

**Born to Die**  
**Luke 2:22-35**

**Intro:** I want to welcome everyone here this Christmas morning. What a blessed time to have a worship service. The last time Christmas fell on a Sunday was 2011. Think about it, we always hit Easter, which is the time we celebrate Jesus' resurrection but we do not always have a Christmas service that lands on Christmas. This is a special time.

**Illst:**

- We opened our presents last night because our family is traveling today . . .
- Last night before we opened our gifts we read the Christmas story from our Noel Calendar and then reflected on the past year.
- What is the best Christmas present you have ever received?
- Last night I received one of the best gifts I have ever received. . . (show Alex's letter)
- It is an incredible blessing to me because I am observing in my 20 year old daughter how Christ, who was born to die is defining her life and is the delight of her heart.
- As a matter of fact these are my points this morning.
  - Christ was born to be the definition of our lives
  - Christ was born to be the delight of our hearts
  - Christ was born to die for our sins

**Let me set the scene for the passage Steve read earlier (the real Christmas story) in Luke 2:22-38.** Jesus was born under the Law and Joseph and Mary were parents who wanted to obey Yahweh so in keeping with the Law forty days after Jesus' birth Joseph and Mary took Jesus up to Jerusalem for the rites of purification and the rite of redemption for the first born male who breaks the womb. Jesus didn't need to be redeemed but in keeping with the law, as a baby, he went through the rite of redemption at the cost of two turtle doves. This was why Joseph and Mary were in Jerusalem.

**I. Christ was born to be the definition our lives (Luke 2:25-28)**

**We do not know when God gave Simeon the word by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw Jesus but I think we can safely assume that it was a long time because the text tells us he had been waiting.** He had been waiting in faithfulness. He had been waiting in righteousness. He had been waiting in holiness. He had persevered. He had run the race or run the course that God had set before him. I like the picture pastor Phil Ryken paints of Simeon. He says, *"This is what it means to be a believer: It means waiting in faith for God to do what he has promised. How often Simeon must have walked the streets of the city, waiting for the salvation that God had promised to give. We can imagine him watching parents present their children at the temple . . . Then one day the Holy Spirit led Simeon into the outer courtyard, where he met the desire of his trusting heart. In the providence of God, he was at the right place at the right time to see the Christ . . . Simeon's heart soared and by the revelation of the Holy Spirit he uttered a prophetic word<sup>1</sup> [The Nunc Dimittis (Now Depart in Peace)]: **Luke 2:29-32**, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation<sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

---

<sup>1</sup> Phil Ryken, *The Incarnation in the Gospels*, p. 124.

**Christ was the defining factor of Simeon's life.** His whole life was centered around and grounded in the promise of Jesus. Christ was who he was waiting on. He was banking on promises God had made in the Old Testament and the specific promise God had made to him. His life exuded faith in God while he was living in the land filled with darkness.

**Application: Are you grounded in the promises of God?**

1. **First you have to know the promises of God.** Simeon was obviously a man who loved God and His word. He read it and understood it. He applied it. You have to get the word of God not just on paper in a book but in your heart and mind.

**As 2016 comes to a close and we look forward to 2017:** What will you do to increase your knowledge of the word of God and love of the word of God in the coming year? You might read the Bible through but you don't have to. It is a good thing to do that but perhaps you start small and just invest in the book we will be preaching through in the coming months.

- a. Make the most of the sermons by gathering for worship and growing in a small group:
  - i. Pastor Eric is going to walk us through the book of Ruth in January
  - ii. I will begin Colossians the first Sunday in February.
  - iii. The ladies are already working on a book by Elise Fitzpatrick on Romans and will have a study time in February.
  - iv. The men have been meeting to study Joshua on Friday mornings as we study the Old Testament in Foundations. Perhaps you begin by making the most of these books.
- b. Reading the Bible through is a beautiful way to do it but you need to do it more than just one year you need to repeat it at least 5 years in a row. After that you really begin to grasp the scope and narrative of the Bible.

2. **A second way we pattern our lives on the promise is by centering our lives on what Christ had already done.** Throughout the year we will need to remind ourselves that Christ came and:

- a. fulfilled the promises of God
- b. FULFILLED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS by keeping the law perfectly and then died on the cross as a substitute TO PAY for our sin
- c. He PURCHASED the riches of God for us and PAID our debt to God for us.
- d. He received the WRATH of God for our sin in order to give us the KINDNESS of God.
- e. Reminding yourself of what Christ has done will help your life to become defined by the gospel of Jesus Christ
- f. **Your life will be marked by the promise of God kept in Jesus Christ.** You will not live to earn God's favor instead you will relish in the approval God is showering on you in the grace of Christ
- g. You will be marked by a life of deep joy, glorious peace and genuine humility
- h. Your life will be marked by worship and gratitude because of the gospel of Jesus Christ

3. **The third thing application I think we can make here is that Simeon was clinging to the promises of God when the world was at its darkest. Christ was defining his life even in suffering.** The time that Simeon lived in is defined as "a people who lived in darkness." It had been 400 hundred years since there had been a prophet of God. The people were loosing hope.

**Matthew 4:15-16**, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—<sup>16</sup>the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

**I do not know what your life is like right now.** The holidays can be especially difficult and dark. Sometimes death, divorce and relationships can disrupt your family to the point where it seems like you have no family at Christmas.

It may be so dark that it is hard for you to believe that Christ is the Light of the world. He has come and removed the darkness. I am not saying you will never suffer or never go through dark periods in your life but when you know the promises of God you see that not only did Christ come to remove the ultimate darkness of sin but He came to give us the ultimate light of Himself. That light is experienced in the gift of the Holy Spirit, His word and His church. For some church is where family is found.

It is only like the shadow of a cloud that glides overhead and is gone because the heat of the sun drives it away. **This leads me to my second point . . .**

## II. Christ was born to be the delight of our hearts (Luke 2:29-32)

This text is saying that Jesus is the consolation of Israel. He is their comfort, hope, joy and delight of a people wandering in darkness. They were sheep without a shepherd. They had no comfort or delight. **Here is the point:** the consolation of Israel was the person of Jesus Christ. For Simeon to see Jesus was enough because he knew the light that had dawned in Christ was for not just for the consolation of Israel but the light to the Gentiles for their salvation as well.

As religious as he was, as faithful as he was, as much Scripture as he knew, as beautiful prophecy as he had been given he knew that none of the religious activities he practiced would earn God's favor or salvation. He needed the Delight of Heaven—Jesus!

### Application:

**1. Jesus must be the delight of your heart.** There will be many people who will practice religion this Christmas. They will attend church, they might even go to a Christmas Eve Service or go to church the day after Christmas and think—*"I hope God is pleased? Surely He is pleased because I came to church."* People who think this are still dwelling in darkness because they do not understand that Jesus has earned their standing with God and they have not by faith trusted in Christ alone. They are hoping their efforts remove the darkness. Only Jesus can remove the darkness.

Friend you may be here this morning and think that your religious attendance and activity has earned you some grace but it has not. It has only increased your sin and your darkness has increased. Friend give up your striving and turn from your own efforts to please God and trust in Christ. There is no greater gift to be given to you on this Christmas morning than you receive the gift of salvation that has been given in Christ.

## III. Christ was born to die for our sin (Luke 2:34-35)

**After Simeon's song, he concluded with the often-overlooked blessing.** Simeon's Song is often quoted with hope and joy, as it should be but we cannot stop there. Right after he gives his song he speaks a blessing over Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Listen to it in vv. 34-35 which says, *"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed<sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

**This short blessing we hear the looming words of Jesus' coming death and conflict.** When v. 34 says it will be *"a sign that is opposed"* means Jesus' call to follow Him will cause conflict. Then Simeon says, *"(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)"* is a prophetic message of the pain. Mary was going to experience great pain and suffering because of Christ for she was going to watch Jesus be torn in two for the sins of His people. It would be like a sword piercing her soul.

Often when we think of Christmas we think of peace and goodwill to mankind but Christmas has always been wrought with conflict and death. Jesus said Himself in **Matthew 10:34**, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Jesus did not mean that He had come to incite violence but that His call to allegiance to Him will bring conflict. It will be conflict among people and within people. Tim Keller says, “Just like any peacemaker who has ever lived, Jesus makes people mad, and he often causes struggle and strife. Yet this is the way His peace comes.”<sup>2</sup>

**1. Jesus causes conflicts among people.**

- a. **Illst:** One of the hardest Christmases I ever experienced was after I began to follow Christ . . .
- b. **Christmas can be a difficult time with family.** Perhaps some of your family members are believers and some are not. Often these can be battle lines for us. Brother and sister in Christ we are not at war with flesh and blood. Let the humility of Christ reign as you humble yourself and serve those in your family who might be antagonistic toward you.

**2. Jesus causes conflict within people.**

- a. **Yet the most peaceful Christmas I ever had began that Christmas because the conflict between God and me was over.** I was no longer at war with Him but instead worshipped Him. The sword of the word of God pierced my own soul discerning its thoughts and intentions. I realized I was a sinner in need of Christ. Jesus began to define my life because He was and is the delight of my heart.
- b. **Friend perhaps you are here this morning because some well-meaning family member or friend has dragged you to some Christmas morning service when you would rather be sleeping.** Perhaps you have stumbled in here because there are not many churches meeting this morning. You are here by God’s appointment. **Isn’t it time you stop running from God and embrace the One who had His body and soul pierced for your sin?** Isn’t it time you let Him heal your broken heart.

---

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller, *Hidden Christmas*, p. 118.