

# 'A Sword Shall Pierce Through Thy Own Soul'

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes that being called by God for a great purpose means facing suffering and opposition, just like Mary and Jesus did.*

**Scripture:** Luke 2:25, Luke 2:34

**Topics:** "Suffering For Christ", "The Calling of the Church"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound calling of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as she learns from Simeon that her son is destined for great things, yet will also bring suffering, symbolized by the sword that will pierce her soul. He draws parallels between Mary's unique role and the Church's calling to manifest Christ in the world, highlighting that both are entrusted with a significant purpose that comes with the reality of suffering and opposition. Sparks reminds the congregation that while they are called to a great honor, they must also be prepared for the challenges that accompany their faith, as the message of Christ is often met with resistance. He encourages believers, especially the youth, to embrace their calling with the understanding that true service to God involves both glory and sacrifice. The sermon culminates in a call to remember Christ's suffering as they partake in communion, reinforcing the idea that the path of faith is not always popular but is deeply significant.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel by Luke, chapter two, verse twenty-five: "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon." And verse thirty-five, "Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." I want to add verse thirty-four to that verse thirty-five, "This Child is set for a sign which is spoken against." "Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

Now turn to the last chapter of the Book of the Acts, chapter twenty-eight, and verse twenty-two, "But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against." "This Child is set for a sign which is spoken against." "Concerning this sect, it is known to us, that everywhere it is spoken against" (ASV).

We do not worship or pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus. We do not ask things from her as though she were God. We do not put her alongside of the Divine Trinity. But we do honor her. We give her respect and honor because of the great service which she rendered unto God. And we find some real help from some of the things which have come to us through her. Some of the things which were said to her by the

angel, by Simeon, by others, have very real value in them for us. Some of these helpful things are in the Word which we have read; in the prophecy of this old man Simeon. And we shall this morning seek to draw from what he said about some of the helpful implications.

Here is a conversation between Simeon and Mary, the mother of Jesus. And it is perfectly clear that Mary was recognizing that something of very great importance to God, was being entrusted to her. This was something of great value to God Himself. Then Simeon said, it was something of great value to the world, "A light to lighten the nations." Then it was something of great value to the Lord's people, Israel, "And the glory of Thy people, Israel." All this was bound up with the little baby now in the arms of Simeon. And Mary realized that she had been chosen by God to serve Him, to serve the nations, and to serve His people in some special way. This little Child was set for a sign; and all peoples would come to recognize what Jesus signified.

So Mary had been the vessel chosen by God for that great purpose - an angel had come from heaven and told her of the great vocation to which she was called. Mary was just a simple country girl, who had with her husband been living in a small house in a far away city of Nazareth. Then a little while after Jesus was born, she came up to the city of Jerusalem, took the Child to the temple and we have this further wonderful thing said by Simeon: "This Child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against." As she listened to these things, no doubt her heart was filled with wonder. What a wonderful thing it is that the Lord has called me to! What a great purpose God has called me to serve. It is something far too big for me. I have no natural qualifications for this. I am only a simple country girl. I am the wife of an ordinary carpenter in a little town, and that town is a very despised one. One man said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And yet the Lord has called such a one as I to serve Him in this great world purpose. Perhaps there was some fear in her heart, but undoubtedly her heart was thrilled when she listened to these things. She would be saying inside herself, "Can it be possible that I have been called to this?" And then as she looked at her little baby in the arms of Simeon, she would say in her heart, "Little Baby, these are great things that are coming through You. These very wonderful words that Simeon is saying. It must be a marvelous Life that is here given to us. God must have some very great things that He is going to do through You." So she listened to these words of Simeon, and astonishment and amazement filled her heart.

While she was listening to those wonderful things, suddenly a cloud came over the whole situation, and already she felt something like a stab at her heart. Because Simeon finished with these words: "And a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Wonderful things, mighty things, precious things, most important things - but a sword. With them all, a sword shall pierce thine own soul.

I expect Mary often wondered about that in the following days. But we know how this prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled. The day came when she saw that Son of hers despised and rejected of men, taken to the judgment hall and accused of the worst sins; and then led to calvary to be crucified. It says that Mary stood by the Cross of Jesus. Yes, she lived to know the meaning of, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul."

Now our word has got to be a very brief one this morning. I have about seven minutes left. But perhaps you already can see the meaning of what we have said. Was Mary called to be the vessel and instrument of this great world purpose of God? Mary was a woman, a simple woman, without any great qualifications, but chosen of God for this great purpose. Do you know that the Church is always spoken of in the

feminine? The Church is always represented as a woman. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." And always, the Church is spoken of as a woman.

But this Church, the bride of Christ, this Church, the wife of the Lamb, is called and chosen for this self-same purpose: That through this Church, this CHRIST of God shall be manifested to the whole world. That through this Vessel, CHRIST may be a blessing to all the nations, and a blessing to all God's people. Mary was not called for a greater purpose than the Church is called for. You and I, who form part of the Church of Christ, are called for this very purpose. Paul says, "We are called according to His purpose," and the purpose is exactly the same as that one spoken of by Simeon to Mary. We are called to be a light to lighten the nations, and a blessing to God's new spiritual Israel. Wonderful things are bound up with the Christ Who is entrusted to His Church. If the little Baby was entrusted to Mary, the great eternal Christ is entrusted to His Church. He is committed to us for this great world purpose. If it was a great honor to Mary, it is an even greater honor to us. If it was a wonderful thing to Mary, it ought to be a more wonderful thing to us. Yes, wonderful things, precious things, glorious things - but a sword.

Anything that is really precious to God will have suffering associated with it. Perhaps the first thoughts of Mary about Jesus were - He is going to be a great public figure whom everybody thinks wonderful things about. What a wonderful Man He is going to be, everybody will think highly of Him. All people will speak well of Him; but she lived to find it just the other way. A sign that shall be spoken against. And these Jewish leaders in the prison of Paul were saying, "This is something that is everywhere spoken against."

We are called to the fellowship of the great purpose of Christ in this world. We are called into the greatest things that ever God has done for this world. Ours is not less an honor and glory than that of Mary. But we are also called into the fellowship of His sufferings. However great this Christ is, and however great the honor entrusted to us in having Him, strangely to say this great preciousness to God will never be popular in this world: there will always be the sword to pierce our souls; there will always be the sign that is spoken against. The Cross of the Lord Jesus is not a popular thing. Man has tried to make it popular, but it is never popular.

So I say to you all this morning, and especially to the younger people here, you are called to a very great purpose. God has called you to a service for Him that is the greatest service in this universe. God has entrusted into your hands His Own wonderful Son. But remember, however wonderful it is, it will never be popular; there will always be suffering attached to it.

In a few minutes, you are coming to the Lord's Table. Is that table the symbol of something popular? No, it is the symbol of the most unpopular thing in this world, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me. As often as ye eat this loaf and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death." When we take these symbols, we are only saying, "We come into the fellowship of His sufferings." To be a blessing in this world, a sword shall pierce thine own soul, a sign that is everywhere spoken against. May we be given the grace to share with Him His sufferings.

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