

Revival ■ The Waiting of Simeon

by Todd Atkinson

This sermon focuses on the story of Simeon in Luke Chapter 2, highlighting his righteousness, devotion, and patient waiting for the consolation of Israel. It emphasizes the importance of waiting on God with expectation, as seen in Simeon's faithfulness to God's promise. The sermon connects Simeon's experience to the concept of sharing in the resurrection life of Jesus, emphasizing that revival is found in the gospel and in being united with Christ's resurrection.

Scripture: Luke 2:25, Psalms 37:9

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Expectation in God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

Well, my thanks to Greg for inviting me to come out and be with you this evening. Delighted to see all the churches in this area represented and coming together for so noble a pursuit. I'd like to turn your attention to the Holy Word of God this evening.

And so please turn in your Bibles to Luke Chapter 2. I want to talk to you this evening about one of my favorite characters in the Bible whose name was Simeon. I think of him this evening as a great revival character. And let's take a reading from Gospel according to Luke Chapter 2, verses 25 and following.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous. And he was devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. May God add this

blessing to this public reading of this holy word.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, my Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen. And this evening begins with the words, now there was a man in Jerusalem.

And his name was Simeon. And the first thing that Luke records about this man is that he was righteous and that he was devout. Righteous meaning he was in right relationship with God.

This is not a man that was going through the actions. He was in right standing with God. He was devout.

He was a man that showed great devotion to God. Heartfelt devotion. And Luke doesn't stop there.

He tells us that Simeon's righteousness and Simeon's devotion took a particular form. Luke tells us that this man was righteous and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel. Two key words in that verse.

Consolation and waiting. Simeon knew that his nation needed consolation. And he was waiting for that consolation.

Which is to say he felt that his nation was grieving. It needed consoling. It needed comforting.

Maybe it's a little bit like our nation at this time. There's some pain in the heart of our nation, isn't there? And here's a holy man, a righteous man, a devout man who his heart felt the pain of his nation. And he was waiting before God in prayer for a day when that pain would be consoled.

He felt the pain that was in the heart of his nation. But Simeon knew that this grieving in the heart of his nation would not last forever. He knew that one day God himself was going to come to his nation to console it.

And so Simeon waited for that day. He waited for the consolation of Israel. He was a righteous man, a devout man waiting for the consolation of his nation.

His righteousness was shown in his willingness to wait. His great devotion was shown in his waiting. In our day, waiting is not seen as something that has any value.

Waiting is thought of as an annoyance. It is thought of as a waste of time. As something that is interfering with our goals.

Getting in our way. Pardon me, I'm getting over a week off. It's seen as something that delays our happiness.

Waiting is seen as something that prevents us from joy, not as something that prepares us for joy. Waiting feels like a denial. It makes us feel like we're brushed aside.

That we don't matter. That something else or someone else must count for more than we do. We hate waiting.

It has no positive connotations for us. And yet I strongly disagree. I think there is something beautiful about waiting.

I think there is something worshipful about waiting. Do you know that what we most love is seen in what we are most willing to wait for? What we wait most eagerly for or we wait most eagerly for, for what we

love most dearly. On many occasions, I've counseled a young man who is in pursuit of a young woman and he's been in too much of a hurry.

And I have said to that young man, send her the message her heart needs to hear. Tell her she is worth waiting for. When we wait on God, we are sending heaven a message.

We are saying, you are worth waiting for. Simeon was a righteous man, a devout man, whose devotion was seen in his waiting. Biblical waiting is different than the kind of waiting we are accustomed to.

Biblical waiting is not resignation. Biblical waiting is not giving up. It is not giving in.

It is not checking out. It is not a last case resort. The thing that we do when nothing else works.

Biblical waiting has got nothing to do with resignation and everything to do with expectation. I say this after many years of waiting. I say this as one for whom waiting has not come naturally.

And so I've wrestled with God over years of waiting and it has caused me to look back to the scripture to think, how does God see waiting when I don't see it at all positively? And here's what I've come up with. Psalms 37 9, those who wait on the Lord shall inherit the land. Acts chapter 2, the greatest outpouring of the spirit of all time, the day of Pentecost, happened after 10 days of waiting.

The birth of the church happened after 10 days of waiting. So what's so deplorable about waiting? What are the things that we'd give birth to if we were involved in holy waiting? What kind of outpourings of the power of God could we see if we engaged in holy waiting? Not resignation, but expectation. In those times of waiting for me, and for me it's been years sometimes, I've asked myself the question, what is biblical waiting likened unto? And I'm convinced that biblical waiting is like children on Christmas Eve waiting for their presents on Christmas morning.

Every year my kids ask me, on Christmas Eve can we open the presents early? And I know and they know that they don't really want to do that. Because what's the fun? The fun is in the waiting. The fun is in watching the Christmas tree grow up.

And seeing items eventually being placed under that tree and the decorations. The fun is in the waiting. The joy is in the waiting.

The expectation is in the waiting because they know me and they know my wife. And we know we love them. And they know that we're pretty good at gifts.

And so what makes Christmas Eve Christmas Eve? It's the waiting. And so I began to take that into my prayer times. To cultivate a childlike heart.

I began to take that into my waiting times and say I'm going to wait on God like my children wait on Christmas Eve. They're so excited they can't even fall asleep. Because they know something good is coming.

And they don't even want it to come too early because it would ruin the expectation, the tension. So I have trained my heart to wait on God like that. Because whatever skill I might have at choosing gifts, I am not the gift giver that he is.

However much my children may know my heart, my heart is nothing compared to his heart. My fathering can't measure up to his fathering. My goodness can't measure up to his goodness.

And so if my children have good reason to wait with expectation, then I have more so. Because I have a much better father than they have. My children wait because they know my heart.

So Simeon waited on God because he knew God's heart. Luke tells us that Simeon's waiting was an inspired waiting. It was a holy waiting.

It was a God-initiated waiting. Simeon waited because it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And so he took that promise to heart.

He locked it away. And every day this old man waited with childlike expectation. Every day Simeon woke up.

He swung those old legs out of bed. And he knelt on the floor and every day Simeon said, Lord, is today the day? And heaven was silent. But silence didn't mean the same thing to Simeon as it means to us.

Silence didn't mean that God wasn't listening. Simeon knew that silence meant something else. It meant, thanks for asking, Simeon.

Nope, today's not the day. But thanks for asking. The next day Simeon would wake up.

Just like he had woken up the day before, he'd swing those old legs out of bed and he'd say, Lord, you promised me I would not die before I see the Lord's Christ. Is today the day? Not today, Simeon. But thanks for asking.

Scripture doesn't tell us Simeon's age. It gives us the idea that he's an old man. He may have been asking this for 40 years.

Every day waking up, swinging those old legs out of bed. And every day he asked with the same sense of expectation that he asked on the first day. Lord, you revealed to me by your Holy Spirit I would not die before I saw the Messiah, the Christ.

With my own eyes. Is today the day? Not today, Simeon. But I love that you keep asking.

Until one day Simeon wakes up, swings those old legs one more time out of bed, and he says, Lord, I've been asking for a lot of years. But I know your character. I know your dependability.

I know the promise you made to me. Is today the day? And this was a day unlike any other day. The word of the Lord came to him.

It says the Spirit moved upon him that day. And that day the Lord said, Simeon, today is the day. Today is the day.

He is in the temple. I have fulfilled my promise to you. Go see him.

Simeon could hardly believe what he heard. He quickly assembled himself and he ran through the streets of ancient Jerusalem. Wondering to himself, today is the day.

Today is the day. The Lord promised me I wouldn't die before I said the word of Christ. He's here today.

He's in the temple. And all of Jerusalem is saying, where's old Simeon going so fast? I promise you Simeon did not die a disappointed man. He didn't die ashamed for believing.

Simeon died a very satisfied old man. Faithful old man. A fulfilled old man.

And he ran down to the temple that day. And the big question is this. What did he expect to see? We had more time we might look into.

What were first century Messianic expectations? What do they think the Messiah would be like? I'll summarize all that study into one sentence. Whatever he expected the Messiah to be like, he did not expect the Messiah to be 21 inches long. And leaking from both ends.

I'll summarize years of scholarship. Whatever he expected, whatever he had in mind, it was not this. He did not expect a baby.

Don't ever forget it. God will always begin things in small ways. Don't ever overlook the small package.

Don't ever overlook small beginnings. Or you will miss a move of God. Right under your eyes.

Simeon round down there expecting the Messiah. Arrived at the temple and said, where is he? How do you miss a Messiah? And that same Holy Spirit that told him in the beginning, you will not die before you've seen the Lord's Christ. That same Spirit prompted him and said, there he is, that baby.

And I do not have the righteousness that Simeon does. I'm not a devout man like he is. Because I would have said, a baby? How disappointing.

How small and insignificant. Because I spent all my Christian life looking for the big. But I did not have the heart and faith of a Simeon.

Because Simeon knew if you take the small and you bless it, he took that baby in his arms, he took that unfazed value, and he held that small gift aloft and he blessed it. Because Simeon knew if you find the big in the small, the small move of God and you bless it, that that Messiah wouldn't remain 21 inches forever. That that Messiah would grow up until he had eyes of blazing fire and feet of burnished brass.

And a voice like the sound of many waters, Revelation chapter 1. He wouldn't have stayed 21 inches. This would be a Messiah who would grow in stature. And die upon a cross.

And be raised from the dead. And give life to others. To all who would believe in him.

How many people were in the temple that day saying, could you shut that baby up? Can't you see we're praying for the Messiah? He did not have eyes to see. I come here today and Greg says, well, not many people as I thought. Oh, I've long forgotten the crowds.

I'm looking for God in the small things that grow up into other things. I've spent enough years meditating on Simeon that maybe in some little ways I might become like him. Show me the 21 inch move of God.

And I will run over and hold it in my arms and bless it. Because I know it will grow. He knew this baby would grow.

Until he would be a full, resurrected, life-giving Messiah. When you think of revival, where do you ground that truth? If your expectation is grounded in any place other than the gospel, you might want to think

again. The early church, the early apostles, you cut them in any place, you know what come out of them? The gospel.

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was just all about the gospel. I would not even use the word revival if I didn't think that it had connections to the gospel.

That it wasn't entailed in God's glorious, eternal gospel for humankind. But I know it is. Because part of the gospel is that we are welcomed into participate in the resurrection of Jesus.

We are called to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but we are called, Romans 6, Colossians 2, Romans 8, we are called to share in the resurrection of Jesus. Revive, to live again. Where do we look for that life? In the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To share in his resurrection. This is our baptismal covenant. I have many people I've heard through the years talk about their Christian life and they say, I don't know, I didn't sign up for this.

I say, yeah you did. You should have read the small print. I say, were you baptized? Yes, then you did sign up for this.

When you were baptized, you made a promise. When you were baptized, you entered into covenant. And the terms of the covenant are this.

I would share in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 6, Colossians 2, etc. Share in, not just even believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

I would actually enter into the death and resurrection of Jesus. So when you go through a hard time, don't say I didn't sign up for this. Yes, you did.

You said I would share in the very death of Jesus. But that's not the whole story. And you would share in his life.

Oh, I wish I had time to tell you more. The Lord took me through a very deep time, a dark night of the soul, where he brought me into his death in a very deep way for 12 years to the day. A kind of Garden of Gethsemane type of experience.

Where I tasted death and sorrow for 12 years. I hesitate to tell you much. I could never glamorize that time.

It was very painful. But I learned about sharing in his death. In the 11th year of that time, he told me this will be 12 years to the day.

Of course I asked, together with the psalmist, how long, oh Lord? He told me it will be 12 years to the day. He said you wanted to see again in your day the days of the original 12 apostles. To see the kind of vibrant faith that they knew.

He told me, I give you 12 years to die for that. On the anniversary of the 12th year to the day, that experience lifted. And as deep as I was taken into the cross, that high I was taken into the resurrection.

And I shared in the resurrection life of Jesus. So these truths are deep in my heart. Where is revival found? In the resurrection.

If you are looking for it in any other place, you will be looking for it amiss. Because we can't look for it as Christians in some place other than Christ. Where that same spirit that raised him from the dead now dwells in us and will crack in our mortal bodies.

Simeon knew this. And he saw this little sign of life. Great resurrections often happen with the smallest of signs.

I wish I had time to take you through the actual resurrection passages themselves. Often the smallest of signs. When the apostles came, they saw a small sign that Jesus was raised.

You know what it was? A folded linen napkin. Jesus wasn't even in the tomb. But they saw a folded linen napkin and they knew.

Their experience of the resurrection started in a small way. And Simeon saw that small sign of life. He took it in his arms.

He just blessed and thanked God for his faithfulness. And that small sign of life grew up to be our great resurrection. My question to you, where are you seeing the small signs of life? Is it enough to change the nation yet? No.

Is it enough to even change our city yet? No. But it's a start. If you look where life is not, you will be discouraged.

If you can train yourself to pray the resurrection of Jesus, visit a church in this area, and you would look for where life is starting to show itself, and you would ask God to even give you the eyes, the discernment to see it, you will have found a recipe for encouragement. Jesus in his earthly ministry didn't go around looking for where God was not. He said, I work where I see my Father working.

He went around looking for where God was working, not where God wasn't. Do you see in your midst the young people? How many people we got here under 23 or 24? 25? Okay, so just a sec. Can I just get you all to stand up? Anybody under 30? Because I can see some of them are doing this, like they're on the borderline.

I won't embarrass you, I promise. I won't embarrass you. Young people in this area don't have a single person under 30.

Lord, I bless you for the young people that you have given this area who love you, who believe in you, and who are signs of great things to come. So let's join me in prayer now. Father, we pray for the church in this region in all of its forms.

We pray for all those who truly know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. All those who have followed you in the waters of baptism and have become yours, have become one with you. Oh, that we might share in your death and share in your life.

And there is a time for both. And let us shy away from neither. Lord Jesus, would you allow the church in this region to share in your resurrection life, to be united with you in your resurrection.

And we will look for the signs of resurrection everywhere we go. Lord, as I came into here and heard the worship, I thought, the Lord is here tonight. This very meeting is a sign.

Here's your people through this region gathered for prayer and unity. This in itself is a sign. And Lord, I pray for your beautiful people here gathered.

I pray that that same spirit, that same Holy Spirit that raised you from the dead would come upon all here present and would raise us from our death, raise us from the death of despair, raise us from the death of discouragement, raise us from the death of disillusionment, that in every way which we feel disconnected from you, the Holy Spirit, you would grant reconnection, that you would strengthen our union with you. And in that union, life would flow. Come, Holy Spirit.

I want you to take a moment now to be like Simeon and for you to ask Jesus that his life would be in you and that the grace of waking be given to you. I've trained myself, my heart over here, is that when I ask the Lord to do something like that, something that I absolutely know is his will. And that's why I only pray gospel prayers.

Things that I know are absolutely in his will. And I know because of the gospel that sharing in his resurrection life is his will. But when I pray that, I know I may not feel any different in the next second or two.

I don't put that kind of artificial pressure on myself. I just pray, and I pray, and I believe, and I wait like my kids. And I watch what the Lord will do in the days and weeks to come.

Until one day I'm walking along and I can feel, whoa, what was that inside of me? My heart just left. My heart hasn't left for years. Whoa.

That's life. There's a pulse there. I tell myself, it's starting.

My resurrection has started. And often the Lord will test my heart. What happens if I do it in other people first? Will you just be like Simeon and bless it? Just bless it.

And so anytime someone comes and says, oh, you should hear the prayer time I had, or this wonderful testimony of their life, I go, there it is. It's starting. It's not me yet, but it's starting.

And I just make sure I bless it and not resent it. All right, so let's go to prayer. Out here we don't just tell people to pray, we pray.

This is full of lots of senior saints here. Lots of people know the Lord better than I do. You don't need me to tell you how to pray.

Pray the gospel. Pray the gospel. The gospel is the power of God.

Don't have more baptism. If you haven't been baptized yet, you better get baptized quick. I mean it.

Acts chapter 2. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit. Maybe you were baptized and no one ever really taught you what it was about. That's what actually happened to me.

It was just kind of a very impromptu baptism. I didn't have a clue what it was about. Years later I learned and thought, oh, wow.

I was given more than I realized. This is a Baptist church. Come here, they'll teach you about baptism.

I guess with a name like that, they'll teach you all about the power of baptism. Where we were made, the scripture says, united with Jesus. We became one, inseparable from him.

There's so many ways in which you could imagine inseparability. But now if you just imagine the Lord holding you so tightly that everything that is in him, it comes into you. When you were married, you became one.

All that you had become the others. And marriage is a picture of Christ and his church. And so Christ, he just holds us so tightly, those he loves, that the life that is in him starts to come into us.

And he shares it with us. Oh, come Lord. It's that embrace that we ask for.

It's that oneness with you that our hearts crave. Oh, Lord. Oh, to be inseparable from you.

Where all that is true of you becomes true of us. Oh, Lord. Where your joy, infectious joy, becomes our joy.

And your peace becomes our peace. And your love fills our hearts. And your life seeps into us.

And we are made alive in you. This is the very heart of our faith. Revival is not something other than Jesus.

It is Jesus. And if it isn't, we should stay clear of it. Revival is sharing in the very life of Jesus.

Hallelujah. Oh, Lord. Without you, our hearts can be dry and thirsty and callous.

But you hold us tight. Resuscitate our hearts with your life. Come Holy Spirit to this end.

And you might allow us, your people, empower us to enter into the very lifeblood of the gospel. The very promises of the gospel. Lord, I thank you for everyone here present.

But particularly tonight, it's those of us that have a few years on us. We pray for our young people. And we bless them.

We pray that the spirit of burning holiness would be upon them. That they would know you in such ways that would so distinguish them from this world. That they would be like burning torches of heaven.

Aflame with the love of Christ. Come Holy Spirit. Bless our young people in this region.

Let them feel our deep value of them. My Lord, thank you for the gospel. The good news.

What good news this is. That we do not have to succumb to a culture of death around us. Because we know the very author of life.

Now may the peace of God guard your hearts and minds. And keep you in the knowledge and the love of God. And of his son.

Jesus Christ our Lord. May the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Be with all of you.

Now and forever more. Amen.

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