

Luke 2:21-40

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[0 : 00] Luke 2 verses 22-14 this evening, it's on page 857 and 858.

! I think I learned something that I didn't know before, and that is people learn much more by observing models than they learn in the classroom.

Let me just say that again. People learn much more by observing models than they learn in the classroom. And to be honest, I've got to be dead, because it's pretty obvious, isn't it?

If you've played sport, you will know that you learn far more from models than you do from your dad's coaching, right? Or football, or rugby.

We learn more, don't we, from watching and seeing than we do from what they're saying. I think that's true with eldership, isn't it?

[1 : 18] It's why the characteristics of elders are so explicit. Because you learn primarily from looking at the elders' lives.

It's certainly true in preaching, isn't it? Normally, you can tell who someone's models are in their preaching quite easily by listening to them. There was a time, wasn't it, I think Chris Roberts had stopped using the claw.

But my friends used to mock me, that you're the poor Levy claw, that you can turn the light bulb on off, that I sometimes would be, he's over that now. Because we like our models, aren't we?

We get like the people that we observe. I think that's the teaching of the New Testament. You watch, and you see, and you hear, you observe the model, and you seek to emulate the model.

And I think that we learn far more from observing models than we do from listening. So where can we find models for Christian living? Where can you find a model for living life today as Christian people in the times that we live?

[2 : 28] Well, Luke is writing to his patron, a man who is by the name of Theophilus. Let's just come into chapter 1, verse 1. Let's just get our bearings there, okay? So Luke says, inasmuch as many people have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, what he's saying there is that Jesus is a fulfilment, he is a fulfilment of what has been accomplished among us, what's been fulfilled among us.

And then verse 2, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses, that is, his source, his eyewitness accounts, that's where he got his information from.

And therefore, verse 3, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.

In verse 3 there, Luke gives his, really his research method. I want you to know, Theophilus, that I have investigated everything carefully in order that I can write down an orderly account.

And so what you find in Luke is, things are put next to each other, very, very deliberate. There's a very, very deliberate structure to Luke's gospel. Now let me read to you the fourth verse, literally.

[3 : 52] It should read like this, so that you may know the things which you've been taught. Certainty. So that you may know the things which you've been taught.

Certainty. The last word of verse 4, it's like an emphatic, emphatic, underlined, bold printed word. He wants you to have certainty. He wants Theophilus' patron, above all things, in this orderly account, which is based on eyewitness sources, which has been researched thoroughly.

He wants Theophilus to be certain. Certain of what? Well then Luke gives us, doesn't he, the fullest account in all the gospels of the birth of Jesus Christ. He wants us to be certain about the fact of Jesus coming into the world.

So let's look at the marriage in chapter 1, verse 18. Chapter 1, verse 18. Here is the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. Zechariah sends to the angel, how can I know this?

For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. The angel speaks to Zechariah, and tells him that his aged wife, Elizabeth, is about to give birth.

[5 : 02] And Zechariah, well he's incredible, he's in verse 18. And sure enough, it turns out that Elizabeth is the mother of John the Baptist, and the wife of Zechariah becomes pregnant, and in her sixth month of pregnancy, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, look at verse 31.

Verse 31. And says to Mary, Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. Verse 32.

He will be great, and will be called son of the most high God. Verse 35. And the angel answered here, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the son of God. In the Creed, Sunday by Sunday, we testify that our Lord Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary.

An early Christian named Ignatius said that he was both made, that is of Mary, and he is not made, that is of the Holy Spirit. He is of both, both of Mary, and he is of God.

[6 : 12] And Matthew and Luke recount the Virgin birth, but Matthew and Luke, or Matthew and Mark on the other hand, report that he is not the son of Joseph, but he is the son of Mary. The Bible says before you that he is truly human, born of Mary, but he is truly divine, he is not tainted by sin, he is born of God.

And as such, he can bridge the gap between God and man, because he is truly the God-man. And in verse 38. Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word, and the angel departed from her.

And I want you to notice her song, in verses 52 to 53. Do you see the song of Mary? He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humblest state.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. The birth of this child, who is the son of God, the birth of this child, who is conceived by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is going to be marked by verses 52 and 53, humility.

If you come to chapter 2, you will see that the Lord Jesus is born in Bethlehem. He's born in a stable. And so chapter 2 in verse 10.

[7 : 37] And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. A manger.

The angel comes and announces the birth to shepherds. Shepherds were lowly people. You don't worry too much about shepherds. They were people of no status.

So look at chapter 2 in verse 20. And the shepherds returned to glorify and praise God for all they'd heard and seen as they'd been told them. Another early Christian said, which is one of my favourite quotes, says, without ceasing to be what he eternally was, he became what he eternally was not. Without ceasing to be what he eternally was, he became what he eternally was not. God became flesh. And Luke said, I want you to get certainty about that.

[8 : 49] Now let's follow what happened to Jesus. He is circumcised, can you see that? On verse 22, he is circumcised on the eighth day. And on the 40th day, he is brought for presentation.

Verse 21, he's presented to Jerusalem. The visit is timed by the law. Circumcision on the eighth day, that is the day that vitamin K, the blood-trotting agent, is at its max.

It's a good day for circumcision. And 14 days later, he's presented at the temple. Now there's nothing haphazard here. The timetable has been set down by God's law, and this is no chance encounter.

So when he goes to Jerusalem, verse 25, he meets Simeon. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. It's been revealed to Simeon, you will not die until you see the Messiah.

[9 : 58] So he has a conviction, although he's getting on, he would not die until he'd seen the Christ of God. And then he sees in verse 29, and he says, Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation. That you are prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to your people Israel. Well, he's seen the Lord Christ. He's seen Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Forty days old. I've seen it. I've seen him. But I want you to notice that the people were divided in their response to this Lord Jesus.

Look at verse 30 or 4. And Simeon blessed them. And said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this man is appointed for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. He will bring about division. Do you see that?

[11:07] There will be those who follow him. There will be those who follow his Jesus, but there will be those who will not follow him. There will be those who recognize Jesus for who he is, but there will be those who refuse to recognize him.

And a sword, Mary, will pierce your heart. There will be those for whom Christianity, well, they don't give it a second thought. It's unimportant for them. There will be those for whom Christianity is of infinite importance.

And for those whom Christianity is of no importance. As C.S. Lewis said, the only thing that cannot be is moderately important. Now notice a prophet, an old man, a six-week-old, fragile little baby. But there's another prophet that day. And her name is Anna. In verse 36. There's a prophetess, Anna.

And she is the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. And she is very old. Now, when you're young, 23 seems very old, doesn't it?

[12:24] Ali said to me this week, I, she's pointing at me, you are very old. But this lady is very old. She's definitely 84. There's a good argument that she might be 101, but you fall asleep by the time I give it to you.

But she's 84. She was widowed after seven years' marriage. And she's so devoted that she virtually lives at the temple. And she gives thanks to God. And she praises God for the child.

In verse 38. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Now, simply notice what you're seeing in Luke's Gospel.

What have you seen before? What have you seen already tonight? You have seen that the Gospel comes to the humble. Look at how Luke gives prominence to women.

It's unthinkable in his day and age. Elizabeth, Mary, Anna. And it's not as though he neglects the aged, the aged Zechariah, the aged Elizabeth, the aged Simeon, the aged Anna.

[13:31] All of these are involved in the coming of the Christ. This Gospel is going to come, this Christ is going to come, and he's going to solve the greatest problem of humankind. But he will not do it in a way that pays any concession to our pride.

He will do it in a way of humility. And the people who are involved in it, they are women and aged people. Look at verse 39. When they performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

And the child grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favour of God was upon him. Where is my model, where is your model for living the Christian life today? You go to the basic shops in Oxford Street, Westfield, and you're confronted by Santa, and all the array of consumables.

Who is your model? My model is Simeon and Anna. And your model is Simeon and Anna. Simeon and Anna give us a pattern for living the Christian life today.

And I cannot think of anyone in the Bible who is more of a pattern for me today, living the Christian life today in 2016, than Simeon and Anna apart from the Lord Jesus himself. But look at them, he's there. Here is our mentor, here is our pattern, this is the pattern for living, Simeon and Anna.

[14:55] Here they are in Jerusalem, the city of God, living in the shadow of the great temple. The huge religious infrastructure is in its place, isn't it?

The Pharisees and the Sadducees and the teachers of the law. The Sanhedrin. And here are two little people. Two little people.

I don't know whether you've ever been to the Vatican in Rome. I went when I was 12 and at that point the church that we were part of didn't have a building and the only room that we could get was a massive sixth home common room that had iron maiden and death leather posters all over the

walls.

And it was in a place called Come Ready Caillou. It's a great year, isn't it? And then we left there to go on holiday in Rome when you visited the Vatican.

I don't know where there have been in it. It is magnificent. It's like a multinational corporation. It's so impressive. It's like we went to a little corner shop for church.

[16:02] And Simeon and Anna must have been overwhelmed by this. All the respective religious structures in place. All of the glory of the new temple.

The Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin. And here are these two little people and Jesus is born. He is born of wedlock. He is born in a school of Bethlehem. He is born in a stable. He is placed in an animal's feet trough. He is barely six weeks old. He comes to the holy city and he is an old man. Here is an old man who has received a promise.

And here is a woman who is 84 years of age and they are very much in the minority but they are looking for the Christ. The religious hierarchy is in place. The elders are meeting and yet they all seem to be going through the motions without any sense of expectation.

Living without expectation. Well here are a people of expectation living without any expectation. Here is a nation of hope but it is living in hopelessness.

[17:11] He comes to the world but the world does not recognise him and it does not receive him but Simeon does and Anna does. And they are people of hope living with hope surrounded by a people of hope living in hopelessness.

But I apologize that is precisely our situation today. This week we will have Presbytery. I look forward to Presbytery.

I really enjoy it. We will have committee meetings. We will have discussions about possible church plans. Decisions will be made. Candidates for the ministry will be interviewed. People will be nominated for office.

Reports will be received. Budgets approved. Trustees consulted. Votes cast. But I think the danger always for church courts is that there may well be little real expectation of the coming of Christ. People with hope living as if there is no hope. If they were here today they would be a little bit quaint oddities Anna and Simeon.

[18:21] Old people barely holding on to life. kind of people no one really wants turning up to a church plant. You know what I mean? But they are waiting.

They are waiting. And this is the authentic Christian. This is the authentic Christian experience. We are anticipatory people.

We are looking to the future. God has promised me that in life I will have six experiences. six experiences.

Number one I was born. Number two by his grace I was born again. What are the other four to come?

Death resurrection judgment and entering into the new heaven and the new earth. Do you see that? I was born and by his grace I have been reborn.

[19:26] I have been born again. But death, resurrection, judgment and entering into the new heavens and the new earth are all still to come. We have had two and there are four to come. Don't you think we should be like Simeon and Anna?

We live in anticipation with a future focused mindset. Look at chapter 2 verse 25. There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and this man was righteous and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Chapter 2 verse 38. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Listen to the song of Simeon and if you grew up in the church you've been in a prayer book service it comes up every morning and every evening every single evening. Listen to these words. Now let your sermon depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation which you prepared before the face of all people to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to the glory of your people Israel.

And it's a constant reminder isn't it? Cranwell wrote that in the prayer book that Simeon is our model and that Anna is our model. That we are looking for the day it's a weekly reminder that we do not live for the day today but we live for the day which is coming.

[20 : 54] And we allow our hope to spur us on. How are we to live holy and godly lives as we wait for the day? How are we to live? We wait for the blessed hope.

That's how we do it. We say no to ungodliness. We live godly and upright lives as we wait for the blessed hope. So here is Charles Simeon.

Charles Simeon was an Anglican director for 50 years at Cambridge University. His church is opposite King's College Chapel and Simeon laboured there in a remarkable ministry.

He saw young men and women converted and one of those young men was a young man by the name of Henry Martin. And Henry Martin had a wonderful career ahead of him as a linguist but when he came to Christ he turned his back on that and he went to India and Persia and modern day Iran and he began to translate the scriptures in those places.

At the age of 31 Henry Martin went to Turkey and he died. At the age of 31. And Charles Simeon had placed in his drawer room a portrait of Henry Martin.

[22 : 01] And every morning one biographer said Simeon would come past that portrait and stop and he would look into the face of the painted Henry Martin. And he would say be serious.

Be earnest. Don't trifle. I won't trifle. That's living for the day. Be serious. Be earnest.

Don't trifle. I won't trifle. Simeon and Anna were expectant waiters for the day. Oh the first day has come. The first advent and it is great fun and we should enjoy it.

But the second advent is coming. I reread this and you can ask him why Bishop Frank Ratief.

Bishop Frank Ratief was evangelical minister in South Africa and in 1993 four men broke into his church in the evening service.

They took automatic weapons and they killed 11 members of his congregation. There were 58 people wounded as a result of that break-in. Frank Ratief said this.

[23 : 07] As a result of that I formulated my five minute rule. And my five minute rule is this.

Whatever is causing the anxiety and worry right now, imagine I was to die and go to heaven in five minutes.

Or the Lord Jesus was to come again in five minutes. Now how does the issue look in the light of my five minute rule? Till my death or the coming Lord Jesus? And Frank Ratief says that he formulated the five minute rule not to live for now, but to live in the light of the imminence of eternity. And that's how Samir and Anna lived. They had a promise. Anna was looking every day, 84 years of age, but she did not lose that sense of expectation.

What about you? Will you live today and tomorrow by the five minute rule? He is coming and it could be at any moment. And how does that which causes so much anxiety look in the light of his return?

Simeon and Anna are examples, are models, are pattern, are mentors. Be serious, be earnest, don't trifle.

[24 : 30] let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.