

Luke 2:22

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[0 : 00] And if you've got a Bible, turn with me to the Gospel of Luke. And I want us to really walk through the early chapters of Luke and get to Simeon and Anna tonight.

You've got to choose by this page 856. And lastly the theme was naming and tonight the theme is waiting. I mean you can call me a little bit dense if you like. I've been a minister for a long time and a teacher of the Bible for a longer time than that.

And what I've begun to learn is that people learn more, don't they, from observing others and observing models than they do from my sermons.

Where did I learn to do ministry? Well from models actually, from people I saw doing it. We know that in life, don't we, those of us who've played sport.

And you've had the kind of laborious explanation of some skill in sport. And you understand that you can't really work out what the guy is doing. And then he says, oh it's just like dot dot dot who plays the game.

[1 : 13] And then you can see it, you see the model. And so you learn more from observing models than you do in the classroom. That's been my experience.

And I'm sure it's yours. It happens particularly in preaching, isn't it? People can go to courses on preaching and countless books. But you can normally tell who has been their minister. People used to say what Christchurch does.

They don't say it anymore. He used to do the kind of Levy claw. And his hand would go like that. And because he'd sat and listened to me for years, he was kind of more influenced by hearing me than by books.

Thankfully, that has changed, hasn't it? Don't we hear you say amen? But we're more influenced by models than listening to theories. And so where can we find a model for living life today as Christian people?

In the times we live. But I want to show you two models. I'm sorry. So let's look at Luke 1 verse 1. Here is Luke and he is writing for his patron, a man named Theophilus.

[2 : 15] And he says, let me read to you from Luke chapter 1 and verse 1. He says, inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.

And so just see that. Many people had written about the Lord Jesus. What has happened in the Lord Jesus is a fulfilment. Has been fulfilled, has been accomplished amongst us.

Verse 2. Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered to us. So can you see Luke's source is there in verse 2.

It is an eyewitness account. 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. So he gives us his research method. He says, I want you to know that I've investigated everything carefully in order that I could write down for you and order the account.

[3 : 18] So when you read Luke's gospel, you will see that there's order in it. It's not random. Now look at the fourth verse. And let me read it to you in the order that he wrote it in the original language.

He writes this. So that you, so that in order, sorry, let me read it to you in the order that he wrote it. So you may know the things which you've been taught certainty.

That's what it is literally. So you may know the things which you've been taught certainty. And the last word in verse 4 should be certainty.

That's what he wants Theophilus, his patron, the person who is funding him, about all things to know in this orderly account. That's based on eyewitnesses and thoroughgoing research.

Luke wants Theophilus and so he wants you to be certain. Are you certain of what? What does Luke want you to be certain of tonight? Well he then proceeds, certainly, to give you the fullest account, the fullest story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 30] He wants him to be certain of the facts of Jesus coming into the world. So let's take up the narrative in chapter 1 and verse 18. Chapter 1 and verse 18.

Here is the kind of coming of John the Baptist. The forerunner of Jesus. And the angel says to Zechariah, his dad, Zechariah said to the angel, How shall I know this?

For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. The angel said that he's going to have a child, Zechariah. And sure enough, Elizabeth, the mother, the wife of Zechariah, she becomes pregnant.

In her sixth month of pregnancy, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, doesn't he? In verse 31. And he says to her, Mary, behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will give him the name Jesus.

And Mary says, Well how can this be? Because I am a virgin. Verse 35. The angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

[5 : 42] Therefore the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And so we said this morning in the Apostles' Creed, that we believe that our Lord Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary.

An early Christian leader called Ignatius, said that Jesus, he is both made, that is, he is of Mary, and he is not made, that is, he is of the Holy Spirit.

He is both of Mary, and of God. Matthew and Luke, and report fully the birth of Jesus. Matthew and Luke, however, report that he is not the son of Joseph, but he is the son of Mary.

And so the Bible says before us, that the Lord Jesus is truly human. He is born of Mary, but he is truly divine, so he is not tainted by sin. He is born of God, so that he can bridge the gap between humanity, human beings, and God, between God and man, because he is truly God.

Elephant verse 38. Mary says, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

[7 : 02] And the angel departed her. I want you to notice her song, just go over a little bit, in chapter 1, verses 52 and 53. She praises God, and she says, He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and God has exalted those of humble estate, those who are poor, those who are humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things, the rich he sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy. He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever.

So, the birth of this child, who is the Son of God, the birth of this child, who is conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, well, his account is marked by humility.

If you come to chapter 2, you'll see that the Lord Jesus is born in a stable. Look at chapter 2, verse 10. chapter 2, and the angel said to him, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, that it's going to be for all people.

It's going to be for all people. Mary praises God, because this coming of the Lord Jesus will be marked by humility.

[8 : 25] And then the angel comes, doesn't he, and he announces the birth to the shepherds. Shepherds were, what? Lowly people. Humble people. They were not people of status.

The angel says, let me read this again, and the angel said to him, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, that it will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

Then go to chapter 2, verse 20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all they'd heard and seen, as it had been told them. So another Christian, early Christian, Augustine said, I've read this to you many times, 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 that is what Luke, wants you to have certainty about.

Let's follow what happened to Jesus. Verse 21, on the eighth day, he is circumcised. And then verse 22, on the fortieth day, he is brought for presentation, to Jerusalem.

[9 : 42] The visit, is timed by the law. So first of all, circumcision, eight days, that is supposedly the day, that vitamin K, the blood clotting agent, is at its maximum.

It's a great day for circumcision. And so 40 days later, he's presented at the temple. There's nothing haphazard, in verses 21 and 22. It is following God's law.

There's no chance encounter. And so when he goes up to Jerusalem, verse 25, he meets Simeon. Verse 25, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon.

And this man was righteous and devout, and he was waiting, for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Because it had been revealed to him, by the Holy Spirit, that he would not see death, before he saw, the Lord Christ.

Simeon had a conviction, but though he was getting on in years, he would not die, until he'd seen the Christ, the Messiah, God's King, God's anointed one. And he sees him, and so in verse 29, he says, Lord, now you are letting your servant, depart in peace, according to your word.

[10:55] For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you prepared, in the presence of all peoples, a light for the Gentiles, and for the glory, to your people, Israel. Son of Mary, Son of God, the second person, of the Trinity, 40 days old, and Simeon says, I've seen it.

I've seen salvation. I've seen him. But I want you to notice, that people were divided, in response to this Lord Jesus. So again, look at verse 34. And Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, his mum, behold, this child is appointed, for the fall, and rising of many in Israel.

And for a sign, that is opposed. And a sword will pierce, through your own soul, also. Well, because you will see, his suffering.

Do you see, what Simeon is saying, about Jesus, he will bring about division. There will be those, who follow him. There will be those, who recognize him. But there will be those, who don't recognize him. And a sword, will pierce your heart.

There will be, for those, from Christianity, they don't give it, a second thought. They think it's unimportant. And then there will be, those, from Christianity, is of infinite importance. The only thing, as C.S. Lewis said, it cannot be, is moderately important.

[12:21] And so notice, a prophet, an old man, a five week old baby, who's very fragile. So there's another prophet, that day, and her name is Anna, verse 36.

And she is the daughter, of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, and she is very old. I know that, when you're, when you're, when you're young, 23 teens old, doesn't it?

This lady, is very old though. We noticed in me, it says that she is 84. She was widowed, after seven years of marriage. And she was devoted.

She virtually lived, at the temple. And she gives thanks to God, and she praises God, for that child. Look at verse 38. And coming up, at that very hour, she began to give thanks, to God, and to speak to him, of all who were waiting, for the redemption, of Jerusalem.

Now I don't know, whether you've, picked that up, as I read it. But one of the things, that I think, I've often missed, in Luke's gospel, is this. The gospel, comes to the humble. Look at how Luke, gives prominence to women.

[13:33] Elizabeth, Mary, Anna. And it's not as if, he neglects the age, is it? The age of Zachariah, the age of Elizabeth, the age of Simeon, the age of Anna.

All of these, are involved, in the coming of Christ. They're not past it. The gospel is going to come, this Christ, is going to come, and he's going to solve, the greatest problem, of humankind, and that is, our arrogant pride.

But he will not, do it, in any way, that pays concession, to our pride. He will do it, in the way, of humility. And the people involved, among them will be, women, and aged people.

Look at verses, 39 and 40. And 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, and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God, was upon him.

Where is my model, for living this week? When I go out shopping, this week, when I go out, for the works drinks, when I'm confronted, by all the kind of, array of consumables, there are.

[14:51] When I go online, and just can't control myself, on Amazon. Where is my model? Who is my model? My model is Simeon. And my model is Anna.

They are a pattern, for living the Christian, life today. And I can't think of anyone, in the Bible, who is more of a pattern, for me living the Christian, life today, than Simeon or Anna. Apart from the Lord Jesus, of course.

Here is our model. Here is our mentor. Here is our pattern, for living. This is my pattern, for living. It is Simeon and Anna. Here they are, in the city of God, in Jerusalem, in the shadow, of the temple.

This huge, religious infrastructure, is in place. All the pomp, of Judaism, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin. And here they are, two little people.

I don't know, if you've ever been, to the Vatican, in Rome. It is an amazing thing. I went when I was, about, I'm ten years old. And, what am I, I'm buying memories, our church, and I'm quite a nasty split.

[15 : 59] And so, at that point, we were meeting, in a sixth form, common room. And, we were in a very big church, but there was, what I remember is, deaf leopard, and Iron Maiden posters, on the wall.

And it was, grotty. It made, TVU Hall, like, palatia, you know. And then we went, to the Vatican. It was incredible. You, you feel so small.

You go to the Vatican, you see this vast, multinational, spiritual corporation, and, we were in a, home common room, in a place called, Camra de Cairo, in South Wales.

It's like we went, to a corner shop. And Simeon and Anna, they must have been, overwhelmed by this. All the religious structure, is in place. But, Jesus is fragile. My God is so weak.

So fragile. He's born out of wedlock. He's born in obscure Bethlehem. He's born in a stable, in the back room of somewhere. He's placed in an animal's, speeding trough.

[17 : 01] And he's barely, six weeks old. And he comes to the, the city. And here's an old man, who's received a promise. And here's a very old woman, about 84 years of age.

And they are very much, in the minority. Because they are looking, and waiting for the Christ. The religious hierarchy, is in place. The elders are meeting.

And yet, they're all going through the motions, without any sense, of expectation. Here is a nation, the nation of Israel, a nation of hope, but it's living in hopelessness.

Here are a people, who, had all the promises of God, a people of expectation, living without any expectation. And he comes to the world, but the world doesn't recognize him. And it doesn't receive him.

But Simeon and Anna, do. Because they are people, of hope, living with hope. Surrounded people, by people with hope, living in hopelessness.

[18 : 04] And I put it to you, that's precisely our situation today. I'm on a prayer's retreat, I'm two weeks. I go, Graham was there, Chris was there, and Paul and Miles was there, and it was a good time, motions were passed.

A debate was held, candidates for the ministry, were interviewed, and approved. People were elected, to office, we had a new moderator, and a new, well, the same clerk.

Reports were received, budgets were approved, trustees were cancelled, plans were made, votes were cast. It's all in place.

I don't want to be, too critical, but I think it would be fair, to say, that there was, little expectation, of the coming of Christ. I say that, on my own contributions, that weekend too.

People, living with hope, well, people with hope, living as if there was no hope. Simeon and Anna, if they were here today, they'd be a little quaint, quaint oddities, oldies, barely holding on to life.

[19 : 13] But they're waiting, waiting. And that is an authentic, that is 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. I've only had two so far. First of all, I was born.

By his grace, I was born again. And so, what are the other four to come? The other four are, death, resurrection, judgment, and entering into the new heavens, and the new earth.

And if you've had the two, and there are still four to come, don't you think we should be like Simeon and Anna? Living, in anticipation, living with a future focused mindset, will it be today?

Chapter 2, verse 25. Now there was an aged man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

[20 : 25] And the Holy Spirit was upon him. Verse 38. Coming up at that very hour, she, Anna, began to give thanks to God. And speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

If you were brought up in an Anglican church, an Anglican church which used the Book of Common Prayer, you would know these words, wouldn't you? The Necdoventus. Let me read to you these words that are repeated every week in the weekly service from the Book of Common Prayer.

Lord, now let your servants depart in peace according to your word. For mine 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.

A constant reminder over generations, every week, that Simeon is our model and Anna is our model. We are looking for the day.

It's a weekly reminder. It's a weekly reminder. Do not live for this day, but live for the day which is coming. And allow our hope of that day to spear us on.

[21 : 36] How are we to live? Holy and godly lives as we wait for the day. How are we to live? Just as we wait for the blessed hope, saying no to ungodliness. Living holy and upright lives.

That is how we are to live. So here is Charles Simeon. Charles Simeon was an Anglican rector in Cambridge, in Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge.

And he was there for 50 years. He still goes to his church's office at King's College in Cambridge. And Charles Simeon exercised the most remarkable ministry for 15 years. He saw many young men and women converted.

And one of those young men, one of the students in Cambridge, was a brilliant linguist 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 to modern day Iran. And he began to translate the scriptures into their language. And at the age of 31, Henry Martin went to Turkey. And he died.

[22 : 37] At the age of 31. Charles Simeon had placed in his drawing room a portrait of Henry Martin, his old curate. Henry Martin said, and Charles Simeon said, every day I would walk past Henry Martin's portrait.

I would stop. And I would look at the face of the painted Henry Martin and he would say to me, 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 expected waiters for the day. And so Advent has come as it with all its fun and with all its joy. And we should be full of joy.

But through it all, the second Advent is coming. Frank Ratif was a minister in St. James's Kenilworth in South Africa.

[23 : 42] And in 1993, four men broke into St. James's Kenilworth in the evening service. They took with them automatic weapons and they killed 11 members of the congregation in Cape Town.

There were 58 people in that church family wounded as a result of that breaking. And Frank Ratif says, as a result of that I formulated my five minute rule. And Frank Ratif's five minute rule, he was the minister of that church, he said, whatever is causing me anxiety and worry right now, well I imagine I was going to die and go to heaven in five minutes.

Or the Lord Jesus was to come again in five minutes. He says, how does that issue look now in the light of my death or Jesus coming again? Frank Ratif said, 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 Simeon and Anna lived. Looking every day, I am a promise. 84 years old but he did not lose that sense of expectation.

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

[25 : 12] Simeon and Anna, our model, our examples, our pattern, our mentors, be serious, be earnest, don't trifle, I won't trifle.

Let's pray.