

The Consolation of Israel

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Date: 22 December 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

And it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it. Which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We are, as I mentioned earlier in our service, now on the fourth Sunday of Advent. The word Advent comes from a Latin word that means to come or to arrive. And so during the season of Advent, we focus on Jesus arriving or coming to earth.

And as we do that, we do a number of things. First of all, we celebrate what God has done in the past. And so we sing songs like Joy to the World. As we celebrate what God has done in the past, as we celebrate Jesus' first coming, we also long for and look forward to what God will do in the future.

[1 : 2 0] And so we look forward to Jesus' second coming. That's when we sing songs like, O come, O come, Emmanuel. And there's a sense in which what we do in the season of Advent is actually what we do in the entire Christian life.

We look back, we celebrate what God has done in the past. We look forward, we long for and hope for what He will do in the future. And those two things together allow us to actually live faithfully now in the present.

That's our focus then as we are in Luke chapter 2, picking up where we left off from last week. You'll remember last week we took a look at the shepherds and their song, as they said, glory to God in the highest.

Now we move on to the last song of this section, actually five songs that appear at the beginning of Luke. The fifth one this morning is from Simeon. And just like last week, this passage has a lot going on.

We have pigeons, we have turtle doves, and we have the Holy Spirit. Okay? And just like last week, we are not going to talk about everything. So we're actually not going to talk about the turtle doves or the pigeons.

[2 : 3 2] We are reading this larger section for the sake of context. We're going to focus on some specific areas. And our focus this morning will be on the words of Simeon. We're going to look at Simeon's song in verses 29 through 32, and then his final words to Mary, verses 34 through 35.

Once again then, we have a rich, rich passage that's before us, but we have limited time this morning, and so we have a narrow focus. In our narrow focus, we're going to look at two things.

We're going to see, one, realistic expectations, and two, high hopes. Realistic expectations and high hopes.

So with that, I invite you to turn with me to Luke 2, starting at verse 22. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide.

No matter where you turn, remember that Proverbs 30 tells us every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

[3 : 42] And so that's why we read now Luke 2, starting at verse 22. Verse 25.

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. And 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, he took up his arms and blessed God and said, verse 29, Lord, 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.

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And 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.

[5 : 34] And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we do, as we do every Sunday, praise you and thank you again for your word. You haven't left us to figure out the world on our own, but instead you've given us your word to show us the way.

We ask that you would do that again this morning by your spirit, that you would give us burning clarity about the gospel of your son and our Savior, our Lord Jesus, that we would grow in our love and affection, our reverence and all our obedience to him.

We thank you that we don't worry this morning about whether we've earned or deserved those things. We know that we haven't. And so we simply ask for them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Last week I asked you the question, if there was one thing you could have or change that would give you more joy, what would it be?

[6 : 46] This week I asked you a different question. If you are a Christian, what did you think the Christian life would be like?

Maybe that was years ago. Maybe you've been a Christian for a long time. Maybe you've been a Christian for a short time. But I want you to try to remember yourself and what it was you thought laid ahead of you.

Now, if you're not a Christian, you can think about something different. You can ask, what about Christianity do you find attractive? Why is it that you're here exploring it, hearing about it?

Maybe you thought that becoming a Christian would guarantee that your family life would be beautiful. You know, you just follow the good old-fashioned child-raising recipe, right?

And everything will turn out great. If you find that recipe, let me know. You perhaps thought that church life would be perfect.

[7 : 53] No one would ever deeply hurt you. No one would ever leave your church. No one would ever fall away from the faith. Maybe you thought that God would provide you with a spouse.

Maybe he did. Maybe you found out marriage wasn't everything that you hoped it would be. Even marriage to another Christian.

Maybe he didn't provide you a spouse. And you're confused because you thought he owed you that. Maybe you thought your friends would be excited and thrilled to hear you share about your new hope in Jesus Christ.

And instead, they're confused and perhaps offended. And so when you thought this was going to be an easy conversation, instead you move forward in that relationship walking on eggshells.

Things perhaps were not quite as easy as we expected. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. There is something special about church community, right?

[9 : 01] We do believe there are powerful resources the Bible provides for us to draw upon as we think about our relationships and our family life. There is a beauty to marriage.

And the Christian life is far from perfect. Okay, that's the first question. What did you think it would be like to be a Christian?

Here's the second question for you, related. What do you think Mary thought it would be like when she found out that her son and the king of the universe were one and the same?

What do you think Mary expected when she found out that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah? It's going to be all good, right?

Unending joy. This is it. What more could someone hope for? This king of the world is in my womb.

[10 : 07] What could go wrong? Question of expectations is before us as we look at this story this morning in Luke chapter 2.

And as we talk about story, I want you all to remember where it is we are. Verses 1 through 7 in chapter 2 told us the birth story of Jesus. Then, last week, we looked at verses 8 through 21.

Those told us about the angels coming, which was so exciting, right? Now, we're in verse 22, and Jesus is being presented at the temple in Jerusalem.

Now, as I already warned you, we're not going to explore the pigeons and the turtle doves of verses 22 through 24. You'll remember this is a rich passage with a narrow focus. Our focus is on verse 25 when we meet Simeon.

Simeon is almost certainly an older man. And in verse 26, we find out that God has made a promise to him. He will not die until he meets Jesus.

[11 : 12] It's with that promise that we then come to verses 27 through 28. There's this perfectly orchestrated sort of providential moment. I don't exaggerate when I say there's a Hollywood quality to this because Mary and Joseph are coming into the temple with Jesus to present him.

And who happens to be coming in at the exact same time but Simeon? And so there's this providential sort of choreography that happens where they collide into each other.

And Simeon realizes that God's promise to him has finally come true. What he has been told all these years is real.

Wow. This is the moment, right? All things come true and right. Mary and Joseph are probably on the high from the song sung by the angels.

And we're taken right back to the question of expectations. You would think that this would be a moment of pure rejoicing.

[12 : 23] But if Mary is ecstatic, Simeon manages to pop the bubble. Just a little bit.

We're going to jump to the end and then we'll go back to the song. Simeon warns them. Verse 34, it says, He blessed them and he said to Mary his mother. Verse 35, And a sword will pierce through your own soul also.

Yes, great joy. And great pain. Yes, the king of the universe is also Mary's son and.

In John chapter 2 at the wedding of Cana, Jesus is going to push her aside and correct her. She's later going to watch Jesus' ministry and she realizes that he will be rejected by men.

And if that's not bad enough, Mary is going to watch her first and oldest son suffer on the cross.

[13 : 33] Remember Jesus' words from Matthew chapter 8. He uses these to describe himself. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

Moms, is that your dream for your son? When you think about his future, do you think to yourself, Man, I hope when he grows up and becomes a man, what's true about him is that he has nowhere to lay his head.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also.

That's what Mary gets to experience. Great hope, great joy, great pain.

Turns out that some hopes, ours and hers, are at times naive.

[14 : 49] At least on this side of heaven. You'll see this on the back of your worship guide. Jesus said he came to bring a sword.

Simeon said so too. Do we see what that means? It means we will have many painful struggles in the Christian life.

Great hope and also great pain. Now we could talk about suffering in general. Here what Simeon, I believe, is warning Mary about is suffering in particular.

Suffering for the sake of the gospel. The same is true of us as we look out on the Christian life. You speak the truth. And others resist it or reject it.

And reject you. You fight hard for faithful obedience in the Christian life. And then you realize faithfulness is harder than you thought.

[15 : 59] And old patterns come back in a surprising way. Advent, as I've told you, is looking back and looking forward.

Here, as we think about the pain, we are looking forward. There is a lament to Advent. There is a sadness over the fact that the cancer of sin in this world is still present.

There is a crying out where we do say, O come, O come, Emmanuel. Because expectations have a way of catching up with us.

Sin is still real. It's still here. A sword will pierce through your own soul also. And you might be thinking, that's not what I came to church for this morning.

Not here for the pastor to be a nasty little Debbie Downer. To have the audacity to talk about suffering while wearing a candy cane tie. I already know the world is full of suffering.

[17 : 22] Thank you very much. Thankfully, that's not all of Simeon's story. I've started here at the end so we can move back. We need a hope that is bigger than the sword.

We need a hope that is bigger than the sword to keep us moving. Last week, I reminded you of the quote from Samuel Johnson, who was an English writer in the 18th century, who told us people need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.

And what is the season of Advent if not a time to be reminded? Simeon doesn't just tell us about the sword.

He tells us about the hope. Verse 25, he is waiting for the consolation of Israel. Consolation here is a big word that simply means comfort.

He's waiting for Israel to be comforted. This is an idea, a concept that comes out of the book of Isaiah, where it appears over and over. Why is it that the nation of Israel needs comfort?

[18 : 35] Well, we could list a lot of reasons. They have lost their independence, and they are now under the brutal rule of the Roman Empire. That's one reason. Their religious leaders have lost the plot, and their religious leaders are more interested in fattening themselves than feeding God's people.

Ezekiel chapter 10 tells us a heartbreaking story that God's presence has left his temple. And do you remember where in the Old Testament we're told that God's presence returns to the temple?

No, you don't, because it's not there. There is no record of God's presence returning to his temple. Matthew chapter 2, if you're familiar with the Christmas story, King Herod comes in, and he's so threatened by the birth of this child that he orders every male Jew under the age of two in the region of Bethlehem to be killed.

That is what Simeon and God's people are longing for consolation from. That is Simeon's hope, his hope for restoration and comfort.

That is what he's waiting for. And he knows that the Messiah will bring it. What is your hope?

[20 : 10] What are you waiting for? What are you convinced will be your consolation?

Your comfort? What do you think the solution is to your problems and the problems of this world?

Is your solution a politician? Is it physical healing? Is it romantic and sexual experiences?

Is it just one more accomplishment or achievement? Simeon tells us what his hope is.

Look with me at verse 29. Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. In other words, you've kept your promise.

[21 : 16] Now I can die. What I have been holding on to, what Simeon has been staying alive for, is nothing less than the birth of the Son of God.

And when that happens, he is content. And he tells us why. Verse 30. He tells us that God's salvation is what he has seen.

The restoration of all things is finally here. That God is going to restore our relationships with ourselves. That we can say goodbye to overwhelming anxiety.

to the shame that haunts us and that we try to cover. Simeon knows that this is not just restoration of our relationship with ourselves, but relationship with others.

That the world of strife and misunderstanding and cutoff and hurt will come to an end. Simeon knows that the relationship between people and this world will be healed.

[22 : 23] That the lion and the lamb will actually lie down together and a little child will actually lead them. And the root, the source of all those restorations is the restoration of the most important relationship of all.

That the relationship between God and his people will be restored. That we will finally have the love and communion that's greater than any other.

Simeon is waiting for the salvation that God has prepared in the presence of all peoples. That's the other piece that stands out here is that God's salvation is not restricted to one type or group of people.

Simeon is obviously a faithful Jew on the one hand. And as someone who knows the book of Isaiah, he's aware that God's salvation is cosmic.

It is meant for all people in all places. That's why he tells us, verse 31, this salvation has been prepared in the presence of all peoples.

[23 : 37] A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. Simeon knows he is not the end state of God's work in the world.

No. It's to go out to every tongue and tribe and nation. Verse 32 helps us clarify what exactly this salvation will look like.

It's going to be a light for the Gentiles. That is, those who are not Jews will have the hope they did not know about. Remember, we looked at this, the beginning of Romans chapter three, the oracles of God were given to the Jews.

They had something that no one else had. Now for everyone. Not just a light though, it's glory for Israel.

Glory in this sense that the Messiah comes from them. There is a special honor to the Jewish people, Simeon is saying, because the Redeemer is theirs.

[24 : 48] Glory to the Jews because Jesus is a Jew. What he's saying in a sense is, it's our hometown hero, that goes to the Olympics.

It's the one who grew up here that gets the honor. That is the hope that's bigger than the sword.

Remember we talked about this last week. It takes a big hope to chase away a big fear. And the biggest hope of all, the foundation of all of these things, is that Jesus has come.

He restores our relationship with ourselves and with others and with the world because he restores our relationship with him. That he goes on to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins and to live the perfect life that we could not so that we could be right with our God and live in a restored and perfect world.

That's what Jesus comes to do. That's the salvation that we're reconciled to God and we're reconciled to his creation. We're going to get to this in the book of Romans.

[26 : 12] Romans chapter 8 tells us the creation itself, the created world, the trees and the squirrels are groaning. And they're groaning for God to make all things right.

Christian, Christian, that is Simeon's hope. Is it yours?

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.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you that you are the light of the world, that you have shown us the hope that we could not find on our own.

We ask that you would grow that hope, that it would be bigger than any sword, any pain, that you'd prepare us for the challenges ahead as we long for and hope for the new creation that is to come.

[27 : 33] And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. fucking moment in your time That you gotta love and be ruler into Christ that you fought and since you never stole your hands and■ice into you and a saint into you and a great name and a great name for yourht due becoming bepardYi.