

My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”
—Luke 2:30-32

Good morning. The title of my message today is, My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation.

These were Simeon’s words. “My eyes have seen your salvation.” What does salvation look like? Have you seen it? Oftentimes when we speak of salvation, we speak of several things, such as what we are saved from. The common answer is sin. We may also speak of salvation in terms of how we can measure others in regards to their salvation. For example, we look at how they live their life after confessing faith in Jesus.

Simeon’s words help us to see the salvation that God has prepared. By his words we know that (1) Salvation was something that can be identified. He was able to say, “My eyes have seen it,” (2) God prepared it in the sight of all nations, that is, it is for visible and applicable for all people. And (3) It gives revelation and glory to his people. This tells us that he is speaking about the way in which God saves people. He said these words when he saw Jesus. He spoke of Jesus as God’s salvation which was prepared in the sight of all nations.

In the passage are shown two people who were waiting and looking forward to this salvation. There is a lot going on in this short passage, but I’d like to focus on how Jesus is revealed as God’s salvation for all nations and how we they were prepared and looking forward to it.

First, look at verses 21-24.

[21] On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

[22] When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord [23] (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), [24] and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

After Jesus was born, Luke doesn’t jump to when Jesus is an adult and begins his ministry. The next story to tells us how Jesus is prepared as a baby. He is prepared according to the law and made subject to it. He circumcised, named, consecrated to the Lord, and his mother went through the purification rites, all as required. These are all important events to consider, especially in light of Simeon’s words that God prepared this salvation in the sight of all nations. These events speak to the importance of the preparation.

About his name, it says that it was given “before he was conceived.” We saw in chapters 1 and 2 so far, that there was much preparation around the birth of Jesus. An angel appeared to Mary, there was a conception by the Holy Spirit, Zechariah and Elizabeth were involved, another baby named John was sent from God, names were given and so on. It was very involved. The name Jesus means “God [Yahweh] saves.” It is, “Your salvation.” It’s in his name.

These things, circumcision, naming, purification, may not seem like a big deal because they are very common, in Jesus' day and today. Many people have names prepared before conception occurs. I think that most baby boys are circumcised for traditional and hygienic purposes. My sister's baby, born several weeks ago, was circumcised without the parents being asked beforehand. The hospital just assumed it was the most hygienic and proper thing to do and did it. Women need time to heal and freshen up after giving birth. But in showing yourself as a Jew, these were a very big deal. We can find that when Paul the apostle made just a short list of things to boast about in regards to his own flesh and righteousness, he mentioned being a Jew and being circumcised on the eighth day. In fact, it was first on the list. He was circumcised, and (!) on the eighth day! If you were to make a list of things about yourself that you could boast about more than others, would you mention your circumcision? Would it be at the top of your list? Consider that you only get once chance to do it on the eighth day as required. It was important in showing himself as a Jew. It was something he could boast about.

Jesus was not concerned about boasting, but in keeping these laws is part of righteousness under the law. It is part of Luke's evidence to support that Jesus is the Messiah as God promised David. to receive David's throne. It is important to show his righteousness from keeping even these laws from birth. Not to say that Jesus, as a baby, decided to do these things or that he told Mary to do it, but that this is how God prepared him and subjected in birth. Before he was grown and could do anything on his own, he is evidenced as and prepared as the Messiah.

Fulfilling these requirements also showed that he was born under law in humility and learn obedience. God's salvation came from Jesus' humility and obedience. He lowered himself to save his people. Jesus is the Son of God. Did he need to be consecrated and subjected like this? It was God's preparation to save his people.

Galatians 4:4-5 say,

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Jesus came to fulfill the requirements, to be the righteous king that pleases God, and to save his people and set them free. Jesus was in a lowly and humbled state. Yet we see God's purpose to bring righteousness for his people.

Fulfilling these requirements also brought him to Simeon and Anna.

Next, let's look at verses 25-30.

[25] 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,

It says that Simeon was “righteous and devout” and that “the Holy Spirit was on him.” It presents him as a reliable witness to Jesus as the Messiah before Jesus had done anything. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would see the Lord’s Messiah. The word “Messiah” means Anointed One. It was used for people appointed for service, such as the kings. David and Saul were referred to as “the Lord’s anointed,” which is also the same as saying, the Lord’s Messiah. He was also waiting for the “consolation of Israel.” The words “consolation of Israel” and “Messiah” show that he was looking ahead to the restored kingdom of Israel. Therefore, he was looking forward to the promised king, the king would be righteous, who would secure the land for the people, who would enable them to serve God, and who would work justice for them. Luke is telling us that Jesus is the king, as promised in the line of David.

Do you think that Simeon saw what he was waiting for? He saw just a baby from a poor family. We know that they are poor because they offered two young doves or pigeons for the consecration, which was the lawful requirement for those who could not afford the year old lamb to be offered as a burnt offering.

When you see a new born baby, about a month old like Jesus was here, you can only guess what’ll happen. Yesterday I saw my sister’s newborn baby boy. He is about a month old, just like Jesus is in this passage. It’s enjoyable to see a new baby. We have no idea what’ll happen with him, how he’ll grow up, and what he’ll do. That’s kind of an exciting thing. But a baby is like a blank page. You don’t know.

Surprisingly, he received the baby Jesus as the Messiah with gladness and praise to God and confidence.

Let’s think about his acceptance of Jesus a little more. What does it show us? When people saw Saul, they welcomed him as the king because he looked tough. He was a head taller than everyone else. He towered over them and came from the tribe of Benjamin, who were known as fierce warriors. He looked like he could really tackle the enemies and keep them safe. When David was anointed as king, he was not welcomed at first because he didn’t look the part. He was young. He was just a shepherd boy. When Samuel, who was sent to anoint the next king, saw David’s older brothers, one by one, he thought to himself, “Surely this is the Lord’s anointed!” But he was wrong and disappointed each time. How about Jesus then who was identified as a baby? He had nothing to show that he could be a Messiah. He was not taller than anyone or stronger than anyone else. Yet we see that he identified Jesus as the Messiah. And in doing so, he was perfectly content and at peace, enough that he was ready to die. He said, “For my eyes have seen your salvation.”

This is surprising! He was not disappointed to see a baby Messiah. He did not ask to see Jesus grow up, to show himself as a strong king, and to see the restoration of the kingdom. Still, he spoke as if those things were done. He saw Jesus not just as a catalyst of salvation, but as the salvation from God. Jesus is the salvation from God. Jesus doesn’t just save his people, he is their salvation. He praised God as the "sovereign Lord." He trusted in God to fully carry out his salvation, just as he had already prepared it and revealed it through the birth of Jesus who was there before Simeon.

Then, Simeon gave more details about this salvation. Look again at verses 30-32.

[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.”

The consolation of Israel and the Lord’s Messiah were prepared for all people. He says, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” Both of these things make up the Lord’s salvation and tells us about Jesus.

First, he is a light for revelation to the Gentiles. The word light infers the darkness that overshadows the Gentiles. They are ignorant of God and the way to be saved. But Jesus is their light.

This tells us that Jesus would reveal who God is to all people for Gentiles refer to everyone who is not a Jew. The Jews knew God through their covenant with him. The rest of the world could know of God through what he did through his people Israel. Jesus came as a light for revelation —revealing God and the way to be saved.

Gentiles were not part of Israel, by definition. They were separate people. But Jesus came to be their light so that they could be saved and join as God’s people. So, Jesus saved those under the law and he also saves those who weren’t under the law because he fulfilled the law for them as well in himself. Gentiles don’t have to become Jews to be saved. Jesus is the light of revelation for the Gentiles.

Here's a good example. Once, Paul the apostle visited Athens, Greece. He saw all kinds of statues dedicated to gods, including one to an “unknown god.” He understood their ignorance of God. So he used their situation to talk about Jesus and give them revelation to God and his salvation.

Acts 17:22-31 tell of this event:

[22] Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

[24] “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. [25] And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

[26] From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. [27] God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

[29] “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. [30] In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. [31] For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

He covered all of human history! History was leading up to one person by which God will judge and save the world. The way Paul spoke of Jesus shows how Jesus was a light of revelation to who God is, who his people are, and his salvation.

Notice that Paul, when he saw how they lived and worshiped, didn't blame or condemn them because of their ignorance. Instead, he considered their situation in view of Jesus and God's preparation of salvation. The way he spoke about human history and their place in it gently and meaningfully wove them into the history of God's work and salvation despite ignorance. He used Jesus to shine the light of revelation on them to who God is, who they are, and how God saves them and all people through Jesus Christ. In this way, Jesus was the light of revelation for them. He connected them to God even though they were ignorant, saying, "As your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'" It opened their hearts.

This helps us to think about how to respond and speak about Jesus to the people around us, especially those in the darkness, who do not know God. Firstly, we shouldn't blame or condemn them. There are all kinds of weird lifestyles and wrong worship, etc. But we shouldn't blame and dismiss people because of their ignorance and darkness, such as post-modernism, a disrespectful cultural, support for gay marriage and rights, etc. Instead, we can understand them and speak to them about Jesus in a way to shine light of revelation on them. Revelation doesn't come through condemnation, but through Jesus who is the light of revelation for Gentiles. Like Paul, we can love and embrace them.

Going through Old Testament studies can be very difficult because the meaning is not always clear. What did you think about going cover through 1 and 2 Samuel? It wasn't easy. But Jesus said that these are the scriptures that testify about me (John 5:39). The reason the learned Pharisees had trouble with Jesus is because they didn't accept the testimony about Jesus from the scriptures. But as it says here, Jesus is the light of revelation. At the very least, we can read and seek to understand how the Scriptures are talking about Jesus. Jesus' words mean that we ought to listen to how the Scriptures testify about him. We should keep that in mind. Thankfully we read from Luke's gospel now which tells us these things directly about Jesus! It's refreshing.

Second, he is the glory of his people Israel. Since the kingdom dissolved, the people of Israel were in a constant state of lacking glory. They didn't recover from losing their kingdoms and lands. They reached the peak with Solomon, and then it went downhill from there. Interestingly, he is the glory of his people. They used to take glory in their treasures, their gold, silver and bronze, their temple, and their land. But over time they lost all of those things. They also broke their covenant with God and the glory of God departed from them as well. But the Messiah came to restore them, to be a lasting king over a kingdom that will never end. He would save them from their broken and disparaged position.

The promise to David was conditional. It was based on David's children (the sons who became the kings) walking with all their heart in obedience to God's commands. Recently, we have been going through 2 Chronicles in Daily Bread. It says that David and Solomon walked before God. Did you notice how long Solomon's son, the third generation from David, walked before God as David and Solomon had done? It was only three years. Then, most of the other kings were evil and didn't walk before God. It looks ahead to that king who obey everything God commands me and who walks before him. It looks ahead to Jesus.

These two things, salvation for Gentiles and Jews, is fulfilled in Jesus. He was satisfied to just see Jesus, even as a baby. It shows his faith in God. We see that he calls God here as "Sovereign Lord." He believed God was going to work his salvation. To see the baby was the same as seeing the grown up Jesus on the cross because he trusted in God who is sovereign to

work out his salvation. He was not anxious. He was not worried about how Jesus would grow up or how he would save. But he was confident that he was looking at God's salvation for all people.

Look at verses 33-35. Simeon continued speaking to them about Jesus.

[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."

The Holy Spirit revealed that many would not just rise, but also fall. It says, "in Israel." Jesus would also be a sign that would be spoken against. Although he is the glory of his people, many would reject him. But it was all happening so that the people's hearts would be revealed, including Mary's.

It tells us that Jesus' kingdom extends to your heart. He sees and judges the hearts of people. It is one reason why people didn't like him because he revealed their hearts. But he did it for their good. This applies to everyone, even to Mary.

I was reminded of 1 Peter 2:6-8.

[6] For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame."

[7] Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

"The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,"

[8] and,

"A stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

Who were the ones who stumbled on Jesus and fell? Who were the ones that spoke against him? Surprisingly, it was those who knew the Scriptures the most, such as the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, and the rulers. They didn't open their hearts to hear the testimony of Jesus. Instead, they wanted Jesus to listen to them. It encourages us to open our hearts so that his salvation can work from there, inside out. But if we close our hearts, still they will be exposed, but will not be touched by his salvation.

Next, let's look at Anna the prophet in verses 36-38.

[36] There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, [37] and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. [38] Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

The description about her tells us that she is a reliable witness of Jesus as the Messiah. She was considered a prophet. She was also devout and prayerful. Like Simeon, she just went up to

Joseph and Mary to say something regarding Jesus. It says she did two things: she gave thanks to God and she began to tell others who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem about Jesus. In this way she also spoke of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised king.

This year, Cari and I will have been married for seven years. She's still expecting a good marriage from me. I told her to look forward to it. I'm trying my best and want to be a better husband. I feel like we're still just starting out. This passage made me wonder, "If I die, will she look forward to another husband? Maybe she would be happier? Or, will she look forward to Jesus more? If so, it is good to die." But I'd rather not die so soon. I want to live a long life.

Remember that Luke is writing to assure people of what they have believed about Jesus. Joseph and Mary were not going around declaring that they have the son of God and new king as their child. But these people came up to them and independently verified who he is. It is recorded to help us know and believe in Jesus more firmly.

We're in a better position than Simeon and Anna. They only saw baby Jesus. They died before they saw his ministry. These people saw the baby Jesus and gave thanks to God and spoke about him to others. But we can know with much more clarity about Jesus and what he's done and is doing and will do.

I learned three things from the passage:

(1) See Jesus as God's salvation: it means to look to Jesus now and look forward to his kingdom and return. Jesus was prepared, humbled and obedient. He is the prepared salvation by the Sovereign Lord. We ought to trust in the sovereign Lord who has prepared Jesus as our salvation as we look to Jesus. We are still working out our salvation and are with others who are doing the same (Philippians 2:12). We can look to Jesus for salvation, rather than ourselves or judging others, trusting in the sovereign Lord. Jesus gives the light of revelation and himself to save us and help us. We should doubt his power to save or be circumstantial.

We can't see Jesus physically as Simeon did. But still we look to him and fix our eyes on him. The author of Hebrews gave a good description of this, in Hebrews 12:1-3:
[1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We do so by trusting in him and looking at his own example of his life. We praise him as the Sovereign Lord who revealed his salvation in Jesus Christ.

This is also important to keep in mind as we look forward to his return. It is surely coming and he will establish his kingdom. We don't need to see Jesus return and establish the kingdom first, but we can trust in the sovereign Lord with what we have seen now of Jesus and his work, and look forward to his return with confidence. When we're looking forward to something, we are prepared for it. Simeon was looking forward and prepared. Anna was looking forward and prepared. They were led by the Holy Spirit.

For example, there was a total lunar eclipse on April 15 of this year. Did you see it? Yes, if you were prepared. Otherwise, you may have wondered what all the “blood moon” talk was about. FYI, the next one is October 8th of this year.

The passage encourages us to pray, to fast, to worship, and to look forward to his kingdom. As Jesus taught us to pray, “Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.”

(2) I learned to give thanks: he is here! His salvation is here now! He is already our redemption and revelation and wisdom and power from God (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

Regarding giving thanks, I was convicted about this two or three years ago, and again reminded of it. Even though one person came to believe in Jesus and had a new life of trying to please and serve Jesus, I did not give thanks and was not happy. I was badgering this person harshly, saying, "What is wrong with you?" But then I had a question, "What is wrong with me? How come even though a person came to believe in Jesus and tries to serve Jesus and please him I am not happy. Why don't I give thanks? Why do I push my way on others rather than let Jesus lead them?" So I gave up on pushing and gave thanks to God. I learned to trust salvation to Jesus.

(3) speak to him with others looking forward to him. It is good to encourage and remind people of the salvation from God in Jesus and be ready for his return. We shouldn't be caught unawares and neither should others.

Thanks be to God for preparing his salvation, Jesus Christ, for us to see and put our faith in.