

Rediscover Hope
Luke 2:22-35

Slide 1

Today we begin Advent season! The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” This season is traditionally a time of expectation, waiting, anticipation, and longing.

Sometimes we forget what it’s like to long for something, to wait in anticipation. Advent gives us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah and to celebrate His birth.

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts and help us place our focus on a far greater story than our own—the story of God’s redeeming love for our world.

It’s not a season of pretending to be happy or covering up the pain or hardships we’ve experienced during this past year or may continue to experience in this next year.

It’s a season of digging deep into the reality of what it means that God sent His Son into the world to be Immanuel (“*God With Us*”).

It’s a season of expectation and preparation, an opportunity to align ourselves with God’s presence.

Take a moment to think about what it was like for Jews living in Israel during the time of Jesus.

Israel, like much of the world, was a defeated nation under the thumb of the Roman Empire. It had been thousands of years since the calling out of God’s people.

Israel had been invaded and conquered at least four times. First by the Assyrians, then by the Babylonians, followed by the Greeks, and now the Romans.

Yet generation after generation continued to remember the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3b, *“And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

The promise that one day there would be a Messiah who’d come and make things right, to bless all humans, and restore all that man had messed up since God’s perfect Creation.

But how long can hope survive, especially under the oppression of the Roman Empire? Was anyone even looking anymore? As it turns out, the answer is yes.

And because of this, we’re going to take things a little out of order this year. On this first Sunday of Advent, we’re jumping ahead to after Jesus was born.

We’re going to learn about someone who never given up hope. His name was Simeon, and we read about him in Luke 2:22-36.

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Now, to set the stage, Simeon shows up 40 days after Jesus was born. We know the exact number of days because verse 22 tells us that the days for Mary’s purification had ended.

Luke 2:22, *“When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.”*

According to the law of Moses in Leviticus 12:1-4, women could come to the temple for their sons’ circumcision at 8 days old, but then were unclean for another 33 days after that.

Therefore, Mary and Joseph have already been to the temple once for the circumcision.

Luke 2:21, *“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.”*

We can also assume that they’re no longer spending their nights on the dirty floor of a stable. They’ve probably found a house, perhaps with relatives, in which to stay for the month.

Now they’re back again, this time to offer the purification offering for Mary. Luke 2:24, *“To offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”*

From the description of their offering, we can tell that they weren’t wealthy parents since Leviticus 12:8 prescribed a purification offering of a year-old lamb, but if the parents were poor, they could substitute two turtledoves or two young pigeons for the lamb.

Also, as they entered the Temple, there was nothing about their appearance that distinguished them from any other couple coming to offer a sacrifice.

There were no marks or signs indicating they were anything other than another poor young couple coming with their newborn son.

It’s at this point Simeon enters the story. Aside from what we are told in Luke 2, we know nothing about him.

We don’t know his background, his hometown, his education, his occupation, or how long he had been waiting and watching.

Luke 2:25-26, *“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.”*

According to verse 25, he was righteous and godly man, who was eagerly awaiting the Messiah to come and rescue Israel.

In fact, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn’t die until he had seen the Messiah with his own eyes.

Underline that word *“revealed,”* because when you see the word “revealed” or “revelation” in Scripture, it’s talking about knowledge that can only be obtained supernaturally.

The word “revealed” or “revelation” shows up three times in the story of Simeon. First, God revealed to Simeon, through the Holy Spirit, that he wouldn’t die before he saw the Lord’s Christ.

Then, in verse 32, Simeon calls Jesus a *“light for revelation to the Gentiles,”* and finally, in verse 35, Simeon prophesied to Mary that through Jesus *“the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.”*

Therefore, when the Bible uses the word “revealed,” it always means something that must be shown supernaturally, through the Holy Spirit, not something that someone would be able to figure out on their own.

Simeon couldn’t have recognized Jesus as the Lord’s Christ apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. So, here’s the first point to consider this morning: Christmas is a time to rediscover revelation.

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Now, think about this. Have you ever wondered if Simeon knew to look for a baby? Would he have assumed that the Messiah was going to be some strong, charismatic military leader or revolutionary?

Simeon was probably an old man at this point, even though Scripture doesn't say that explicitly. I imagine him being about 70-80 years old.

Perhaps he had a long gray beard, stooped shoulders, wrinkled face, bushy eyebrows, and trembling hands. If so, then he knows it can't be long. The Lord's Christ must be coming at any moment.

Then enters Mary. She's holding the baby in her arms with Joseph by her side. He's a poor carpenter from Nazareth, she's a peasant girl carrying a little baby boy.

Simeon notices they obviously don't have much money since they're bringing an offering of a pair of pigeons. If we were people-watching, we wouldn't have given them a second glance.

Yet, when Simeon sees them, he asks his question for the 10,000th time, *"Is this the one?"*, and the Holy Spirit says, *"Yes."*

Suddenly Simeon's heart leaps within him. The long days of waiting are finally over. The Lord's Christ is before him. Here is the One for whom the nation has been waiting.

Now the Bible doesn't say this, but I imagine he walked over, introduced himself, and asked, *"Do you mind if I hold your child?"*

As Mary gives the infant Jesus to Simeon, the thought hits him, *"I'm holding the salvation of the world in my arms."*

Today, we also need the Holy Spirit to see Christ in Christmas. Our culture wants to make Christmas about everything but Him.

It's easy to let Christmas be about the gift giving, the gatherings, the traveling, and the busy-ness. It's easy to be distracted by anxiety, fear, or depression.

It's easy to forget the wonder that the eternal Son of God came to earth as a tiny baby. Hope finally had a name, and His name is Jesus.

Therefore, for the next twenty-four days, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to us. We need to ask Him to give us supernatural eyes to see Jesus in the midst of all of the hustle and bustle and shopping.

Don't forget that Simeon said that Jesus was a "*light for revelation to the Gentiles.*" Jesus came for all people, not just the Jews.

This Christmas, I want you to think about this: Jesus came for all people, even those that don't believe in Him yet.

People who're still walking in darkness. People for whom Christmas doesn't mean anything more than the opportunity to get together with friends and family and exchange presents.

Right now, think about someone you know that doesn't know Jesus. Would you take a moment to pray that Jesus would reveal Himself to them this year?

This Christmas, we must not only rediscover revelation, but we need to rediscover redemption.

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In the Bible, when we talk about redemption, we're talking about paying a price in order to free someone from slavery or to save them from sin.

Simeon's words should remind us that this tiny little baby, Jesus, would one day save us from our sin.

After years and years of waiting for God to make good on His promise, Simeon held Jesus in his arms and prayed.

Luke 2:30, *"Sovereign Lord, you may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples."*

Cradling the tiny infant Jesus in his arms and looking full into his face, Simeon saw more than a baby. He saw a side to the Christmas story that isn't often told.

Those soft little hands, fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, were made so that nails might be driven through them.

Those baby feet, pink and unable to walk, would one day walk up a dusty hill to be nailed to a cross.

That sweet infant's head with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was formed so that someday men might force a crown of thorns on it.

That tender body, warm and soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear, then wrapped in burial clothes.

When Simeon looked at Jesus, he saw a Savior who would someday pay the penalty for his sins and ours.

Then, when Simeon looked at Mary, he saw the pain she would feel when she saw the suffering of her Son. That's why He said to her in Luke 2:35b, *"And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

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Jesus came to earth for many reasons. He came to reveal God to the nations. He came to teach truth. He came to fulfill the Law. He came to establish His kingdom.

He came to show us how to live. He came to reveal God's love. He came to bring peace. He came to heal the sick. He came to minister to the needy.

But ultimately, He came to redeem a lost humanity, He came to be our Savior. That's why he was named Jesus.

When the Lord appeared to Joseph in Matthew 1:2, He said, *"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."*

The name Jesus is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua (Yeshua), which means *"Yahweh saves!"* or *"Yahweh is salvation!"*

When Simeon lifted Jesus up in his arms and cried out, *"I have seen your salvation!"*, it was a play on words, because Yeshua literally means *"Yahweh's salvation or Jesus is our salvation."*

Simeon even said this in Luke 2:30-31, *"My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations."*

Most Jews in Simeon's day were expecting a Savior, but not a Savior for all people. They were expecting a Savior for the Jewish people.

A Savior who would rise to power, bring an end to their oppression, topple the Roman empire, and restore Israel to her former glory, but that's not what God had in mind.

Centuries earlier, through the prophet Isaiah, God said of Jesus in Isaiah 49:6, *“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”*

Jesus didn’t come to save a select group of people. He came to save all people. Aren’t you glad He didn’t come to just save some people or certain people.

That He didn’t come to save tall people or thin people, or rich people, or famous people. That He didn’t come to save saintly people, or sober people, or perfect people, or pretty people.

There’s no asterisk on the word *“all.”* There are no exceptions or exemptions. It’s neither hyperbole nor exaggeration. All means all. That means there’s hope for you and me at Christmastime.

If you’re lonely this year, Jesus came for you. If your family has rejected you, Jesus came for you. If you feel forgotten, depressed, discouraged, and down on your luck, Jesus came for you!

Whatever sins are holding you back this year, Christmas means that you can be forgiven, because Jesus came for you. Jesus came to bring salvation to all people—to ends of the earth!

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, don’t make the mistake of leaving Him as a baby in a manger. Keep in mind that His birth was just the first step in God’s glorious plan of redemption.

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Conclusion

Finally, as we look at Simeon's story, I hope that you can rediscover rest. Remember that the Lord told Simeon that he wouldn't die until he saw the Savior with his own eyes.

So, as soon as Simeon set eyes on baby Jesus, he sang out in Luke 2:29, "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.*"

This word "*dismiss*" used here was a military word that meant "*to be relieved of duty.*" It was commonly used to describe a sentinel who stood watch during the long hours of the night.

Then, as the sun came up over the eastern horizon, the sentinel knew his work was done and his commanding officer would dismiss him.

At that time, he could go back to his barracks to rest. That's the way Simeon felt.

The long wait was over, the years of anticipation had been fulfilled, his sentry duty was finished, for he had seen and personally held the Savior.

He was ready to be dismissed. Simeon could finally be at peace. He could finally rest.

It's possible that you came to church this morning just to hear this one truth: In Christ, you can find rest. No other religion offers what Jesus promises.

Judaism sees salvation as a Judgment Day decision based on morality. Buddhism grades your life according to the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Muslims earn their way to Allah by performing the duties of the Five Pillars of Faith. Every other religion is spelled with two letters—D. O. Do this. Do that.

It's all about the things people do to try to earn God's favor or forgiveness, but Christianity is spelled with four letters—D. O. N. E. Done!!

It's not about what we do, but what Jesus has done for us. He already lived the perfect life. He paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

Simeon knew that once he embraced Jesus as Savior, he was ready for eternity. He couldn't be any more ready. There was nothing else he had to do to prepare.

Jesus didn't come to make us to do more or work harder. He came to give us peace and rest.

Christmas brings revelation because Jesus is the light of the world. Christmas brings redemption because Jesus is the Savior of all people.

Christmas brings rest because once you've embraced Jesus as your Savior, you don't have to worry or work your way into heaven.

You don't have to bear the weight of your own sins. You can rest. You're ready for eternity. Simeon's first thought after embracing Jesus is that he's now ready to die.

"Are you ready?" Let me tell you, you're not ready to die until you've embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior the way Simeon did.

You may be ready to graduate, you may be ready to buy your first home, you may be ready to retire, you may be ready to do many things, but without Jesus you're not ready to die.

If you need the light of Christ in your life and you're ready to follow in Simeon's footsteps, then embrace Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Salvation is a gift you don't have to wait until Christmas to open. You can have it right here, right now.