

A Study in Luke

Week Five

Luke 2:25-52

Day One

25 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 upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 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, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

v. 25 – We don't know who this man Simeon was or who his father was. The only distinguishing factors that set him apart from everyone else were being righteous and devout. But what a wonderful reputation to have! The other distinction that was his was that the Holy Spirit was upon him. He may or may not have been educated, but that didn't matter. He was a spiritual man and others knew he was a spiritual man.

v. 26 – What a major revelation this was and how favored he was to receive such a promise. Prophets of old had yearned to see what Simeon was going to see. But how would he know which child it was? How would he know when he saw the Messiah? He had to have faith that the God who promised him would fulfill the promise. I am convinced that God is speaking to many people who don't recognize it as God or don't want to recognize it.

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:12-15).

Are you honoring what you think you are hearing from the Lord today? Do you record what you hear? Do you share it with other people?

v. 27 – The Spirit was positioning Simeon for the fulfillment of the promise. As Joseph and Mary were moving to fulfill the Law's requirements, they were in for another surprise visitor who would speak marvelous things about their Son.

v. 28 – This old man took the baby Jesus and spoke over him in the hearing of his parents. Mary had to allow a stranger to hold her newborn and allow this stranger to prophecy over Jesus. Our children are not our own; they are on loan from God and they belong to Him. Joseph and Mary were there to dedicate their child—give Him to God—and God was receiving Him, relating His plans and purpose for that child. Do you have

any idea what God's plans are for your children? Your nieces and nephews? The children around you in your neighborhood or church?

Day Two

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

v. 29 – This promise to Simeon had to be a personal promise. By that I mean that he could not have received this promise by listening to the reading of the Old Testament. There he would have known that Messiah was coming, but not that he would see Him. My point is that God spoke to him in a manner that he understood. It is not unusual to have God speak, but it is unusual for Him *not* to speak. God is always “broadcasting,” but is anyone listening? Are you listening?

Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind" (Proverbs 8:1-4).

I often hear people say, “Something told me.” Often that “something” is God speaking. Is He speaking to you today? What do you think He is saying?

v. 30 – Wisdom, salvation and knowledge are not “things” for the believer; they are a person—Jesus Christ. Simeon said he had *seen* God's salvation once he had seen Jesus. Paul wrote: “Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3). Don't seek wisdom or knowledge, seek Jesus! When you have Him, you'll have the other “things” as well.

v. 31 – This has the sound of God preparing a feast in front of all the people and Jesus is indeed just that for those who choose to partake of Him. I thought of the psalmist writing: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Psalm 23:5). What God did with Jesus, He did for all the people to see.

v. 32 – This truth was reflected in Jesus' ministry, but was not to come to full light until the ministry of Paul—Jesus came not just for the Jew, but also for the Gentile. This was a difficult thing for the Jews to comprehend, and more than one epistle was devoted to the topic of the Gentiles and the gospel. Prejudice is a powerful drug, dulling the spiritual senses. The Jews had avoided Gentiles for centuries; now they were going to have to make room for them in the new covenant in Jesus.

Do you have prejudice against any group? Perhaps you are not biased against an ethnic group, but some other man-made grouping like lawyers, homosexuals, or people with tattoos, to name a few. Could your prejudice keep you from sharing the gospel with that

group? If so, you need to repent, for your personal preferences should never take precedent over the love of God for *any* group.

Day Three

33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

v. 33 – Imagine these young parents hearing all this about their first-born child. What could it mean? How could they interpret it? I doubt if they could, so they simply marveled. Sometimes you know that God is doing something in your life or in the lives of those around you, but you don't quite understand all the implications. So what should you do? Just marvel and worship God.

v. 34 – There are some people that aren't comfortable with "personal prophecy," where someone delivers a prophetic message to another individual about God's will for that person's life. No matter how you feel about it, this is what was happening here. Simeon gave Mary a word that she would need to understand events 30 years in the future. One day men would speak ugly things against her Son; God was giving her warning now so she could be aware of what was happening when it happened.

While Jesus came to save, some would reject that salvation to their own "fall." I have always been amazed that there were and are some who hate Jesus; they aren't neutral about him, they hate Him. Those who hate Jesus speak against Him and work to undo the work that He has done—to no avail, I might add.

v. 35 – This is a little different "word" than the angel delivered to announce Jesus' birth. This was a sobering word that warned of future pain and suffering. The ways of God are not all smooth ways, especially when those ways confront the entrenched forces of darkness. There is no way to avoid suffering if you are going to follow Jesus:

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Don't ever get confused that when you suffer, you have done something wrong. On the contrary, you are doing something right, for you are following Jesus and His example.

Day Four

36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them

at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

v. 36 – What a day at the Temple this turned out to be. Joseph and Mary thought they were simply going to circumcise their son; instead they had an encounter with God and His servants. That is how it can be. We set out to do our ordinary duty and find God doing something unexpected. That is why it is so important to develop an awareness of what is going on around us, for oftentimes God will disguise Himself ever so slightly or interrupt us when we are going about our business.

This happened to Jacob one night when he went to sleep and had a dream. He awoke and stated:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (Genesis 28:16).

Have you been in a difficult or confusing time? Maybe you haven't done anything wrong, or perhaps you aren't just encountering natural circumstances. Perhaps you are dealing directly with God and you didn't realize it! If so, that realization can help you get through this difficult time.

v. 37 – Anna had spent her entire adult life, perhaps 60 years, in the Temple area. After becoming a widow, she obviously saw God's hand in her circumstances and devoted herself to God.

v. 38 – Anna spoke about Jesus to all who were looking forward to Israel's redemption. But it is interesting to me with all that happened up to this point, that there was no following or group who took notice and followed the events in Jesus' life from this point forward. Obviously, God did not allow this to happen; these events were to encourage Mary and Joseph. It would seem that Joseph died at some point before Jesus went into public ministry. It would further seem that Luke would have gotten all this information from Mary herself.

I have to think that Mary shared some of these things with Jesus, which is perhaps why He stayed behind on one trip to Jerusalem, which Luke tells us about next.

Day Five

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. 41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

v. 39 – After this spiritual “high” of the last few weeks, Joseph and Mary returned home to establish a normal life. It is interesting that Luke tells us nothing of their flight to Egypt found in Matthew’s account. I wonder why that is? Perhaps Luke was aware of Matthew’s gospel and didn’t want to repeat the story. Do you have any theories as to why this story would not be included?

v. 40 – There were no shortcuts in Jesus’ life. He grew up like every other Jewish boy in a Jewish home with Jewish parents. He had chores, learned his lessons, kept the Sabbath and learned a trade. What patience! God’s ways are not our ways. I would have had Jesus show up as an adult to do His work, but God had Him come as a baby and grow up as a Jew. That simply astounds me! And Jesus, while fully God and fully man, actually developed and grew, spiritually, mentally and physically.

v. 41&42 – Joseph and Mary were good Jewish parents. They did what the Law required them to do and one of those things was make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover. They were poor, but they set aside money to do what the Lord required. This is where Jesus would have become familiar with the Holy City, the place where He would ultimately meet His death.

It is important, I think, to have regular spiritual rituals and journeys that are maintained not by spiritual “highs” but by determination and discipline. Joseph and Mary went up every year, rain or shine, whether they felt like it or not. And this was putting something into Jesus (and James, Jesus’ brother) that would serve God’s purposes. What are you doing with your family and yourself that would allow God to do the same?

Day Six

43 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

v. 43 – This one story must have stood out in Mary’s mind among many others from Jesus’ adolescence. He was probably a year away from his bar mitzvah but already He was showing signs of His unusual purpose. He stayed behind in Jerusalem. How did He expect to get home? What was Jesus thinking? Whatever it was, His desire to stay behind outweighed all other considerations.

vs. 44&45 – Joseph and Mary traveled away for a day; then they had to travel another day back to Jerusalem—that makes two days without Jesus.

vs. 46&47 – They searched for him three days; that means they were without their son for five days! This must have been a difficult ordeal and they could only have imagined the worst. Yet they kept searching, perhaps remembering all the “words” they had received concerning Jesus and His future role.

Finally they found Him in the Temple. I wonder where He stayed for those five days and what He ate? Who took care of Him? Perhaps He was eating the food to eat that His eventual disciples knew nothing about (see John 4:32). At any rate, He was conversing with the teachers, asking questions and giving answers.

I recently preached a message entitled, “There Is No Baby Holy Spirit.” God can reveal Himself to a child and that child will know God. A child can pray, or lead someone to the Lord, and when he or she does, the results will be the same as if an adult does it. Don’t underestimate the spirituality of a child or teenager. If they seek God, He will reward them with His presence and revelation. Thus our Sunday School and youth programs should not only be entertainment, but also provide opportunities for spiritual growth and development for young people.

v. 48 – I don’t think Mary spoke to Jesus in a contained, gentle manner. They had been anxiously searching for five days and they finally found their boy who had not been lost, but had willingly chosen to stay behind. I would think that Mary would have wanted to take Him by the ear and drag Him home, as any mother would after such an ordeal.

When the Lord begins to lead our children, we must work to be aware of what He is doing, because He may not lead them or reveal Himself to them as He did to us. Is there a young person you can encourage in their walk with the Lord today? Perhaps you can pray for them, or take them for a coke and talk, or just say a word of encouragement. Even at 12 years of age, the Lord can be moving mightily in their life and you may be amazed, like the teachers were with Jesus, at their questions and answers.

Day Seven

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them. 51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

v. 49 – Translations vary on this verse. One translation says “my Father’s business.” But it seems that the best translation is simply, “I had to be about My Father.” When we pursue our purpose, it is really about being after the Father, for our purpose brings us closer to Him and His heart. Luke reported:

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:1-2).

Notice that the call to Barnabas and Saul was, "Set apart *for me*." The focus of their call was not the work they were to do, but the Lord Himself. Your purpose brings you closer to God and sets you apart for Him. That is why knowing your purpose is so critical.

v. 50 – How often I have not understood what the Lord was saying to me. Often I don't have the context necessary to understand and must, like Mary, treasure what He has said in my heart. The problem, however, is that when you make mental notes, the ink fades so quickly. That is why it is important to write down and maintain what the Lord is saying to you, for a time when you can understand it more fully. My great fear in walking with the Lord is the rebuke found in Psalm 50: "You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you" (Psalm 50:17).

I have been guilty of receiving a word and then walking away from it, so to speak, leaving it behind as I go. I need to learn how to carry those precious words with me, so that at some point I can understand.

v. 51 – Notice how they went "down" to Nazareth, even though Nazareth is north of Jerusalem. A Jew always "went down" from Jerusalem, no matter where they were heading, for the Holy City was the pinnacle of Jewish spiritual life. Since Luke wasn't a Jew, I think this represented accurate reporting on his part and causes me to trust everything he reported (not that I need any help in trusting his word, for it is the inspired word of God, but I thought that was an interesting tidbit).

Mary became the depository, so to speak, for the promises of God concerning her child. She is the only one who could pass these things on to us. That is why it is my opinion that her purpose was not to birth to Jesus, but to remember and have faith for all the promises that God made concerning Jesus' life and purpose. If her purpose was to give birth, then her purpose was over as soon as the baby was born. But a woman's purpose goes well beyond giving birth to offspring, and her purpose is usually *not* to raise them, although that will consume much of her time for the first years of her children's lives. If you are a married woman or a mother and are reading this, do you know what your purpose is? Can you describe it apart from your family?

v. 52 – We hear of no other unusual occurrences in Jesus' adolescence. He went home and maintained a low profile. All the while, however, he was growing in wisdom, favor and stature. There was nothing spectacular what would set Jesus apart, except for the revelation from the Father of who Jesus was. To some, He was an ordinary Jewish man, son of Mary and brother of his siblings. But to others, He was the Son of God! But that knowledge did not come from flesh and blood, as Jesus told Peter in Matthew:

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17-18).

I have often taught that God doesn't promote potential or giftedness; He promotes and uses faithfulness. And Jesus was faithful as a son, carpenter and Jew. Don't despair today that you aren't as gifted as the next person. Be faithful! Grow in stature with other people as you be the best you can be at what you do. Maintain your integrity and trust God. He will use you according to the gifts and purpose He has given you if you are faithful.