

God Has Come

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[0 : 00] And you can turn over to Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2, and a little bit of a longer text today. So two readers, Corey and Kara, come on up, please. Thank you for serving us this morning.

And I think Kara's going first. Is that right? Okay. Kara and then Corey. Luke chapter 2, and we are starting at verse number 21. Luke chapter 2, starting at verse number 21.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. 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. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him, according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

[1 : 49] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, behold, this child 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, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years and having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin and then as a widow until she was 84. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping and fasting and prayer night and day. 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. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

And as the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favor of God was upon him. Father, thank you for your word. We're so grateful to have it. Thank you for the opportunity to think about it carefully this morning as we turn our attention in our time of worship now to sitting under the preaching of your word. Would you please help me as I continue to worship by preaching and serving your people? And would you please guard my heart and my mind from things that would be unhelpful or distracting? And would you please help your people gathered here to listen and to respond well to the things that they are hearing, to listen actively and carefully and to compare the things that they are hearing with scripture to see whether these things are so? Please help us to have our attention turned to our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, would you also send your Holy Spirit and draw those to salvation who have never responded to the preaching of the gospel? We ask that you would do that today for your glory in Jesus' name. Amen. Do you like the game of Monopoly? Some people do, some people don't. What happens when you are playing the game of Monopoly and you don't have enough money to pay the rent for the property that you are on? What do you do? You go bankrupt, right? Maybe you mortgage your properties, maybe you turn in your hotels or your houses and you get your money back for those. I think you can do that. And then you, eventually, as you are losing, eventually you will just have to declare bankruptcy. You do not have enough money to pay your debts. That's in the game of Monopoly. But what about if you can't pay

your debts in real life? You can't just say game over, right? And sort of start putting away all the play money because we're playing with real money in real life. You owe real people real money. And if you can't pay all your debts, then you may declare bankruptcy. And bankruptcy is when you say, I owe much more than I have and I need help and I need time and I need a plan and I need a fresh start. Does that sound pretty close, Ray? That's pretty close. I mean, that's ballpark for this group, right? That's bankruptcy. Now, think about Christianity for a moment.

Wrongly understood, Christianity will lead you to a sense of personal adequacy. God is reduced to my self-help coach.

And I will have this mindset of, if God just gives me a little strength, I can do life on my own. I can do more. I can try harder. I can be better. In other words, God helps those who help themselves.

[6 : 23] This is Christianity wrongly understood that leads to a sense of spiritual adequacy. Now, in contrast to that wrong understanding of Christianity, the gospel of Jesus is for those willing to declare spiritual bankruptcy. For those who are willing to say, I have done more wrong than I could ever make right. I cannot pay for the sins that I have committed in my past and I cannot guarantee better behavior in the future.

The gospel, in other words, the good news of God's salvation for sinners through the obedient life and the atoning death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus, this gospel is for those who will agree with Jesus, which is always a good thing to do, by the way. That's just a freebie. Those who will agree with Jesus when he says, apart from me, you can do nothing. That's who the gospel is for. The gospel is for those who acknowledge their inadequacy and recognize their neediness and admit their helplessness, who will repent of their sinfulness, those who never stop looking to Jesus. Because Jesus is help for those who cannot help themselves. You'll remember that during their visits with the angels, both Joseph and Mary are instructed to name their son Jesus. And Jesus means the Lord is salvation or the Lord saves.

The Lord is salvation or the Lord saves. In other words, the name Jesus makes both a claim and a promise.

It is a claim. The Lord is salvation. And it is also a promise. The Lord saves. This is the name Jesus. I wonder how Joseph and Mary must have stared into the face of their son.

[8 : 59] And wondered. This baby. Our child. Is salvation.

Since Jesus comes to earth as a baby, it's important for us to note that his fulfillment of the law begins with Joseph and Mary's obedience on his behalf.

I thought that was an interesting thought this week. He is dependent on them to do certain things for him in order to fulfill the law.

And they do. To ensure that Jesus is recognized as a descendant of Abraham, they circumcise him on the eighth day. We read about this in verse number 21.

At the end of eight days, when he, Jesus, was circumcised, he was called Jesus. The name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

[10 : 06] And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.

In other words, they needed to offer a sacrifice because Jesus is their firstborn son. What did they offer? A pair of turtle doves, middle of verse 24, or two young pigeons.

It would have been, right? Sweet, sweet, sweet condescension for God to send his son to earth as a king.

That would have been sweet condescension on the part of God. How much sweeter then is the condescension of Jesus to come as a helpless baby, to poor newlyweds living in the notoriously rough Roman outpost called Nazareth.

We know that Joseph and Mary were poor because Luke records for us the offering that they brought to the temple for Jesus, their firstborn.

[11 : 36] Instead of a lamb, they brought a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. You can read about this back in Luke, sorry, Luke, Leviticus chapter 12 and verse number 8.

This is what it says. And if she, the mother, cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtle doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

While they are in the temple, Joseph and Mary encounter a man named Simeon. He is a godly man.

He is filled with the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit has made Simeon a promise. We don't know exactly how this came to be, but this was the promise that the Holy Spirit made to Simeon. You won't die until you have seen the Messiah. What a splendid promise. Verse 25.

[12:39] 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.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

What a beautiful promise. Simeon is righteous, he is devout, and he is patiently waiting for something. Do you see that there in your Bible?

If you're into circling or highlighting, you might circle that word consolation. This is not like a consolation prize.

That would be a wrong understanding of this word. This word consolation is closely connected to the word comfort.

[13:44] He is waiting for the comfort of Israel. Why would a righteous, devout person, filled with the Holy Spirit, be waiting for the comfort of Israel?

And the answer to that is back in Isaiah chapter 40. I wonder if this was one of Simeon's favorite scriptures. Comfort.

Comfort my people, says your God. Or perhaps his favorite was Isaiah 61. Speaking of the Messiah.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.

Notice the last line. To comfort all who mourn. This is the promise that Simeon grabs hold of.

[15:02] That God will comfort his people Israel. And so Simeon is waiting for God to send comfort.

comfort. I imagine Simeon arriving at the temple every day.

And every day, perhaps there is a priest or a Levite who says to him, Simeon, what are you doing today?

What's your day look like today? And Simeon says, I'm waiting for the Messiah. And then the next day, this process repeats day after day after day after day.

Haven't I told you? I'm waiting for the Messiah. The Holy Spirit told me, I'm not going to die until I see the Messiah. Don't you remember? God has promised to comfort his people.

[16:05] I am waiting for the Comforter. To come. Perhaps some tease Simeon, and maybe some begin to make some jokes about this righteous, devout man who just keeps showing up, waiting around for the Messiah.

Who could possibly have that kind of faith? Maybe they roll their eyes at Simeon. But not today.

Verse 27. And he, Simeon, came in the Spirit into the temple, just like every other day.

What are you doing here today, Simeon? I am waiting for the Comforter. And when his parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for him, according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.

You're letting me die. You're letting me rest in peace. Why? Verse 30. For my eyes have seen, what?

[17:28] Your salvation. Who did his eyes see? His eyes saw Jesus. Jesus means, the Lord is salvation.

The Lord saves the claim and the promise. My eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

I wonder if Mary is startled by Simeon's wrinkly hands, reaching out for her newborn son.

Mothers, you probably have experienced that feeling from time to time. I wonder if Joseph gets a little defensive when Simeon's trembling arms lift baby's arms, Jesus.

Perhaps Simeon remembers this ancient prophecy from Malachi chapter three. The Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

[18 : 52] The messenger of the covenant you delight in. See, he is coming, says the Lord of armies.

What faith Simeon has. To hold on to these promises after 400 years, as Mike said last week, of the silent treatment from God, if we can say that respectfully, he's holding on to this promise that the one you seek will come suddenly to his temple.

on this day, Simeon's faith is rewarded. He looks into the face of baby Jesus and he recognizes him as the promised Messiah, God's salvation.

No wonder Joseph and Mary marvel at his words. But notice there is also a sense of foreboding.

Verse 33. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 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 so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

[20 : 39] Do you see this here in the text? Some will encounter Jesus and they will fall. They will trip and they will stumble and they will be offended at him and turn away from him.

Why? The Messiah? A helpless baby? No thanks. No thanks. I'm doing pretty good on my own.

The promised deliverer? Crucified on a cross? That's not for me.

I'm looking for a different type of leader. Some will fall. But some will encounter Jesus and they will acknowledge their inadequacy and they will recognize their neediness and they will admit their helplessness and repent of their sinfulness and these will be raised up because Jesus is help for those who cannot help themselves.

I don't know if Simeon taking up Jesus in his arms looks like this like how we might hold a baby or if it looks more like the lion king Mufasa you know?

[22 : 11] Ah that one right? I think it's the second one but this is just conjecture. I think Simeon is lifting up the still swaddled baby Jesus and looking right in his face the comforter the promised Messiah and as he is drawing this attention to Joseph and Mary and their baby someone else notices a woman named Anna who joins this celebration and Anna is likely around 103 years old that feels really old doesn't it?

and she loves God's house perhaps she lives very near the temple or perhaps right on the temple grounds and Anna is a devoted worshiper fasting and praying night and day look at verse 36 and there was a prophetess Anna the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher I think this is sort of interesting maybe worth noting Asher is considered one of the ten lost tribes after the exile there were ten tribes that never really formalized their identity back in the promised land again and yet here after 400 years is a faithful follower of God who still can track her genealogy back to Asher one of the sons of

Jacob the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher she was advanced in years having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin and then as a widow until she was 84 she did not depart from the temple worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day and coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him of this baby of baby Jesus to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem Anna sees this baby she sees Simeon holding up God's salvation God's promised Messiah the comforter and she gives thanks to God this is what a worshiper does this is exactly what you would expect someone who is worshipping night and day with fasting and prayer this is exactly what you would expect her to do but notice this

Anna is also a prophetess she is not a fortune teller she is not a future predictor she is a truth teller so after seeing Jesus it shouldn't surprise us that Anna the prophetess immediately begins telling others truth about baby Jesus what would she say who does she tell well notice what your bible says she tells those who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem it's very closely connected to what Simeon is waiting for he is waiting for the consolation of Israel the comforter of Israel and she is waiting for the redemption of Israel very closely connected ideas what does she say to those who are waiting for the

Messiah what truths would she tell those who are still clinging after 400 years to God's promises do you see this baby that that baby is the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head that baby is the lion from the tribe of Judah that baby is the prophet greater than Moses that baby that's the root from Jesse's stump this is David's promised descendant the one who will reign forever and ever he is the one Isaiah prophesied who will be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our

iniquities and punished to make peace with God this baby right here is God's salvation
[27 : 22] God's redemption God's comfort for his people friends our needs are so much greater than being bankrupt in real life or in a game of monopoly our needs are so much greater than that we are far more spiritually destitute than we can imagine more helpless than a newborn baby but don't despair child of God don't despair Jesus is help for those who cannot help themselves God sent his son for people like us people who are willing to acknowledge our inadequacy who will recognize our neediness and admit our helplessness and repent of our sinfulness the promised Messiah the wonderful counselor the mighty God the everlasting father the prince of peace the mediator of the new covenant the author and finisher of our faith his name is a claim and a promise Jesus is God's salvation I wonder do you sense your need of him or are you seeking salvation in your best efforts doing more and trying harder and being better attempting to fill your spiritual bank account you will never do it you will never fill that spiritual bank account but you may have God's righteousness by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone is Jesus your savior children is Jesus your savior think of the Jews groaning in bondage think of them languishing in exile in Babylon think of them being oppressed and dominated by Rome they needed comfort that could only be found in God's promises isn't it true that sometimes our circumstances make us groan we suffer injustice and abuse and we grieve we grieve because we feel lonely and neglected and betrayed we also need comfort and we may not find the comfort we are looking for in changed circumstances we may not find the comfort we are looking for in changed circumstances but we will always find comfort in the unchanging promises of God friend are you tempted to seek comfort in the good things that this world offers perhaps you are tempted by experiences or wealth or recognition from your peers or career advancement that you think these things will comfort and minister to the deepest needs of your soul perhaps you are looking to God's gifts to provide comfort that can only be found in the giver and maybe you are tempted to give up on people and to quit truth telling to quit sharing the gospel to turn away from the faith and just to say it's not worth it when you feel these temptations remember Simeon and remember Anna and remember their hopeful expectation year after year and remember their eager anticipation day after day and remember remember their testimony hear the words of your sister Anna the prophetess don't stop believing don't be a shrink backer the Messiah has come Jesus this baby will break the curse and stomp on the serpent's head and triumph over death and pay the price for sin that will satisfy the father it is with sufficient grace that Jesus meets us in our very deepest needs he comes to us in our spiritual bankruptcy in our emotional immaturity in our broken relationships in the sinfulness of our flesh and in the weakness of our bodies
[32 : 54] Jesus comes to us with sufficient grace because he is salvation he is God who has come to comfort his people and the coming one we read in Hebrews 10 will come again we've had one coming one advent and we are those eagerly anticipating the coming one who will come again so keep your eyes on Jesus and as our sister Emily says let's keep running towards him together because Jesus is help for those who cannot help themselves let's pray good father we are grateful for your promise to us that the coming one will come we confess that that feels hard to believe when we groan when we groan under difficult circumstances it's hard to believe when we feel the sinfulness of the flesh inside of us and when we sense the weakness of our bodies and we experience the brokenness in relationship father would you please comfort us by the presence of the

Holy Spirit thank you for giving us this precious gift this another comforter that Jesus speaks about in John 14 we have received the Holy Spirit and he is the promise the guarantee that Jesus the coming one will come please help us to persevere in faith by your grace until then Holy Spirit would you please help us as we take a few moments and prepare to receive the Lord's Supper you know the sinfulness in our hearts you know the places where we are tempted to lie and to deceive and to be angry you know the places we are tempted by pride you know where insecurity has done more harm than good in our hearts this week you know where we have hurt others and caused others pain would you please help us to be sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit as we take a few moments to confess our sin and to receive again your forgiveness Father we love you Lord Jesus we love you blessed Holy Spirit we are so grateful thank you for all that you have done for us we love you and adore you Father Son and Holy Spirit please help us as we continue in our time of worship thank you for the forgiveness of sin that is ours by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus it is in Jesus name that we pray Amen