

Series: The Invitation	Reference: <i>Luke 2:25-26</i>	Title: Simeon's Hope	Date: 12.08.2019
Website Writeup: What did Simeon hope for, and why did they need consolation? What do we hope for, and why do we need consolation? Questions we explore in the 1st sermon in our Christmas Series.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

(Dave Brown's story of finding church through neighborhood relationships)

Memory Verse for this Series

Romans 6:23

*For the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Turn with me to p699 in your church bibles to the book of Luke, specifically in chapter 2, beginning in verse 25. Luke is both the 3rd book of the New Testament, and 3rd book of the four Gospel accounts. We're going to tether ourselves to this passage, but will look in other places as well - so bookmark this to come back to it later.

We begin by looking at Simeon's Hope here in Luke 2:25-26 where it says...

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous & devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Have you ever waited for something great? Joe Gargano waited for his fiancé, Christa. We wait on, not only what we anticipate, but for that which we hope & eagerly long! Kids wait & hope for Christmas, summer break, or Halloween. When I was 15 I figured out a loophole in the system which allowed me to get my license a week early! It was hard to wait, I wanted to drive so badly. When I put the engagement ring on Kim's finger I had to wait months to get married - the most difficult wait of my life! And that engagement came after a whole year of waiting to even get engaged, since Kim wouldn't allow me to ask her before a year had passed!

I'm not great at waiting patiently...but, back to our passage. This tells us Simeon took faith seriously. A man who walked faithfully with the Lord. He's described as 'Righteous & devout'. If he lived today, he'd be found at church in worship, prayer & study. And in Community Group, sharing truth with fellow brothers & sisters in faith. He'd be found in his neighborhood, at work, at community events, or parties having conversations with others concerning the hope he had in Jesus.

Before Pentecost when the Spirit of God was poured out on God's people, which would come later in the Gospel story, there weren't too many people of which it said the Holy

Spirit was upon them...but the Spirit of God was upon Simeon. Which may reveal - when you walk by the Spirit, you live by the Spirit. When you submit to the Spirit's leading, you more easily hear the Spirit's leading. Of course he wasn't perfect, no person is outside of Jesus, but he walked in righteousness keeping in tune with the Holy Spirit.

In coming to faith we have an unbreakable connection to God the Father due to Christ the Son. We're saved by grace through faith, this not of ourselves, it's a gift of God so that no one can boast (Eph 2:8-9). Our connection established by Jesus, not us. As we receive the Holy Spirit it's like a pipeline carrying the spiritual nutrients of wisdom, discernment & guidance. But that pipeline becomes clogged when we disregard the Spirit, and begin living in ways unworthy of our calling (Eph 4:1). When we indulge in habitual sin, harbor un-forgiveness, become prideful, or wallow in bitterness. We can't destroy our connection with Jesus, but we can dampen the Spirit's voice through disobedience. Walking in the Spirit always brings ease, adventure & freedom.

Bookmark Luke 2 & turn to p797 in your church Bibles to Galatians 5:16-17. Paul describes life in the Spirit for us here. *¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. And in v25, ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Simeon seems to have been a man who walked by the Spirit, lived by the Spirit, and kept in step with the Spirit, even as he waited. **What was he waiting for?** Well, it tells us plainly - *'the consolation of Israel'*. Consolation - the act of giving relief or comfort in affliction, very closely related to compassion.

The word is used in Isaiah 40:1-2. Turn now to p493 & let's look at that. It says, *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

Alluding to Israel's eventual release from burden - Isaiah brings an image of her showered with grace which outweighs her sin! But **from where does this consolation come?** Interestingly, this same passage is one used to describe John the Baptist in the New Testament as it continues in V3...³ *A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

If you know the story, John the Baptist was the herald (Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3, Jn 1:23) announcing Jesus' on the scene as Messiah, the Christ, sent from God to bring consolation to Israel. Sent for comfort, relief & compassion. Which is what was promised to Simeon & what he waits for - consolation by way of 'the Lord's Christ'.

And as Simeon's been in the practice of doing up until now, he once again follows the Spirit's leading into the Temple courts as Luke 2 continues in v27, turn back to that if you can...²⁷ *Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents*

*brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms & praised God, saying: ²⁹"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³²**a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.**" ³³The child's father & mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them & said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling & rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

v32 says Jesus came for all peoples, as promised throughout Scripture. There's been a lot of talk of Israel's consolation up to this point, but Israel's call has always been to bring the light of God to all peoples. That's what Jesus came for. As we come into Christ, we become spiritual descendants of Abraham ourselves. V30 here in chapter 2, and also Luke 3:6, both quote Isaiah 40:5 where it says, "And all people will see God's salvation."

So, we know what Simeon waits for, but **what's the situation surrounding his waiting?** What's the need for consolation?

Simeon's is the story of Christmas, although this side of it... a story we don't want to get lost in the maelstrom of sentimentality & gift giving. We want the meat of it.

Up to this point God hadn't spoken for 400 years, and here's Simeon being led by the Spirit, the clearest voice of prophecy about this child. He not only sees the joy, but the pain it will cause as well, evidenced by his words to Mary & Joseph. We have the benefit of looking back on this event having seen his words come to fruition.

Christ's birth comes during trying times for the people of Israel. Jesus was born under the rule of Caesar Augustus, the same ruler who'd coined the term 'Good News' or 'Gospel' for his government. Regarded as deity; with rites of worship established for him. His rule, thought to be the final solution to peace & order for the world, was regarded as an unending empire. But through Jesus, there's going to be an upset to Caesar's rule. God will undo & surpass the rule of Caesar Augustus. The word 'Gospel' would be usurped to mean the rule of Christ, robbing Caesar of his glory & giving it rightly to Jesus! Augustus mentioned only once as a marker of when Christ entered the world (Yancey).

Jesus was also born under the local rule of Herod, the despicable despot who killed two brothers-in-law, his own wife & two of his very own sons. Who ordered the massacre of all first born male Jewish children in fear of this coming 'Jewish King'. Who rounded up innocent citizens five days before his death, ordering them to be executed the day he died to insure proper mourning at his demise. A comparative image of the Kingdom of the World wielding its power of the sword, with the Kingdom of God wielding the power of consolation.

In his infant days, Jesus spent his time as a refugee in Egypt under Roman oppression. Divinity, unafraid to enter a world of violence & hatred as the God-man. In the end, Rome thinks it had put an end to any threat by crucifying Him, but like puppets on a string, they'd only done what was expected, aiding in the necessity of Jesus sacrifice.

Jews longed for the days of Solomon when he'd made silver as numerous as stones on the ground & to be free from Roman oppression. And here's the Messiah, born in a stable with animals & shepherds. The menial & despised as witness. God made approachable in the form of a baby dependent on two poor back-country teenagers. Herod & Caesar struck fear by the sword, not a day passed without an execution under Herod's rule. Yet, God came in the least threatening form he could. A contrast of kingdoms. Then, after a few years, three 'unclean' foreign gentile kings undermine Herod's orders & come to worship Jesus.

Everything about His birth was shrouded in tension & contradiction to Messianic expectation. Even his Aramaic language wasn't fit for a king of the Jews. It was linked too closely to the 'dirty' Gentile nations. He hailed from Nazareth, the backwards town in Galilee, known for insurrection. The Peace of Rome, was the reigning thought. Jews splintered into various groups to deal with roman oppression & hellenization; Zealots, Sadducees, Sanhedrin, Pharisees & Essenes. All with different ways of dealing with the harsh political climate, either violent, pacifist, or compromising.

This era follows the Maccabean Revolt which lasted almost a century prompted by Antiochus who entered the Holy of Holies in God's Temple, which came to be known as the 'Abomination of Desolation'. Where he sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the alter of God & smeared the room with its blood. Declaring no Jew could follow the Mosaic Law, nor could they be circumcised any longer in order to participate in Greek athletic events. Violence broke out & it took Rome thirty years to squash the rebellion finally installing Herod as their own 'King of the Jews' - a title Jesus would also usurp.

Just before Jesus' birth, from 67-37bc, no less than 150,000 men perished in Palestine due to uprisings. Jesus birth came at a chaotic & dangerous time. And God enters history placing himself in the hands of two Jewish teenagers from Galilee. And there's Simeon, faithfully waiting to see this promised Messiah. People certainly needed consolation on many levels.

Jews of the time all felt the harshness of roman rule, the weight of their own sin & their inability to satisfy the requirements of Mosaic Law.

So, that was theirs, but **what's our situation?**

We all feel the harshness of our political climate, whichever side you fall on. We constantly witness accusatory words, evil acts, violence & separatism whether intentional, or by default. We're witnessing the death of healthy communication & compromise. Society's dividing before our eyes through the breakdown of simple respect, rationale & logic. The increased acceptance of harmful personal practices &

legislation. From the hookup culture, to the discussions of law which would enable us to abort children even into toddler years. A brittle overly sensitive society, where emotion reigns - people triggered & offended at the slightest action, or word. I recently watched the story of a woman suing a man who rescued her from drowning. She was unconscious underwater for over 2 minutes, and he pulled her out & saved her life. She stated he hadn't asked permission to touch her body. Therefore she considers herself to have been raped... We all know where this leads. Nowhere good. Some may claim I speak in extremes, but extremes are a sign of where we're being led.

We also feel the heaviness of our fallen nature. We struggle to walk in step with the Spirit in worship, purity & joy. We find it difficult in a society increasingly juvenile in its sexual expression & licentiousness. A society which seems to heap derision & ridicule on Christians who set moral standards if even just for themselves. While illogically praising other peoples religious expression, overlooking their derision of impoverished peoples, women, or those different than them.

Some of us have been indifferent to walking righteously & devout as Simeon did. We may NOT be walking lockstep with the Holy Spirit, but we have found the beginnings of consolation in Jesus. We've been reborn - like infants moving onto adulthood, there's still time to say yes to the Spirit & begin to grow spiritually. There's power in Christ for our spiritual formation. Positionally we've been made righteous, life's being renewed, that's truth. And Simeon saw this consolation in the baby he held in his arms.

Simeon stood on the promise of God. The oath God swore to Abraham; the promised Messiah throughout Scripture. A promise of *'light for revelation to the Gentiles,'* revealing Simeon's understanding - Messiah is for all people, stretching beyond the cultural borders of Israel, offered to all people groups. The same promise to Abraham that he'd be a blessing to all nations is fulfilled in Jesus. Simeon knew this Davidic King would bring everlasting consolation. He also knows, we live under the harshness of our times; the Kingdom's come, but not yet fully come. We're new creations in Christ, the old has gone the new has come, but in the interim, we still battle sinful nature in a hostile world as we await the future hope of the kingdom established in full.

Simeon's hope had come; the fulfillment of God's promise. The Messiah, the Second Adam offering forgiveness. Bringing peace, but not in the way they'd expected. Jesus, through death & resurrection, ushered in a new covenant. Herod & Rome crushed with the sword, Christ brings peace in sacrifice; consolation found in the promise of God & rebirth through reconciliation with God. Like Simeon, our hope has to reside in the Lord's Christ, Him alone, nothing else. But, peace doesn't come without a sifting of hearts as Simeon points out to Mary & Joseph, peace is purchased through sacrifice, self denial, struggle, formation in the furnace.

We stand, not only on the other side of this prophecy, but in the midst of it. Jesus has been crucified, Mary's soul's been pierced seeing her son brutally murdered. But the Gospel continues! Jesus has risen, the eternal rule of the Davidic King still stands. Jesus, sifting hearts, looking for those who'll say, "I now understand Christmas, it's not

sentimentality & gift giving, not even family & friends. Christmas is a bloody birth into a violent world. An infant King, bringing peace to our hearts by personal sacrifice. It's reconciliation with God & restoration of creation. Jesus, is the consolation the world needs!" In this baby, cradled in the arms of an old prophet, the world finds this consolation & peace with God.

What do you wait & hope for? Is there really any hope in political ideologies, social, or cultural manipulation, or legislation of the morality of those in power, only to be overturned in the next regime change? The question is, how can Jesus bring you consolation in any environment, peaceful or chaotic? Is He your consolation? Do you share the hope Simeon had in his world? And do you choose to struggle in faith, walking with the Spirit? Or is your hope in something else? Because anything else other than Jesus, will fall miserably short.

In the middle of our chaos Jesus brings consolation through His Word, His Spirit & His Church. Consolation will not come to our society if He's kept hidden by His people. He was born in an open stable, let's keep that tradition alive. Be the open stable - the open life of Jesus, sacrificially & truthfully loving others in a hostile world. People who, like Simeon, willingly hold up salvation on the open steps of community & proclaim consolation's come in Jesus.

We had a great discussion this week in our Community Group concerning how we can better bring the hope & consolation of Christ to each other & our community. In the coming year leadership will be thinking hard about how we can do that even better than we already have. How to do that as a Body & organically as individuals. Pray for us, offer thoughts, do your part by walking with the Spirit, and proclaiming the consolation & hope of Jesus to others! Be the church out in our community together, and hopefully we will draw other people into the life of Christ as the Browns experienced - and hopefully even others who've never known the consolation of Christ before!

I wanted to end today with celebrating a story with Chuck who recently stepped out of his comfort zone to share the Gospel with others...

(Chucks story about the homeless ministry)