

Luke 2 notes

- I. Intro
 - a. "Everybody's lookin' for something"
 - b. Christmas is not about getting a new thing; Christmas is about wanting the right thing. Or to say it a little differently, Christmas is not about wanting SOMETHING; Christmas is about wanting SOMEONE, Jesus, the Messiah, the Promised One.
 - c. And there is a wonderful, though often overlooked, biblical example for us to ponder of two people who beheld the Baby Jesus, and who welcomed Him after a lifetime of looking, waiting, and longing for Him to come. Their names are Simeon and Anna, and we find the account of their meeting their long-awaited Savior in Luke 2.
- II. The Context – 2 things that set up our understanding of this passage & our lives
 - a. Key word (v. 25, 38): "looking for" (NIV), "waiting for" (ESV): anxiously awaiting, carefully looking, pros-dechomai: looking toward taking hold of!
 - i. Advent: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel & Come Thou Long Expected Jesus
 - ii. They are both old
 - iii. Invested a lifetime: What they were waiting for defined them, the crowning moment of their life was to see Jesus! True for us (Nunc Dimmitis)
 - iv. OT saints look forward, NT saints look back, but we look forward too! And they looked at!
 - v. I John 3:2-4 powerful!

² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,^[a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

- b. Historical context - 2 significant traditions observed
 - i. The Offering for Purification
 1. http://www.wjrv.net/outlines/2-6-05_Lev4Purification.pdf
 2. Leviticus 4-5
 3. Ignorance: unintentional,unaware repeated over 10x
 4. Offered at joyful times/when we are "at our best"! (birth, healed from an infection, dedication of priests, completion of a vow).
 5. Hebrews 10:1-4 a reminder of sin, separation: who God is

¹ The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those

sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

ii. The Offering for Redemption

1. Exodus 13:1-2a,14-16

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.” ³ Then Moses said to the people, “Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand... ¹⁴ “In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’ ¹⁶ And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.”

- a. Five shekels: \$900 in modern terms, a huge price!
- b. The sacrifice of our firstborn was what God required: an impossible price.
- c. Exodus also taught that slavery is more than oppression. We are slaves to sin.
- d. To be freed from slavery is not freedom from oppression, but from sin
(Matthew 1:21)

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.”

2. This was a reminder of sacrifice and slavery
3. This is the present looking to the past AND looking forward to the future, in short: longing, waiting, anticipating
4. One more thing: “righteous”-ness misunderstood, the Hollywood/Hallmark view of Christmas: “Good people”.
5. All the Christmas “characters” were indeed “righteous” (Joseph, Simeon), but not in the way we often understand it.
 - a. “found favor” (Luke 1:31)
 - b. Piper illustration

Is Christianity just a bunch of rules for how to live?

I suppose there is an element in religion of telling people how to live, but it isn't men telling people how to live. It is God telling people how to get right with him.

Christianity is not first and foremost a religion. It is first and foremost news. It's news.

It's like we're in a war, in a concentration camp, and suddenly you're hearing on the smuggled-in radio that the troops of deliverance have landed in helicopters five miles away. They're conquering everything in their path and they're just about to get to the gate and open the doors. And having lived all your life in this concentration camp, you're now going to be set free.

That's Christianity. It's news that God sent rescue troops into the world, namely Jesus Christ, and that at great cost to himself he has conquered our enemy the Devil, opened the gates of the concentration camp, and welcomed us home. And then you add the beautiful image of bride and bridegroom and realize that this is not just a soldier who simply frees you go and do what want to do. He's you're husband, as it were, who has been separated from you for years and years, and you're the wife who has been in the camp. And when the gates are opened there he stands on the other side, and the kinds of affections are huge.

I remember watching at the end of the Vietnam war some of those magnificent videos of men who had been away from their wives, some of them I think up to five years. I remember watching them run toward each other and seeing them sweep their wives off their feet. My heart leapt and my tears flowed when I watched that kind of reunion.

So when I think about what is missing from the average person's picture of Christianity, I want to show them that there is such a freedom that is offered us because of what Jesus Christ did to die for our sins, and such a sweet reunion with the one for whom we were made.

I just hope by my ministry and by God's grace through other people's ministries we could take away these false assumptions of what Christianity is and help people see the beauty of what it really is.

- Audio message Q&A at his church

<http://home.flash.net/~thinkman/articles/OTbelievers.htm>

6. This is the backdrop for Christmas! And we see it through the eyes of Mary & Joseph. "What child is this?", "amazed". Like all who were waiting/longing, they were seeking purity (to have a clean heart so they could be reconciled to God) and they were seeking a redemption (the price to be paid to be redeemed for God). Then they meet 2 complete strangers with MORE GOOD NEWS.

- III. Meet Simeon: What was Simeon waiting for?
 - a. Simeon teaches us what to wait for (and what Christ brings): Comfort
 - i. **Paraklesis** (Advocate, Comforter, Helper, Counselor)

1. "Consolation" was the primary word the Rabbis in that day used to describe the Messiah.
2. Isaiah 49:13-15 (the book of condemnation/consolation)

¹³ Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. ¹⁴ But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me." ¹⁵ "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!

b. Simeon teaches us how to wait

i. Wait in the Spirit

1. Romans 8:22-25

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

2. I Cor. 1:7

Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

ii. Wait on the Word of God

1. Simeon could have given up. We can listen to so many other voices – Hebrews 11:24-28

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

c. Simeon teaches us why we wait

i. Wait to die in peace: one choice for eternity!

ii. Wait for Truth: The hope that will bring us joy in eternity is sometimes the hope that will bring us suffering in time, in the now.

iii. I Peter 2:4-6

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house^a to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” ⁸ and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

IV. Meet Anna: What was Anna waiting for?

- a. Anna teaches us what to wait for: Redemption (so common, movie plots, Mike Vick)
 - i. The problem of sacrifice and sin: who’s going to pay, how can we make it right?
 - ii. Mary & Joseph didn’t know: redeeming the Redeemer, the one who would redeem them
(I Peter 1:17-19)

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

b. Anna teaches us how to wait: in prayer and fasting

V. Conclusion: What are you waiting for? It’s ok to still want gifts at Christmas, but let’s long for, wait for gifts that matter, that last, that hold the wonder of our hearts in rapt, eternal attention.

- a. For believers: how about the gift of the Spirit? Yes, you have Him, but does He have you? Has He filled your heart with wonder and awe and worship and anticipation for Jesus? Or are you bored and insipid?
 - i. For the “believer who has everything”, why not ask for more of the Holy Spirit? Make room for Him. Get rid of some of the clutter in your life, and remember the words of Jesus

ii. Luke 11:9-13

⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for^b a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

b. For those who don’t know Jesus

- i. The gift is right there just waiting to be opened.

- ii. Open the gift: He's all you'll ever want, long for, need
 - 1. He's the Comforter
 - 2. He's the Redeemer
 - 3. Turn from the useless way of life to Him
- c. And for us all, let's let our longing to see Him shape our living to serve Him and our waiting for Him inspire our worship of Him. What are you waiting for?