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**Nunc Dimittis**

**Luke 2.21-35**

**Series: Songs of the Incarnation**

**December 19, 2021**

**The Village Church at Shell Point**

- I. Bucket List
  - A. Do you have a bucket list?
    1. Special things you want to see or do before you, well, you know, kick the bucket?
  - B. Maybe you've already taken care of your bucket list
    1. After all, we're all closer than we've ever been to our bucket
    2. Maybe you've already checked off all the things you want to do
  - C. But lots of people have a bucket list
    1. Most common things on people's bucket list
      - a. See the Great Pyramid of Giza
      - b. Walk on the Great Wall of China
      - c. Visit the Colosseum in Rome
      - d. See the Taj Mahal
      - e. Visit Stonehenge
      - f. View Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower
      - g. Walk into the Grand Canyon
      - h. Snorkel in the Great Barrier Reef
    2. Those involve travel; sometimes a bucket list involves something you might want to do
      - a. Run a marathon
      - b. Bungee jump off a bridge
      - c. Watch a major league baseball game in every major league stadium
  - D. Whatever it is, there is something about the awareness of us humans about the world around us that we have a desire to see and experience some of the more unique features of our incredible world
    1. And some of those things strike us as so exceptional that if we were to experience them we might say, "Now I've seen everything I need to see before I leave this planet"
    2. It's your bucket list
  - E. Simeon had just one item on his bucket list
    1. He just needed to see the Messiah
    2. **Luke 2:25-26** (NASB95) —
      - a. 25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

- b. 26 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.
- 3. That's it – the Christ, the Messiah
  - a. Once he saw the Christ, that was all he needed
  - b. Didn't need to see the Great Pyramid
  - c. Didn't have to walk on the Great Wall of China
  - d. Didn't need to visit every major league baseball park in America
  - e. Just the Messiah
- 4. That was his desire; his quest
  - a. His bucket list
  - b. Before he died

## II. **Named**

- A. Let's put this text in context
  - 1. Jesus' parents had been doing everything Jewish parents in those days were expected to do for their newborns
    - a. Feeding
    - b. Changing
    - c. Rocking
    - d. Playing
    - e. Mary and Joseph certainly were doing all of those things
  - 2. But the most important things that parents are called upon to do for their newborn children are spiritual
    - a. And Mary and Joseph were diligent about taking care of those things
- B. **Luke 2:21** (NASB95) —
  - 1. 21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.
- C. Jewish parents were called upon to circumcise their infants eight days after birth
  - 1. And it was at that time that the baby was named
  - 2. In this case, Mary and Joseph were obediently following the instructions given by the angel Gabriel when he told Mary that the baby she would conceive would be given the name Jesus (**Luke 1.31**)
  - 3. Names of children and their meaning were very significant to the Jewish people in those days
    - a. Jesus! The name itself is extremely significant
    - b. **Jesus = The Lord saves!**
    - c. Matthew records that when the angel of the Lord encountered Joseph with the news of the significance of the child Mary was carrying, he was told, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (**Matthew 1.21**)
  - 4. That's quite an vocation, don't you think?
    - a. Saving His people from their sins?

- b. You and I know that no matter what name we would be given, we can't even save ourselves from our own sins
    - c. Here, this child would save an entire people – all those who would ever believe in Him – from all of their sins!
- D. And it is even more significant that the naming of such a child as this would take place at the time of His circumcision
  - 1. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God gave to Abraham
    - a. Once God promised that through the seed of Abraham all the nations of the world would be blest, He instructed Abraham to be circumcised, and to circumcise all the males in his family
    - b. So the foreskin of every male was cut
    - c. And the children of Abraham were identified as such by the shedding of blood – the blood of the covenant
  - 2. And when Jesus was circumcised, His blood was shed
    - a. The first shedding of the blood of the Savior
    - b. A foreshadowing of the cross
  - 3. John Milton was one who made that connection, that even in His infancy the salvation of His people began to be displayed
    - a. “Alas, how soon our sin
    - b. Sore doth bring
    - c. His Infancy to seize!” (*Upon the Circumcision*)
- E. So in His naming – The Lord Saves! – and in His circumcision, Jesus identifies with His covenant people and is marked as the Savior

### III. **Set Apart**

- A. The second thing that we see is Jesus' presentation at the temple
  - 1. **Luke 2:22–24** (NASB95) —
    - a. 22 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord
    - b. 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD”),
    - c. 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.”
- B. According to the Law of Moses, once a woman gave birth she would have to present herself and her baby for purification
  - 1. There was a period of forty days required
    - a. And then sacrifices were offered to complete the purification
- C. The sacrifices were actually to atone for the sin of the child – children are born sinners!
  - 1. But not this child!
    - a. Jesus was no sinner
    - b. So what to make of the offerings of purification?

2. Well, Jesus, in His identification with His covenant people, was taking upon Himself everyone else's sin
    - a. He would be our sin-bearer
    - b. **2 Corinthians 5:21** (NASB95) — 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
  3. So even in this sacrifice, Jesus – The Lord Saves – is preparing to be our Savior, our atoning sacrifice
- D. In addition, Jesus is presented at the temple to be consecrated, set apart for God
1. **Exodus 13:2** (NASB95) —
    - a. 2 “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.”
    - b. Sanctify – set apart
    - c. So every parent would consecrate, sanctify, set apart the firstborn
  2. Now there was a provision in the Law that parents would continue to raise their own firstborn children as their own
    - a. Provided they offered the appropriate sacrifices to redeem their sons
    - b. So in presenting Jesus for consecration, they were setting Him apart for God's service
    - c. Significant service indeed!
  3. Philip Ryken: In his circumcision, Jesus received the lawful sign of the covenant. In his presentation, Jesus was consecrated to God, as the law required. Then all through the rest of his life, he lived in perfect obedience to the whole will of God. He did this for our salvation. We are saved by Christ's death on the cross, but we are also saved by his life on earth, in which he fulfilled all the righteousness that we owe to God.
- E. So this episode sets the stage for Simeon's bucket list
1. Because it was in the outer court of the temple that Simeon encountered the Messiah
  2. And it set the stage for the song he composed
    - a. Our series this Advent is Songs of the Incarnation
    - b. There are four of them in Luke
    - c. Mary's Song – The Magnificat
    - d. Zacharias' Song – The Benedictus
    - e. The Angels' Song – Gloria in Excelsis Deo
    - f. And now, Simeon's Song
  3. First, let's see how Simeon encountered Messiah Jesus

#### IV. **Encountered**

- A. Simeon's Preparation
1. The first thing we see about this encounter between Simeon and his Messiah is that he was prepared
  2. **Luke 2:25** (NASB95) —

- a. 25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.
- 3. Experiencing one's bucket list always requires preparation
  - a. You don't get to the Great Wall without planning
  - b. You can't get around to every major league ball park without thinking about travel and schedules
  - c. You can't run a marathon without training
- 4. Simeon was spiritually prepared for the encounter, and he put himself in the right place at the right time
- 5. How was he prepared spiritually?
  - a. Well, he did the ordinary things that believers were called upon to do
  - b. He followed the law as best he could
  - c. He obviously studied the scriptures to know of God's saving purposes for His people
  - d. He devoted Himself to the spiritual disciplines – certainly prayer, and likely fasting; attendance upon worship
  - e. And he submitted himself to the influence of the Holy Spirit
  - f. Those are all ordinary things that all believers should do – that we should do – and he did those things
  - g. Let's not overlook the mundane, ordinary spiritual disciplines like Bible study, worship, prayer, fellowship
  - h. Because those ordinary things prepare us for the extraordinary things God may have planned for us
- 6. But how was he prepared practically?
  - a. Well, he put himself in the right place
  - b. Sooner or later, the One who would be the consolation of Israel would be born
  - c. And then what would happen?
  - d. Well, his parents would bring him to the temple for consecration
  - e. You can imagine this old man looking at every set of parents walking through the court of the temple with a newborn
  - f. Asking himself, "Is this the One?" "Is this the One?"
  - g. Who knows how many babies he observed before the Spirit of God said to him, "This one, Simeon! This One is Messiah!"

B. **Simeon's Revelation**

- 1. And then, of course, none of this would have been possible if it had not been for the Spirit's revelation
  - a. **Luke 2:26** (NASB95) — 26 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.
- 2. Now let's face it, Simeon had an advantage in pursuing his bucket list
  - a. His bucket list was God's bucket list for him

- b. God had revealed to him that he would not die until he had encountered the Messiah
  - 3. That's how he could sustain himself over presumably many years of waiting and watching
  - 4. And by the way, that's really the way all true disciples of Jesus pursue the Christian life
    - a. Discover through the scriptures, spiritually understood, the promises of God
    - b. Then wait and watch for them to be fulfilled
  - 5. So Simeon is perhaps not all that different from us
    - a. The Spirit promised him that he would see the Messiah
    - b. The Scripture promises us eternal life
    - c. And so we wait and watch with Simeon for the promises of God to be fulfilled
- C. So Simeon was prepared for his encounter with Messiah
  - 1. He did the ordinary things any believer should do
  - 2. And he understood the promise God made to him
- D. Are you prepared to meet the Messiah?
  - 1. If that's not an arresting enough question for you, let me put it this way:
    - a. Are you prepared to die?
  - 2. Because that's the real connection with Simeon
    - a. Simeon was not prepared to die until he had met Jesus
    - b. We're only prepared to die when we have truly met Jesus
  - 3. Are you prepared?

## V. **Simeon's Song**

- A. All of this, of course, leads to Simeon's song
  - 1. **Luke 2:27–28** (NASB95) —
    - a. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God...
  - 2. We've noted that all the songs of the incarnation in Luke are traditionally known by their Latin titles
  - 3. And that the Latin usually represents the first word or phrase of the song
    - a. Mary's Song – The Magnificat: "My soul Magnifies the Lord"
    - b. Zacharias' Song – The Benedictus: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel"
    - c. The Angels' Song – Gloria in Excelsis Deo: "Glory to God in the Highest"
- B. **His Release**
  - 1. Probably the least familiar title is Simeon's Song: Nunc Dimittis
    - a. Literally means, "Now dismiss"
    - b. **Luke 2:29** (NASB95) — 29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word..."

- c. Or, “Now Lord, You are dismissing Your bond-servant to depart in peace...”
- 2. Finally! The one item on Simeon’s bucket list is complete!
  - a. Here is Messiah! At last!
  - b. After all the waiting
  - c. After all the watching
  - d. Here he is!
  - e. Now I’m ready to die
  - f. And God is releasing me!
- 3. Some of you are perhaps wondering why you’re still here
  - a. What more is left for you to do?
  - b. You thought your bucket list was all checked off
  - c. But here you are!
- 4. Maybe God has something else planned for you
  - a. Some additional task to fulfill – maybe reconciliation with a friend or family member
  - b. Maybe some issue of character that needs to be resolved – God is always chipping away at the marble of our lives until we resemble Jesus
  - c. Maybe someone in your family who needs to be prayed into the kingdom – and you are the designated pray-er
- 5. Who knows what it is – but are you willing, as Simeon was, to wait and watch until all is fulfilled for you to be released?

C. **His Salvation**

- 1. So that’s how Simeon’s song begins
  - a. **Luke 2:29** (NASB95) — 29 “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word...”
  - b. But what is the significance of what he is experiencing in his one bucket list item
- 2. **Luke 2:30** (NASB95) — 30 “For my eyes have seen Your salvation”
- 3. The salvation of God is before him; in fact, in his very arms Simeon cradles his Savior!
- 4. Of course there is much for the Savior to do in order to be his Savior – and ours
  - a. He must grow up into a man
  - b. He must live his life without sin – fully devoted to His loving Father
  - c. Fully devoted – not in the flippant way we usually like to use the term about ourselves
  - d. But fully devoted – so that not a moment of a day passes in which the mind, will, and heart of Jesus are not 100% in accord with the will of God
  - e. And then, He must suffer – something the Jews failed to understand
  - f. He must be rejected by the Jewish religious authorities, turned over to the Romans
  - g. And executed on a cross

- h. At which time He experienced the wrath of Almighty God for all the sins of all those who would ever believe in Him
  - i. And then He must be raised from the dead – conquering sin and death once and for all
  - j. And then ascend into heaven, sitting on the right hand of the Father
  - k. Continuing to live as our Great High Priest, always living to make intercession for us
5. All of those things had yet to be accomplished
    - a. Yet in his arms Simeon held the One – the only One – who would check off every single item on the Divine bucket list
    - b. And so secure the redemption of us all as we trust Jesus alone for our salvation
    - c. And Simeon, with the eyes of faith, could see it!
    - d. “My eyes have seen Your salvation!” he sang!
  6. And sing we should as well – every chance we get
    - a. We should sing with all our hearts
    - b. Hearts as full as Simeon’s – with the recognition that in this baby Jesus is the salvation of God

D. **His Evangel**

1. But Simeon’s song is even more expansive than that
  - a. I call this his evangel – his good news
2. **Luke 2:30–32** (NASB95) —
  - a. 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
  - b. 31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
  - c. 32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.”
3. Simeon was longing for the consolation of Israel
  - a. He got that and more!
  - b. He received the consolation of the whole world
  - c. The consolation of all peoples
  - d. A light of revelation to the Gentiles!
4. The notion that the salvation of God is reserved, not just for Jewish believers, but in fact for believers from all peoples, from all nations
  - a. It’s not really a new concept
  - b. Simeon quotes from his own Bible study
  - c. His Bible, of course, was the OT
5. **Isaiah 42:6** (NASB95) — 6 “... And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations...”
6. **Isaiah 49:6** (NASB95) — 6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
7. **Isaiah 51:4** (NASB95) — 4 “Pay attention to Me, O My people, And give ear to Me, O My nation; For a law will go forth from Me, And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.”



8. This is Simeon's evangel – his good news!
  - a. Salvation is provided in this little child
  - b. The One in Simeon's arms
  - c. For believers – Jew and Gentile alike
9. So that ultimately, around the throne, there will be those from every people, tongue, tribe and nation
10. That's the Song of Simeon
  - a. And that's why he is being released!

## VI. **Simeon's Prophecy**

- A. Of course, the story doesn't quite stop there
  1. Simeon is not immediately translated up to heaven
    - a. He doesn't drop dead on the spot
  2. He has more to say
- B. **Impact**
  1. But first, let's see what impact his song has already had
  2. **Luke 2:33** (NASB95) — 33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.
  3. Dear friend, we sing all the time – every week we sing some of the great hymns of the faith
    - a. And as we sing, we express the great truths of the faith
    - b. We praise God for His goodness, provision, salvation
    - c. We remind ourselves of what it means to be a disciple
    - d. All of those things and more
  4. But let me ask you, once you've sung a hymn or a song, or heard someone else sing a hymn or a song – are you, at least for a moment, amazed at what you've just sung or heard?
    - a. We often enjoy the songs we sing – we should!
    - b. But do our songs leave us amazed? – they should!
  5. But then the story turns a page
    - a. And clouds form on the horizon
    - b. And the sun begins to set on the glory
  6. **Luke 2:34–35** (NASB95) —
    - a. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—
    - b. 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”
- C. **Opposition**
  1. This salvation which Simeon has extolled will not come without trouble, without opposition
  2. We must be careful this Advent and Christmas to not get so caught up in the joy and excitement that we think the salvation is for everyone
    - a. For not everyone will respond in the same way to this Messiah-Jesus

- b. Some will rise
- c. And some will fall
- d. On account of this Savior
- 3. There will be those who respond in faith and obedience to this Jesus
  - a. Both during His earthly ministry
  - b. And throughout history
- 4. But there will always, until Jesus returns, be those who oppose this Jesus
  - a. And in opposing this Jesus, will oppose His followers, His people
- 5. This Jesus is the Servant of the Lord
  - a. But He is the suffering Servant of the Lord
  - b. And His suffering is integral to fulfilling His calling
- 6. The opposition will appear to have succeeded
  - a. They will, in fact, kill Him
- 7. But they will not succeed
  - a. For Jesus conquered death
  - b. He rose from the grave
  - c. The tomb is still empty!
- 8. But the road would not be easy
- 9. And the road for His people would not be easy
  - a. “In the world you have tribulation” ([John 16.33](#))
- 10. The sufferings of Christ are thus shared by His people, the church
  - a. [Colossians 1:24](#) (NASB95) — 24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.
- 11. Yes, the One who brings this glorious salvation must be opposed, must suffer
  - a. But that is all part of God’s purpose
  - b. For Simeon prophesies as much

D. [Heartbreak](#)

- 1. And then, of course, that will lead to heartbreak
  - a. [Luke 2:35](#) (NASB95) — 35 “and a sword will pierce even your own soul...”
- 2. Simeon breaks the tough stuff to Mary here
  - a. There will be trouble
  - b. Excruciating trouble
  - c. Trouble that will tear apart any parent of any child – for no parent likes to watch their child suffer
- 3. But in doing so Simeon is not being mean to these dear parents
  - a. He is not abusing Mary
  - b. No! He is preparing Mary for the most significant moment of all
- 4. She will eventually stand gazing at the foot of the cross
  - a. She will see her son slowly die
  - b. She will experience vicariously His pain
- 5. But her journey to the cross begins right here

- a. Right here in the context of worship
    - b. Right here in the midst of glorious musical expressions of God's salvation
  - 6. Because there is no salvation apart from the cross
- E. **Revelation**
  - 1. But as we've said on numerous occasions, all the suffering – even the suffering that God wills (and He is sovereign over everything!)
    - a. Always has purpose
  - 2. **Luke 2:35** (NASB95) — 35 “and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”
  - 3. “Thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”
  - 4. The suffering of Christ is where the rubber meets the road in the Christian life
    - a. Once you see the suffering of Christ – His death on the cross
    - b. His death for us
    - c. You're either with Him or against Him
    - d. You either exult in God's magnificent redemption
    - e. Or you can't stand a God who would give up His own Son to suffering and death
  - 5. The suffering of Christ will either make you or break you
    - a. How is it for you?
    - b. Are you with Him?
    - c. Or are you against Him?
    - d. Do you love Him for His sacrifice on your behalf?
    - e. Or do you hate God for supposing that you needed such a radical intervention to save you from your sin?
  - 6. The sword that pierced the soul of Mary was the passion of the Christ
    - a. To the end that dispositions of the hearts of all human beings would be made known

## VII. Bottom line

- A. Simeon had one thing on his bucket list
  - 1. One thing that he had to experience before he died
  - 2. That is that he would meet Jesus Christ
    - a. And that in Christ he would see the salvation of God
- B. Whatever your bucket list is – there should be one item on it
  - 1. That we would have an encounter with Jesus
    - a. That we would see Him as our Savior
    - b. That we would see Him with the eyes of faith
    - c. That we would trust Him alone
    - d. Trust Him for giving us the righteousness that we so desperately lack
    - e. Trust Him for paying the penalty for our sin
  - 2. Whether we see the Great Wall or visit every ball park in America
    - a. Don't miss the one thing that matters for all eternity
- C. Simeon was released

1. Simeon could depart in peace
  - a. Only because he had met Jesus
2. Have you met Jesus Christ?