

“The Revealer of Our Hearts”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 12/8/19

Text: Luke 2:25-35, at FBC of Newport, NH

*//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 on him. 26 It had been **revealed** to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 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:*

*29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.*

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

*32 a light for **revelation** to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”*

*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.”//*

—Luke 2:25-35 (NIV)

Simeon gets but one, little Christmas. And that is enough for him. This righteous, devout, man of God has waited a long lifetime to see the coming of “the Lord’s Messiah.” And when Christ comes to him, it is in the form of a 40 *day*-old baby named Jesus. Simeon sees him and is overjoyed and prophesies over Jesus. He also blesses the parents, Mary and Joseph. Then he prophesies again, this time to Mary, about the destiny of the child, his purpose, and the unique pain that will pierce Mary because of him.

This is the first Advent, the first coming of Christ (especially to Simeon), and this brief encounter here with Simeon is already revealing a lot about this baby, about Mary & Joseph and about Simeon himself. For just as the second coming of Christ is called The Revelation, the first coming of Christ is very much a Revelation as well. In this passage alone the word “revelation,” in one form or another, is used three times. First in reference to the Holy Spirit revealing to Simeon that he will not die before seeing the Messiah. Then, in Simeon’s prophesy he speaks of the baby Jesus as being “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of ... Israel.” And then finally, when speaking about the purpose of Christ, Simeon says it is “...so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed...”.

It is this last word that I am most interested in today.

What does it mean that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed by Jesus Christ? Surely it means a lot of things to a lot of different people.

The things that are inside of us, when we encounter Jesus, are no longer a secret known only to us. Or, sometimes, not even known by us ourselves. Jesus can look at a person with the kind of eyes a parent has for his child, both to see what's best and to see right through any attempts to cover up the worst.

This probably explains why he was such a magnet for people whose worst was already on the outside and surprised to find in Jesus someone who loved them, forgave them and called them to a true righteousness from God. The publicans and harlots, tax collectors and smelly fishermen were usually more than comfortable around Jesus.

It might also explain why Jesus was such a lightning rod of controversy with the people who could appear way more righteous than they really were. For Jesus wouldn't play the game of appearances. When he saw evil in the heart, he would call it for what it is. And he would call it out into the open. There it could be forgiven, or it could be fuel for more conflict. And so it was between Jesus and the Pharisees, Sadducees, the rich and powerful and others frequently upset with having the thoughts of their hearts revealed. Rather than seek to repent and remove their sin, they sought to get rid of Jesus, the Savior.

This Christmas, as with every Christmas and every day since the first Christmas, we need to welcome Jesus *and* the revelation that comes with him. To do this, we might as well look no further than to Simeon himself.

1. Simeon's heart was poor, hungry and thirsty for God.

//25 ...Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.//

This reference to "righteous and devout" doesn't mean he was sinless and perfect. If he was he wouldn't be waiting for a Savior. And this description doesn't mean he was necessarily a professional religious person. It's the Bible's equivalent of what we might say of someone who is a "law abiding citizen." But in Simeon's case it wasn't in regard to the laws of men; but of God and even in regard to the Spirit of God's laws.

Jesus captured this in a clarity that shocks our worldly measures of outward religion and self-righteousness when he identified his type of followers as: "Blessed are the poor in spirit..., Blessed are those who mourn..., Blessed are the meek..., Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness...." (Matthew 5:3-6)

If our sense of poverty, our sense of grief, meekness and hunger only come from the world and its values, then there's a very limited blessing to be found in it. But if one's sense of poverty and hunger, etc. come from a recognition of sin and desire to be right with God, then the potential for blessing is as unlimited as God himself.

We don't have to *achieve* hearts such as this through heroic deeds and effort. Just the opposite. We need to examine ourselves and be honest about the corrupt and wicked hearts we already have. When we do that we then have hearts that are at least ready for God's blessing of Christ.

2. Simeon's heart trusted the Spirit of God.

*//25 ...and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been **revealed** to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.//*

It's not all negative. Simeon didn't just confess his sin and then throw up his hands while he waited for God to do something about it. This goes beyond the Law, beyond legalities, rules and formulas in relating to God. This is personal. Simeon had a person to person relationship with God.

But hey, Simeon was an old man. And Jesus was only 40 days old when Simeon finally got to see him. How could he have a personal relationship with God?

Well, why not? Personal relationships with God didn't start with Jesus. Jesus brought such relationships into powerful and even perfect focus, since he was God incarnate in human flesh and blood. But God has been a personal being from the beginning. Adam had a personal relationship with God. Noah had a personal relationship with God. Abraham, Moses, David, Mary, Joseph and Simeon ... they all had relationships with the God who is personal. As opposed to relationships with God as if he were a statue, a machine, or even a tree. They related to God as if he were a person. Because he is.

Three Persons in fact. And in such a relationship there was communication, trust, belief and deepening of understanding between one another. Read Simeon's words of praise to God for the revealing of the baby Jesus to him. Those are words of deep understanding of what God is up to, of what Jesus means to Israel and to the whole world as Savior. I doubt God simply zapped Simeon like a robot or Balaam's donkey to make him say those words without any personal understanding on his part. No. Simeon had a heart that was positively walking and talking with God, even before Jesus had come to the earth.

Why then did Jesus have to come to earth if Simeon and others like him could already have personal relationships with God without Jesus?

Just ask Simeon. He's the first one to say how very much he needs Jesus. Without Jesus all this walking and talking with God would amount to frustration. Any hope that it would lead somewhere would be a dead end. Adam also needed Jesus, as with Abraham, Moses and David. But Simeon got to see him.

People wonder about Native American 'Indians' and their relationships with God prior to their hearing about Christ. People wonder about the Old Testament people outside of Israel. People wonder about a lot of people ... and this is where Simeon's statement to Mary is so important. "...the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed..." The wondering period is over. Now we can know where people's hearts are at. We can't go backwards and sort out everyone in

the past. (Though God can.) But we can go forward and present Jesus to people and see what their thoughts are revealed. Native American, native Chinese, Russian, African, and even people from the wilds of New Hampshire.

Not “baby Jesus” either. But full grown Jesus. Jesus of the Gospel, the Savior of the world. If anyone’s hearts receive and rejoice at this first coming of Jesus, this first Contact between them and God, then it’s one great big Christmas for them.

And this leads me to my last point.

3. Simeon’s heart was satisfied with the smallest presence of God.

*//29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, //*

All Simeon did was see the baby Jesus, forty days old. He didn’t see him as a man preaching and teaching, healing and casting out demons. He didn’t get to see him feed the multitudes and walk on top of the sea of Galilee. He didn’t get to see him enter Jerusalem, confound his critics and face off against the powers of this world as well as the principalities behind it. He didn’t see Jesus die for his sins, forgive those who crucified him. Nor did he see him risen from the grave in complete victory over sin and death.

Simeon didn’t see it with his eyes in all the detail we know today as the Gospel. But he knew who Jesus was, even as a baby. He knew God. And he knew even the tiniest word of God is still God and able to be the Savior of all.

C.S. Lewis made a hugely profound statement in just a few, small words in the midst of one of his most profound sermons, *The Weight of Glory*. In it he says: **“He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only.”**

Simeon knew the truth and spirit of that statement well before it was uttered by C.S. Lewis. He knew it was enough that he had been blessed with seeing even the smallest presence of God there before him in his mother’s arms. And because he knew this, he knew to be more than satisfied. He could live or die at this point. It would make no difference to the satisfaction he found in the face of Jesus.

Do you see this? Do you see Jesus?

Do you have this satisfaction in your heart toward God? If you do not, maybe you need to see the face of Jesus more clearly. Do see that? Do you see it as poverty or as blessing? Or both? Do you hunger for it? Thirst for him? Do you realized he is available to you, even in some small way. And that small way amounts to the whole of God, the revealing of our hearts, and a satisfaction found only in God, in the face of Jesus Christ.