

Small Group Notes for the Week of January 10, 2021

Luke 2:21-35

²¹ After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²² 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 ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

General Questions:

1. What was memorable that stood out for you in the sermon?
2. What is something new you didn’t know before?
3. Is there a question that the sermon prompted for/in you?
4. How do you feel called to respond to the sermon?

Discussion Questions:

1. What keeps you up at night? What makes you restless these days?
2. Can you relate to Simeon? What promises have you waited for that finally came true? What promises are you still waiting for?
3. Look closely at verses 25-27. What one word (or two words) get repeated 3 times in these couple of verses? What is the significance of this? How does this apply to your life?
4. Look closely at verses 33-35. Simeon says Jesus will be “a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed.” What do you think Simeon means by this? How is this true today? And what did Simeon mean when he says to Mary, “a sword will pierce your own soul too”?

Beyond Questions:

1. Pastor Nate talks about how Simeon had to drop what he was holding so that he could hold Peace in his arms. So much has happened in our nation last week. Name all the emotions and thoughts you have regarding what happened on Capitol Hill. What do you need to drop in order for you to hold peace in your arms? What about our nation? Pray for our nation with your small group and throughout the week.
2. Simeon blesses Mary and Joseph in verse 34. Parents definitely need to be blessed. Which parents do you know who need to be blessed/encouraged this week?
3. Pastor Nate says, "Grace was around the corner. It was around the corner for the Holy Family. It is around the corner for us in these in-between times...God's grace is in control. It is just around the corner, and it is enough for Simeon, for me and for you. It is enough for us to be right here in this time and still rest." What does it mean for you to let go and let grace to be in control in your life?

Here's a wonderful prayer Pastor Marjorie wrote for our prayer vigil last week:

Prayers of Intercession

From the scriptures, God speaks to us today to say: If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, then will I hear from heaven and heal their land. In that assurance, let us turn to God in prayer.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget us forever?

As our country stands so divided today, we pray for ourselves,

for we are stunned and shocked to see the shadow side of our nation exposed:

to see fully revealed the extent to which anger and a desire for power will drive us.

We feel deeply wounded from this violence – physically, emotionally, spiritually –

and we cannot deny as a people that we are engaged in an arduous struggle for the soul of our nation, for healing for a shattered world, for hope in the midst of despair, for justice and peace to be restored.

Yet you reach out to us with a gentle reminder of who you are.

You pull us out of paralyzing fear, out of an endless wheel of anger,

out of ourselves, breathing hope and life into our ragged souls.

Even in this time of uncertainty as history dangles at a precipice,

you remind us that you are still God and we are still your beloved.

And so we cry out to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. We pray to the Lord.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

For this country, this exhausted and fragile country, this wondrous and beautiful country, we pray.

We pray for all its peoples, the ones you have so lovingly and hopefully created.

For all who feel unheard, discarded, forgotten or dismissed;

For all who feel disenfranchised or hopeless; for those who hunger, physically and spiritually;

For those who have been ravaged by a relentless pandemic;

For all we know and love and for those who remain strange and stranger to us;

send your spirit of openness and truth, your spirit of hope and reconciliation to move among us and make us whole.

We pray for a peace that goes beyond the lack of violence;

we dare to pray for a peace that is borne out of love, compassion, understanding and respect for all.

We pray to the Lord.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

We pray for all our elected officials, for those to whom we have entrusted our government.

Help them to rule with wisdom and compassion.

Grant them understanding and a willingness to heal our divides.

Give them wisdom to know how best to respond,

and courage to do the right thing, even when it may not be popular.

Guide them to serve in humility and truth, to truly seek liberty and justice for all.

May truth prevail over distortion, wisdom triumph over recklessness,

and harmony and wholeness once again prevail. We pray to the Lord.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer.

We pray for your Church, O Lord. As you have called us to be light and salt in this world,

may your Holy Spirit continue to move and shape, provoke and prompt us into a deeper discipleship.

Fill us with a passion for your peace, and inspire us to work for reconciliation in our neighborhoods,

in our marketplaces, in all the ways you have equipped us and in all the places you send us,

Show us how we can become healers, repairers, peacemakers and justice bringers,

For it is only together that we can be the change that is so desperately needed.

In that spirit of Oneness and of Hope, we join our hearts and minds together in the prayer that Jesus taught

us:

Our Father...

Amen.