



Luke 2:28b–35

When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,

you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and the glory of your people Israel.’

33 The child’s father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

Reflection

Jesus is forty-days old. In meticulous observance of Jewish law his parents have travelled to the Temple in Jerusalem for Mary's purification after child-birth, and for the dedication of their firstborn son to God. In recording these details, Luke is at pains to show us that Jesus is Jewish. In the opening two chapters of his Gospel Luke places Jesus thoroughly within Judaism. This is not some new religion that is sweeping the world but the same God continuing to work out his plan of salvation from within the institutions, rituals and practices of Judaism. To humble, faithful and zealous Jews of the first-century a Saviour is born, from the line of David, the long-promised Messiah that the Jewish nation has been waiting for.

Simeon is one such Jew. He was introduced to us in yesterday's passage in these terms,

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

We have the impression of another Zechariah and Elizabeth type, a devout old man, as full of faith as he is full of years, patiently waiting on our Lord. Graciously, Simeon's wait is over. Reading today's passage,

from Luke 2:28b–35,

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Age-spotted hands hold baby Jesus in the air and for a moment the world ceases to turn. Joy and prophecy flow out of Simeon's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit as he cradles the Saviour of humankind against his chest. Simeon unlike so many Jews down throughout the centuries nev-

er even for one moment gave up trusting and looking and waiting for the consolation (deep comfort and renewal) of Israel, the coming of the Messiah in whom all of God's ancient promises to his people would be fulfilled. And that day is finally here. In uncontained joy Simeon lifts his voice to his God,

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you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

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and the glory of your people Isra-

el.’

Here is the type of person to whom Christ comes. One who is profoundly empty and profoundly full. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Simeon longed for the righteousness and consolation that would come only through the Messiah. He came to God’s house hungry, and received as few others have in the history of the world.¹

And we can hear it in his voice,

29 ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,

you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your sal-

¹ R. Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth (Preaching the word; Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 97.

vation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and the glory of your people Israel.’

All the promises of God will find their yes and Amen in the baby that Simeon holds in his arms. And he knows it. A kingdom that will never end (2 Sam 7). Every nation on the earth blessed through him (Gen 12). One pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brings us peace will be on him, by his wounds we will be healed (Isa 53). And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and

peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever (Isa 9). I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain ... You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Ps 2). Simeon trembles as the word of God rushes through his soul by the power of the Holy

Spirit, its fulfilment living and breathing, his little heart beating in his arms.

But then, as Mary and Joseph marvel at his words, he pronounces this bittersweet prophecy.

‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

A tsunami is about to pass through Judaism, and ultimately through every nation on earth. For anyone to become a Christian we must fall before we rise. Battle lines will be drawn, apathy is not an op-

tion, Jesus will be spoken against or for, there can be no middle-ground, and ultimately the thoughts of every heart will be laid bare depending on our response to him. But for Mary, a special prophecy,

And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

Mary's future will include her family's escape to Egypt, her Son being misunderstood and rejected, the terrible events of the Passion week and ultimately watching her Son die on the cross.

A great sword will go right through Mary's soul. Even as her Son goes on to become the Saviour of the world, the most honoured of all women will know the greatest of pain.

Think & Pray

Consider Simeon and Mary this morning. Simeon never gave up trusting and waiting on his Lord, looking with anticipation towards the coming of Jesus. We await the second and far greater coming of Jesus. And we would do well to model our anticipation and longing for it on Simeon's example. Are you patiently trusting and waiting on the Lord? Is your greatest joy the consolation of our planet at the return of Jesus Christ? And if not, what would it take to realign the longings of your heart towards the great day that lies ahead of us?

But also spend a few moments reflecting over what Mary has in store in her rela-

tionship with Jesus. Her life will go on to exemplify the heartache and triumph of so many Christians, the bittersweet journey of the Christian life as we await the ultimate prize. Perhaps a sword is piercing your soul at the moment – a husband who has fallen away from the faith, a debilitating illness or the dark cloud of depression that so often turns your life into shades of grey. Draw strength from the patient trust and faithfulness of Simeon and Mary this morning. And rest in character and goodness of our promise-making-promise-keeping God who has laid up in store for you unspeakable riches in Christ.

Close in prayer this morning however you are led by the Holy Spirit who so powerfully moved Simeon and who also moves us.