discovering that you have not one bit of righteousness before God — the sting that you are incapable of saving yourself — the sting of discovering that you are so utterly lost that the only way you could be saved was for God to become man and die in your place.

The Gospel that brings you peace slays you! In speaking of how the message of our crucified King brings peace Charles Spurgeon said

QUOTE: Spurgeon — *Christ's five wounds kill my suspicions and fears. ... Can you view the flowing of the Savior's precious blood upon the tree of doom and not trust him? What more can he do to prove his sincerity than to die for us?*

But those very wounds sting us with the reality of our sin

Isaiah 53:5-6 (ESV) But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought

us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Gospel is like antiseptic poured into a wound. It always stings at first. It hurts — but it heals. There is absolutely no way to get real peace without the pain of conviction of sin and repentance. Conviction and repentance stings because it's like a sword that gets to the sin underneath the sin. It gets to the underlying cause of sinful behavior — which is this: Man put himself in the place of God. And because man put himself in the place of God, God had to stand in the place of man on the cross.

CHRISTIANS — The painful reality of repentance is not reserved only for those who need to bow the knee to the King who is Savior. Martin Luther said that all of life is repentance. Repentance stings even the born again Christian. It stings because it gets to the underlying sin of any sin a Christian commits. Here is the underlying sin of every sin committed by a Christian: *The love of Jesus was not enough.* No matter the specific sin, here's the sin the Christian needs to confess and forsake — turn away from. *“Lord Jesus, I did this thing because Your love wasn't enough. In this thing, I denied your love. I denied that your death and your love is enough for me. Forgive me.”* The moment **that sword** comes in — peace begins to come in.

But there's another arena in which Jesus brings conflict — another way that Jesus brings the sting of the sword — *the conflict and sting of obedience.* Follow me here. When you become a Christian, a miracle happens. God begins to give you new desires.

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

It becomes your **desire** to obey the One who loves you and washed you from your sins with His blood. You find great joy in obeying God — great joy in the discovering and doing the will of God. I pray we never forget how amazing it was when we first experienced God doing that in our lives.

Pleasing God is not a bargaining chip to gain favor with God. You want to please Jesus because you love Jesus. But the very thing that you delight to do, the very thing that brings joy will also bring a sword. There's a sting to obedience.

There are going to be those times when obeying God is uncomfortable and costly. In some cases, it might cost you financially. In some cases, it might cost you your reputation. In some cases, it might cost you your girlfriend or your boyfriend. In those situations you feel like the road to peace is disobedience because by not obeying God you can have what you want, when you want it and how you want it. Obedience is painful because it says, *"God, What you will, when you will, how you will."*

Obedience **is** painful in the short-term. It's painful to not get what we want when we want it and how we want it. But in the long term it brings real peace.

Following the One who is King, Savior and Son of God is a life of joy, and peace — **and** it's a life of pain. Most churchgoers want to sign up for the peace and the joy — but they don't want anything to do with the conflict — they don't want to have anything to do with the sting of repentance and obedience. They don't want to hear about the Jesus who's going to pick a fight with them.

Tragically, there are plenty of places for them to go where they will hear about a Jesus who is less than the Jesus who causes men to rise or fall. They are hearing about a Christian life that never confronts them with the underlying sin of idolatry. They never hear that the faith that leads to peace also brings a sword. They never hear that obedience stings. They aren't expecting any of that. The minute following Jesus costs them they cry and complain.

Authentic Christianity is this: We're distressed by the reality of following Jesus in a broken world. But we shouldn't be distressed that we're distressed. We're surprised at the reality of the cost of following Jesus in a fallen world — But we shouldn't be surprised that we're surprised.

CLOSE

Simeon said to Mary, “There’ll be a sword that pierces your soul.”

What if Mary had said, “I don’t want a sword in my soul?”

What if you say, “I don't want a sword in my soul?”

We need to think about this:

What if **Jesus** had said, “I don’t want to be pierced? I don’t want peace that way”?

What if **Jesus** said, *I don't want to leave my throne in glory for sinners to have peace.*

What if **Jesus** said, *I don't want to be despised and rejected — scourged and crowned with thorns — have nails driven through my hands and feet so that sinners can have peace.*

The one who is Creator and King — Son of God — stepped into our world — took on our humanity — for one purpose! To be Savior! He came to endure the wrath of God that we deserve **so we could forever have peace with God. HE** is our peace.

The One who IS your peace, picks a fight with you! The One who IS your peace pierces you in the depth of your being with the truth about your sin. He pierces your soul with conviction of sin.

But the one who picks the fight — the one who makes absolute claims of divinity — the one who demands loyalty and adoration is **SO** absolutely and utterly humble that He became man to save you — **SO** absolutely and constantly compassionate — **SO** absolutely and beyond comprehension merciful — **SO** absolutely filled with grace and truth — that He is worthy of your heart, your life, your all.