

The Rock: 12-26-2021**Advent: The Road to Bethlehem**

First reading: Isaiah 9:6-7

Title: The voice of God in the cry of a child

Scripture: Luke 2:22-38 (black bible Pg. 805)

Theme:

Learning to rest, to wait and to listen leads us to the place of expectation and promises fulfilled.

Introduction:

This morning, this last Sunday of 2021, I want us to look at two people from Luke's gospel, as we continue this Christmas season to look at God's promises being fulfilled through faithful people.

Advent, as we have learned is the season of waiting, of hopefulness and of listening for God in the midst of all the noise.

Simeon, Anna, two people who were prayerfully waiting for the first Advent moment in history, the coming of the King.

We too, need to recognize that we are waiting as well, much as they were. We however are waiting for something greater -that second Advent, where there will be no cradle, there will be no humble stable, or a journey to Bethlehem.

No, Our King will come this second time on a great white horse and He will be seen and known as "Faithful and true".

We have examples in Simeon and Ann as to what we are to do and how we are to act in the waiting. Much like the people of old awaiting the "consolation of Israel", they were faithful, obedient and simply did life as God led them.

Simeon and Anna believed the promises told to their people long ago and were waiting, listening and watching.

They were about to receive in reality, what all those who had gone before believed would happen, and the writer of Hebrews captures this in that great chapter 11:

-Hebrews 11:8 (ESV)

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."

-Hebrews 11:11 (ESV)

"By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised."

-Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)

"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."

I want us to look at this passage this morning through these three words:

1-Routine

2-Revelation

3-Redemption

Keeping those in mind as we unpack this will be helpful.

The Story:

I love Isaiah the prophet and was drawn to him and all of the passages he writes, as he stands on his toes as it were, and looks down the corridors of time to see events unfolding in the distant future.

Getting glimpses of God's promises and plans being fulfilled for His people. A privilege, I am sure, to be gifted in

that way, and perhaps sometimes not, as what Isaiah sometimes saw was unsettling.

Passages such as Isaiah 52-54 for example. This mysterious suffering servant - quite the contrast actually to what he saw and recorded in what we know as Isaiah 9.

No one, Isaiah included, would have assumed that these two figures and prophetic pictures would be one and the same person, just painted on opposite ends of a life lived.

But they are, and we know that because we have the benefit of history to help us.

-Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes a great observation here that I think is

beneficial for us this morning as we look at Simeon and Anna:

"What kings and leaders of nations, philosophers, and artists, founders of religions and teachers of morals have tried in vain to do -that now happens through a new born child. Putting to shame the most powerful human efforts and accomplishments, a child is placed here at the mid-point of world history -a child is born of human beings, a son given by God (Isa. 9:6). That is the mystery of the redemption of the world; everything past and everything future is encompassed here. The infinite mercy of the almighty God comes to us, descends to us in the form of a child, His son. That this child is born *for us*, this son is given *to us*, that this human child and son of God belongs to me, that I know him, have him, love him, and I am his and he is mine -on this alone my life now depends. A child has our life in his hands."

-God is in the manger Pg. 56

What we discover here, something Luke is careful to record for us is that two people were going about the daily routines of life, hear the voice of God in the cry of a child.

1-Routine:

We find Joseph and Mary now going about life as any couple of that time would. They had been through the weariness of a long journey from Bethlehem. Mary had given birth to Jesus, just as the messenger had promised.

I find it quite amazing how simple and unassuming they are and how they move forward. After all, angels lining the hillside, messengers of God singing and lighting up the night sky, proclaiming your son's birth to smelly shepherds.

Who, by the way, show up as a result of that event, to worship this little child, your child, knowing Him to be the promised King.

They seem to do nothing other than the routine, next right thing, speaking it is clear of their deep faithfulness to God and His law.

-Luke 2:22-24 (ESV)

"And 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 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in

the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Obedient to the law. Luke gives that to us no less than five times here in this short text. Repetition, remember is important. Luke is making a point.

If you look back to the Old Testament and specifically into Leviticus, we find that God, when He gave commands, also made provision, most especially for those who were poor.

Which it seems Joseph and Mary were as they didn't offer the required lamb, but rather two turtle doves or pigeons.

I leave that with you to look up in Leviticus 12, but trust me when I tell you that once again, God is moving, not in palaces and houses of power and government, but among poor and insignificant people who are faithfully obedient to Him.

Their offering affirms this. They were very poor people, yet, completely obedient to do all they were required to do according to the law.

Nothing changes for them in their simple obedience to God and their routine of following the law. It is simply time to bring Jesus to the Temple to dedicate him

to the LORD, some six weeks now after his birth.

Just an aside, and not a small one. But this is why we still dedicate children today to the LORD. They are a gift to us, from God.

To dedicate them to Him and of the bringing them up under the guidance and leading of the Scriptures is the responsibility of the parents. For He has entrusted children to our care, as much as it depends upon us.

It is one of the privileges I have as a pastor that I love and take very seriously. It is a privilege to be blessed by God with children, and it is a great responsibility to raise them in the fear and knowledge of the LORD.

Back to our text, because it is in the routine of the day, were Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in, where they encounter their first surprise:

-Luke 2:25-26 (ESV)

Now 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. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that

he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

2-Revelation:

A man going about his day to day routine in life, is given a revelation of God - The event you have been waiting for, that you have been praying about, "The consolation of Israel", has happened -the first great Advent: A child born, a Son given, is upon you Simeon. Go to the Temple and you will see.

Now the Temple was no small place, but I am sure that there was a particular spot where the male children were brought for their dedication -but amidst of all the crying and other noise there, how would one ever know?

Well, one listens intently, that's how. A trained ear, bent toward the voice of God, will hear it in the cry of a child.

Simeon we are told, and Luke takes great care to give these details - was devout, righteous, and was waiting, and he was moved by the Holy Spirit. There was no guessing here, or wondering for him.

Why? Because God had given him a promise, and he was crazy enough to believe it would come to pass.

Just like Abram, Sarai, Ruth, Hannah, and David -with one exception, Simeon would see with his eyes they very thing they never did, but by faith they knew they had a part and a hand in that plan. That was the consolation of their people Israel.

It is not a passing thing or a light thing to understand that this "revelation" is available to us all -How? Start with two things: Prayer and the revealed word.

Remember, we learned that God inclines Himself to hear our prayer. He wants to be found by you. Therefore, He will be if you seek Him. God is no cosmic trickster, playing the ultimate hide and seek game.

No, He desires that you and I know Him. Prayer helps to make that happen. The Holy Spirit will always be there, and respond to the prayers of a genuinely seeking person.

Second- His revealed and inspired word. If you want to know God's will, if you want to hear Him speak -read His word.

-2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in

righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

-2 Peter 1:19-21 (ESV)

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Men wrote or as we are told, were "carried along". What that means is that God, through His Holy Spirit, inspired these men to write what they did.

Simeon knew he was being led by the LORD because he had spent so much time in prayer and studying the word, that when he was told to go, he knew it was God.

Again, that repetition which Luke gives us. Three times we are told that Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit.

We can have that same type of relationship with the LORD. We can be led by His spirit in the same way.

But it takes effort on our part, it will never just happen. Too often we forget that success in life looks an awful lot like hard work and dedication to the task.

What happens next is profound and simple. Profound in Simeon's recognition, simple in the fact that he is simply seeing Scripture revealed, and come to pass in the birth of this baby:

-Luke 2:28-32 (ESV)

"...he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Joseph and Mary are shocked, as any of us would be if this happened. "Who's the weird guy, Mary?" "No, Joseph, this is just another confirmation for us."

A hard reminder to a mom that she will suffer the pain of loss while the world gains redemption and salvation.

She knows Jesus's mission, that much like Hannah, she will be giving Him back to the Lord for His service, that He has been given for and to the world. Knowing

that as much as Isaiah tells us that her son is given for the salvation of the world, he is also going to be despised and afflicted. Rejected by his own.

She is His Mom, and I can only imagine the burden she carried knowing and seeing all of this. Simeon knew what he was saying to her. A sword will pierce your own heart!

Routine, Revelation, and

3-Redemption:

-Luke 2:36-38 (ESV)

"And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."

Another person, a woman who has her heart and ear turned in such a way that she too hears the voice of God in the cry of a child.

She is a widow, who has dedicated her life to prayer (there it is again), to worship and to fasting.

She recognizes what is going on and who Jesus is -even though she or Simeon for that matter, may not know how this redemption is to come about -They know that their great redeemer has arrived.

Along with the shepherds from verse 20 (read), she goes about declaring what she has seen. And what is that? That the redemption of Jerusalem (Israel) has arrived in this little boy.

No fanfare, no traveling ministries to make sure everyone knows Joseph, Mary, and the Christ -child.

No fighting the establishment to make Him king. No, none of that nonsense. Why?

He is King - the world and all its rulers don't need to believe it to make it so - IT IS SO - A child born (for us), a son given (to us). This is a fact.

All of us here today, are living (if you are a believer) in faithful expectation for the consolation of the world. This in-between of the two great Advents of humanity and history.

The unbeliever too, is waiting. Not for consolation and redemption. No,

unknowingly you wait for judgement, as that is the sad truth of the Scriptures.

There is no in-between, there are no half-ways. Believer or non-believer -the end comes for us all, that is never a question.

The question really is this: Is the King of Kings, this Jesus of Nazareth - your King?

For the fact that He is King of Kings is undisputable -His resurrection from the dead removed any doubt.

The only real question that remains for us all is- Will we bend our knee now, in humble thankfulness and submission?

Or will we do it then in forced recognition and realization that this baby, this God in a manger, cannot be ignored.

Anna knew this. Simeon knew this. Joseph and Mary knew this. I pray that today you will not harden your heart to the call of the Holy Spirit which calls you to come and see this thing which as happened in Bethlehem.

Come to Him today, come and be reconciled to God.