

sermon study guide

Sermon Summary (see next page for discussion questions)

A Thrill of Hope: Hope's Promise

December 11/12, 2021

Pastor Ashwin Ramani

Hope is essential for life. When times are tough, all things appear to be gloomy, plans fall through and the future is uncertain, it is hope that keeps us going. Biblical hope is much more than a wish or naïve optimism. It is a confident expectation and certainty of the outcome. All hope has an object and the object of biblical hope is not just a change in circumstances but is rooted in the person of God Himself (Psalm 146:5). The Christmas story is one of hope, and Simeon, one of the characters in the story demonstrates what it means to wait confidently in hope no matter the circumstances.

If the object of our hope is in things like the pandemic ending, the economy improving, our dreams coming true or any other temporary thing, then our hope has been misplaced. Any hope that does not have God as its object leads to disappointment and disillusionment.

Jesus was born into a world which was familiar with disappointment and disillusionment. The people in Israel lived in an environment of chaos and uncertainty which was ruled by the dominant and ruthless Roman empire. For 400 years Israel had no freedom as they were under one oppressive regime after another. It also was a silent period for them without any prophetic voice from God. Almost everyone in Israel was hoping for a change to their circumstances and restrictions to be removed in order for normalcy to return.

Simeon's hope was rooted in something far deeper than an improvement in the circumstances. His hope was rooted in God and His Word. Therefore, he did not seek the blessings of changed circumstances but looked for the comforting presence of God Himself, the One from whom all blessings flow. True comfort is not found in a problem-free life but in a life that overflows with God's presence. Although scripture does not provide much information about Simeon, it is evident that he established regular rhythms to connect with God through habitual prayer, reading the Word and going to the temple. Through these, in some unspecified manner, God had clearly revealed to him that he would see the Messiah face to face before his death (Luke 2:26). As Simeon lived a life of devotion, faithfulness and expectancy of the revealed promise, God's plan unfolded one day when he was moved by the Spirit to go to the temple courts. As only God could arrange, this was the very same day and time that Mary and Joseph were there, amongst the crowds, fulfilling the Old Testament purification requirements forty days after Jesus' birth. Upon seeing Baby Jesus, Simeon takes Him in his arms and in his song (vv. 29-32), recognizes that Jesus is God's plan of salvation, not only for the consolation of Israel in the midst of their current harsh situation but for all the people of the world.

Simeon models the true hope that encounters Jesus in a personal way. Through the coming of Jesus, God has taken care of the eternal problem of sin and restored relationship with him, promising an eternity with no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sickness and no more death. God willingly parted with His most prize possession allowing His Son to endure the shame and agony of the most painful death in order to provide eternal life for us with Him (Romans 8:32). The salvation God has provided in Jesus has taken care of our eternal future and will take care of us in the now. This is hope!

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Discussion Questions

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is something that you are looking forward to with anticipation?
2. If you were asked to draw a picture of what hope is, what would you draw?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Luke 2:25-35

3. Simeon is described as being righteous and devout, having the Holy Spirit upon him and waiting for the consolation of Israel? What do each of these mean and why are they significant?
4. After this event Simeon walked back home but nothing had outwardly changed. What changes had Simeon experienced inwardly?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. What changes might you need to make in your life to establish regular rhythms of connection with God so that He alone is the object of your hope?
6. How do others see your life reflecting hope in God?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Jesus has secured eternal salvation for all who place their faith in Him. The times may be dark, God's promises may seem farfetched, unrighteousness may abound, and the future may seem bleak. The salvation God provided in Jesus has taken care of our eternal future and will take care of us in the now! Spend a few moments now thanking God for these truths.

THE WORD (NIV)

Luke 2:25-35

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."