

Luke 2:27-32
The Blessing of God
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For my last year of high school I commuted to a Community College. Three times a week my brother and I woke up at 7:00am. The commute was about an hour so we left early to get to class by 9:00am. My Dad was gracious enough to get up with us and fix us breakfast. He usually made us eggs and maybe some toast or oatmeal. Before he sent us on our way he often reminded us of something. He prayed for us and reminded us to be a blessing to those around us. He encouraged us to be a blessing to those we came in contact with that day.

Now today I would define blessing as “God showing his favor to his people.” But back then I can’t say I knew exactly what being a blessing meant. I probably assumed that my dad meant I should be nice to strangers. Being nice is certainly one way to bless people, but there’s more to it than that. Being a blessing isn’t just about opening doors or respecting teachers. Being a blessing isn’t just about letting others cut in traffic or at Dunkin Donuts. Being a blessing isn’t just about being gracious to Broncos fans when the Patriots win. Being a blessing is about sharing how God has blessed you and me with his favor. God’s ultimate favor is the peace and salvation he offers us through Jesus. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God’s blessing for us.

This is what our passage is all about today, the peace and salvation of Jesus. A man named Simeon experienced this blessing forty days after Jesus was born. The parents of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, took Jesus to the temple to consecrate him. It was the custom of all Jewish parents to bring their firstborn males to the temple. But when Joseph and Mary arrived in Jerusalem they ran into a man named Simeon. This man was waiting for the “consolation” or “comforter” of Israel. He was waiting for the promised Messiah who would save the people from their sins. And here at last the Holy Spirit has lead him to the temple to meet the Messiah. Here in this moment Simeon is about to bless God and be blessed by God. Let’s read about God’s blessing in Luke 2:27-32. What does Simeon’s blessing teach us about the blessing of God?

We bless a God who first blessed us. (2:27-28)

We bless God by praising him for his blessings. (2:27-28) Joseph and Mary have brought Jesus into the temple courtyard. And at the same time the Holy Spirit has brought Simeon to the temple. God orchestrated the meeting of Joseph, Mary, and Simeon in the temple. Verse 28 says, “[Simeon] took him up in his arms and blessed God...” The man Simeon holds God incarnate, God in the flesh, in his arms. And when he holds this child the first thing he does is praise God. He blesses and praises God for sending the Christ child Jesus. The word used here for “bless” is “eulogeo” (εὐλογέω). “Eulogeo” means “to bless” or “to praise” and sounds like our word for “eulogy.”

Today when we think of an “eulogy” we think of a funeral. We think of “eulogizing” the deceased by remembering their accomplishments. But here Simeon is “eulogizing” a healthy baby boy who has accomplished nothing. He blesses God and therefore the Christ child Jesus who is God in the flesh. He blesses him not because of what he has done, but of what he has come to do. The child Jesus has come to die and accomplish what no one else can. Jesus is that promised “comforter” or “consolation” of Israel. He is the

promised Messiah who will save his people. He has come to save his people from all their sins. And when Simeon sees him he rightly blesses God. We bless God by praising him for his blessings.

But why should we bless God at all? What has God done that is worthy of our praise? We bless a God who first blessed us. (Gen 12:1-3) The Septuagint is the Hebrew Scriptures translated into the Greek. The Old Testament was translated into Greek about 300 years before Christ. So at the time of Jesus the Old Testament was available in both Hebrew and Greek. The same word Simeon uses, “eulogeo,” is also found in the Septuagint in Genesis 12.

In Genesis 12 God promises a man named Abram that he will use him to bless the whole world. Genesis 12:2–3 says, “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will *bless* you and make your name great, so that you will be a *blessing*. 3 I will *bless* those who *bless* you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*.” (ESV) God stays true to his promises and makes Abram the father of a great nation. He renames him Abraham and he becomes the father of the nation of Israel. God said to Abraham “in you all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*.” It is from Abraham’s descendants that we receive Jesus, the promised Messiah. Here at last that promise is coming to fulfillment through the blessed child. Jesus will bless the world by providing a way of salvation and hope. The promise to Abraham was never meant for just him or his race. This promise to Abraham was meant to be a blessing to all nations. (Gal 3:7-9) This is why we praise God—because he made plans long ago to bless us. Through Abraham he first blessed us with a way of salvation. And so now we turn to God in praise and adoration. We bless a God who first blessed us.

Christmas is a super exciting time of year for little kids. One of the first Christmas presents I remember receiving was a bow, arrow, and apron. My dad and mom actually made the gifts that year because we were on a budget. We spent the whole morning shooting a homemade target with our arrows. Another year my parents bought me a metal black and yellow dump truck. I remember racing around the living room pushing my dump truck. I was so excited and so grateful I would thank them repeatedly. I would thank them over and over again too, like I’d never received a gift before. We thank God with joy and thankfulness because of the gift he has given us. We too get to race around shouting about how great our gift of salvation is. And when we get excited about what God has done for us, it brings God praise. He loves seeing us respond in happiness for what he has given to us, his Son. We bless a God who first blessed us.

How is Jesus a part of the blessing of God? How did Simeon see the blessing of God in a baby boy?

God’s blessing is the peace and salvation of Jesus. (2:29-30)

First, God’s blessing is the peace of Jesus. (2:29) Simeon is an old man that is approaching death. God wanted him to see the Messiah but now that task is done. His God-given life goal is complete and now he is going to die. For many of us, when we think about death, we get pretty nervous. Even if we’re Christians, if we’re honest with ourselves, death scares us. But for some reason death doesn’t seem to scare Simeon after he meets a baby. When he holds the baby Jesus in his arms he says that he can now die in peace. Luke 1:29 says, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace...” Simeon knows and experiences a peace that overcomes death. To depart in peace is to leave this world at rest, not in anxiety. I don’t know about you but I want to have this same peace. Like Simeon, when I have fulfilled my earthly tasks, I want to die well. That’s kind of a weird message for the Christmas season, but it’s in the text. God’s blessing is the peace of Jesus and

that peace overcomes death. If you believe in Jesus, you may approach even death in peace. It doesn't matter if you die old or young, you may know rest. You may go into eternity confident in the peace that Jesus offers. First, God's blessing is the peace of Jesus.

Second, God's blessing is the salvation of Jesus. (2:30) Christians like to talk about "salvation" and "getting saved." But the whole idea of "getting saved" is a rather abstract concept. It's abstract like a thought or idea, not concrete like a podium or pew. What does it really mean to know the salvation of God? Notice that Simeon doesn't have our problem. In Luke 2:30 he says he can die in peace, "for my eyes have seen your salvation." This is because salvation is not a "what" but a "who." Salvation is not a "concept" but a "person." Simeon sees this savior with his very eyes. Salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ. The salvation of Jesus is not just an abstract concept. The salvation Jesus offers is his physical life for yours. He doesn't just offer a new start with an invisible scorecard. The salvation Jesus offers is his real life for your real life. This is the blessing of God, it's real, and tangible. It's a whole new life through Christ Jesus. Yes for now we don't get to see Jesus like Simeon. But one day we will behold him with our eyes too. Second, God's blessing is the salvation of Jesus. God's blessing is the peace and salvation of Jesus.

Some of you may know I'm a fan of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For those of you who don't know, Bonhoeffer was a German pastor in World War II. Instead of passively submitting to Hitler he joined a conspiracy to assassinate him. The plan was eventually discovered and Hitler condemned Bonhoeffer to death. The camp doctor was on hand to witness Bonhoeffer execution by hanging. He didn't know who Bonhoeffer was at the time but he remembered the way he died. He remembered the way Bonhoeffer died because he died at peace with God. The doctor described the scene this way, "Through the half-open door in one room of the huts I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."¹ The last line says, "In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God." There is only one way any man or woman can go to their death with this much peace. They must have experienced and know in their hearts the peace and salvation of Jesus. Bonhoeffer's final moments showed he knew the peace and salvation of this Christ child. But have you known and experienced the peace and salvation of this Christ child Jesus? If you haven't, come talk with me or just about anyone in this church after the service. I would love to tell you how you too can know the blessing of God. God's blessing is the peace and salvation of Jesus.

The wonderful news about this blessing is that it's still good today. The blessing is for any and all who believe yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us. (2:31-32)

The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us. (2:31) Simeon says in verse 31 that God has prepared this salvation "in the presence of all peoples." God hasn't put together a secret plan of salvation only a few can know about. You don't have to be part of a secret order or sect to receive spiritual truth. You

¹ Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy by Eric Metaxas (page 532)

don't have to receive some special knowledge or privileged upbringing. God has revealed his plan of salvation through a person anyone may know. This person is Christ Jesus and he was born to save both Jews and Gentiles. God sent his Son to bless all peoples—Israel and all the nations.

First, the peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for the Gentiles. (2:32a) The author of the Gospel, Luke, is writing to a non-Jewish audience known as Gentiles. He includes what Simeon says in his gospel to emphasize Jesus also came for them. The word Simeon uses for "Gentiles" (ethnos) sounds like our word for "ethnicity." Essentially Simeon is saying Jesus is "... a light for revelation to [all ethnicities]." It doesn't matter if you're Hebrew, or Greek, or Roman, or Egyptian. It doesn't matter if you're American, African, Hispanic, French, or Chinese. God has sent his Son to vanquish darkness all around the globe. He has sent his Son to vanquish the darkness in your heart—sin. He is "a light for revelation..." that can turn your night into day. May the good news about him open up your mind and heart. May God's Word so convict you, you can't help but see your own sin. May it so challenge you, you turn to Christ in repentance and faith. May this message really bless you as God intended it to. It is one of peace and salvation in Jesus for all who believe. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us.

Second, the peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for the Jews. (2:32b) Simeon says in verse 32 this salvation is a "glory to your people Israel." The nation of Israel isn't in the darkness in the same sense as everyone else. God has been using his people to reveal his plan of salvation. Isaiah 42:6 says, "...I will give you as a covenant for the people, *a light for the nations*" (ESV) God chose Israel as his covenant people in order to be "a light for the nations." This is why we began with Genesis 12 and God's promise to bless all nations. God's plan of blessing the nations has finally arrived in the baby Jesus. The nation of Israel receives honor and glory because Jesus comes from them. But this Messiah didn't come for just them, but for all peoples. In verse 32 "Gentiles" and "Israel" are parallel to show God's message is for all. No longer is there God's people Israel and a separate nation of believers. All who belong to God are his one people—"the people of God." The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us.

My dad used to tell us to be a blessing before we went to school. He told us to be a blessing as he sent us on our way to college. College is full of pagans, sinners, atheists, and addicts. But you can't stay inside if you want to save sinners. You will have to spend time getting to know them. Being a blessing is risky business. My dad could have fixed us breakfast and told us to bless each other. He could have kept us home and never sent us out into the darkness. But the blessing of God is for all peoples—not just us or those we like. The hazard of sharing Jesus to the world is you have to go out into the world. How will the darkness ever break if we don't take the light of Christ out there? Sharing the blessing of Christ doesn't guarantee our safety. There are times we will slip and fall in the darkness. But Christ has given us his light to pick us up again. God wants the pagans, sinners, atheists, and addicts to know his peace. He wants them to know the peace and salvation of his Son, Jesus. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us.

We are to take the peace and salvation of Jesus to all. Our passage doesn't include a command or an imperative. It doesn't say, "Okay, now go tell the world about this child Jesus." But if we look at Simeon's response we can see what we should do next. Simeon first praises God and then he preaches about Jesus. We are to respond in praise and then take the good news to the lost. This is what we are called to do even though most won't care or listen. Most will not want to hear about the peace and salvation of God. But we still need to share because we don't believe in a universal religion. God is not going to save everyone but

everyone needs the opportunity to believe. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us. We are to take the peace and salvation of Jesus to all.

This may be the last sermon you'll hear this year. Maybe that's a good thing because you're excited to start a new year. But there's a message you need to hear before you start next year. We all need to hear and know just how much God has blessed us. Don't measure this year's blessings by all the new toys you got. Don't measure this year's blessings by the pay raises or new relationships. Measure this year's blessings by the blessing God gave you in Christ Jesus. God gave us peace and he gave us salvation through a baby boy. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us. It's not just a blessing for you or for me, but for all God's people. It's not just a blessing for just the Jews or only the Gentiles, but for us. I pray that you will go into next year knowing this peace and salvation. May you know the peace of God deeper next year than this year. May you know the salvation of God more richly every single day. And may you share this blessing with everyone. The peace and salvation of Jesus is God's blessing for us.

The word "benediction" is another way of saying "blessing." When I give the benediction it's just another way of saying "may God bless you." As you receive this blessing, remember how God first blessed you through Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 1:2 "May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."