



**Christmas Eve, 2020**  
**Luke 2:25-30**

**Merry Christmas everyone. I'm so glad each of you could be here tonight with us and glad those of you watching online you could join us as well.**

**If you have your Bible or any device with you, turn with me to Luke chapter 2. What you just saw and heard read is from Luke chapter 2:1-20 and it's what we call the Christmas Story.**

**When we think about Christmas, we think about anticipation and excitement. Someone has said that half the fun of Christmas is looking forward to it.**

**Children can't wait for December 25<sup>th</sup> to see what presents they're going to receive. Even most adults anxiously look forward to Christmas Day.**

**e.g. I remember the Christmas when I was 9 years old. All I wanted was this racetrack set that I saw advertised everywhere. It looked so cool and so much fun.**

**For weeks I couldn't wait for Christmas to arrive. Finally, it was Christmas Eve. I had a hard time sleeping that night and I woke up in the middle of the night. Curiosity overwhelmed me, so I got out of bed.**

I walked ever so quietly down the stairs and about halfway down, I could see into the living room where the Christmas tree was.

It was pretty dark, but I could see silhouettes of things in that room that hadn't been there when I went to bed. And that just got me excited even more!

I went back up to bed and somehow got back to sleep. The next morning, we were up early – I'm sure my parents were pretty groggy. I came down the stairs excitedly – this time with the lights on – and there it was.

This big, beautiful racetrack that seemed like it filled the whole living room. IT WAS AWESOME! My dad must have spent hours putting it together. Which is probably why he was asleep in the corner! 😊

It was a dream come true for a 9 year old. As I look back on that Christmas, I'll never forget the excitement I had that year anticipating what Christmas morning might bring.

This evening we're also excitedly anticipating what Christmas might bring, but for a much different reason.

The theme for our Christmas Eve Services is "Advent: The Coming King". Many of you probably participated in advent Christmas traditions when you were growing up.

The word itself means "arrival" or "appearing". Advent Season – the four weeks leading up to Christmas – is the season when we celebrate with anticipation the commemoration of the arrival or appearing of God's Son Jesus, when He was born in Bethlehem as a baby.

**We call this His FIRST advent (arrival or appearing). But Christmas also anticipates Christ's second coming, when He will come back to take His people back to heaven with Him. This is referred to as the Second Advent.**

**Just as the nation of Israel longed for their promised Messiah to come the first time, so today all followers of Christ long for Christ to come again just as He promised and take us to heaven to be with Him forever.**

**One of the traditions in the season of Advent is the lighting of candles representing various aspects of Christ's coming. This tradition also includes lighting a white candle on Christmas Eve, called the "Christ Candle". It's a reminder that Jesus, the Light of the World", has come.**

#### **LIGHT CANDLE IN FRONT OF PULPIT**

**The whole significance of the traditions of the Advent Season are meant to build anticipation and excitement toward Christmas day when we celebrate the Christ of Christmas and His coming to earth to be the Savior of the world.**

**Since Christmas is all about Christ, it is also about worship – worshipping Jesus who loved us and came to earth to die for us so that we could have eternal life.**

**When you read the story of Christ's birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke you see people coming to God and to His Son in worship.**

**His mother Mary worshiped. Her relatives worshiped. Joseph worshiped. The shepherds worshiped. The Magi – wise men from the East – worshiped.**

And tucked into the various details of Jesus' birth in the Bible is a character that we're told very little about, but when He came face-to-face with Jesus, he too worshiped. It's his story that I want us to look at tonight.

We normally stop reading the Christmas story in the Bible at verse 20 in Luke chapter 2, like we saw on the video. But let's continue reading now in this chapter because verses 21-24 provide the context of this special character who worshiped Jesus.

Look in your Bible now, it's also on the screen...

**(Slide)**

*"When the eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus – the name given by the angel before he was conceived. And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (Just as it is written in the law of the Lord. Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord) and to offer a sacrifice.*

Luke 2:21-24a

That's the background information, now, let's meet this obscure man who worshiped Jesus in verses 25-30.

**(Slide)**

*"There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him*

*up in his arms, praised God, and said, 'Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. For my eyes have seen your salvation.'"*

**Luke 2:25-30**

Outside of these few verses we know nothing else about this man called Simeon. But what we are given here tells us a lot about him and in his life, we see an example of someone who truly celebrated Advent.

Simeon is a highlight in the Christmas story because if there's anyone who anticipated and appreciated the arrival of the Son of God and got it right in terms of the celebration of worship it was him.

As we anticipate celebrating the advent of our Lord Jesus this Christmas, let me show you how you can be like Simeon and make the worship of the Lord the focus of your Christmas.

First, you've got to...

**(SLIDE)** 1. Live in right standing with God – Lk. 2:25a (Read)

Simeon was prepared to worship God's Son because He was righteous. What does that mean "righteous"? Well, whenever the Bible says someone was righteous, it means they are justified before God.

It doesn't mean they earned a righteous standing with God by their own efforts because that's impossible. It means that God declared them righteous. God only declares sinners righteous when we trust in Him for the forgiveness of our sins, not in our own good or religious works.

So a righteous person is one whom God considers just, because their sins have been paid for and they have been forgiven by Jesus. The Bible's teaching on the doctrine of justification is simply this...

**(Slide)**

*Justification:*

God eternally declaring every person who believes in him "not guilty", placing them into a right relationship with Himself.

Justification is a legal term meaning that God the righteous judge has acquitted us of the guilt of our sin. When Jesus died for our sins on the cross His sacrifice provided an acquittal for our sins.

So God – the righteous judge – sees the blood of Jesus His righteous Son, and when we place our faith in His Son, we are acquitted of our sin – we are justified – we are declared for all eternity "not guilty".

e.g. I read the story about a man from England who wanted to go touring around Europe. So he loaded his Rolls Royce onto a ferry and took it across the English channel.

While he was driving around Europe his car developed some mechanical problems so he contacted the people at Rolls Royce back in England. They flew a mechanic over to where he was and the guy repaired his car.

Well, he never received the bill and he started getting a little nervous. So when he got back to England he wrote a letter to the Rolls Royce company and asked how much he owed.

**They wrote him back and here's what the letter said, "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with your Rolls Royce."**

**Folks, the Bible says our enemy, the Devil, is the Accuser of the brethren. It's not hard for us to imagine Satan saying to God, "Hey, you can't let him, you can't let her, into heaven. He's a sinner; she's a sinner."**

**And God opens the record books and because you've placed your faith in Jesus, all he sees on your ledger is the blood of His Son Jesus. So he turns to the Devil and says, "I have no record of this person even committing one sin. He's covered by the blood. He's innocent."**

**That's justification! You see, God doesn't just erase our sin off the books. You can see erase marks on paper. No! God wipes our record clean with the blood of His Son.**

**As far as He is concerned all He sees is the blood of Jesus and because of Christ's blood shed on the cross for us, not only are we not guilty, but we've also never BEEN guilty.**

**There is No record that we've ever done anything wrong. That's justification and it takes place at the moment of salvation, when a person exercises their faith in Jesus Christ.**

**Nowhere in the Bible is justification so clearly seen than in Romans 5:1...**

**(SLIDE)**

**"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

**Romans 5:1**

**When you've been declared justified by God, it means you are also at peace with God. And that process of justification begins when you place your faith – not in being religious, not in being good, not in self-improvement – but in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sin.**

**There's absolutely no way you can worship Jesus fully this Christmas unless you've experienced being justified in the sight of God. So let me ask, where do you stand with Jesus tonight?**

**Is He YOUR Savior? Have you placed your faith in Him, asking Him to forgive you of your sin and give you eternal life? The Bible calls this salvation.**

**Are you saved tonight, have you experienced being justified by God and felt the peace that comes from this spiritual work in your heart and life? Do you know the true peace that comes through Jesus? If you don't, you can!**

**Now, that's where it starts. But that's not all we see in the life of Simeon. If we're going to truly worship Jesus fully this Christmas, we also have to...**

**(SLIDE) 2. Live a godly life – Lk. 2:25a (READ)**

**“Devout” means he was godly. He was concerned about the things of God. Now let me carefully clarify here, that unless you've been saved and justified, you can never be godly. You can be moral, but not godly.**

**Living a godly life comes after salvation, and as a result of salvation. In fact, God is the one who enables us to live a godly life through the presence of His Holy Spirit inside us AFTER salvation.**

**Another word for devout or godly is the word “cautious”. Simeon lived a cautious life. What do I mean by that?**

**When you live a godly, devout life, you are cautious in the way you respond to God and to His Word. You don’t want to treat God lightly. You don’t want to live an irresponsible life. You are cautious in seeking to obey God’s Word.**

**You are cautious to be sure that you don’t dishonor God in the way you live. Someone who is godly is doing their best to bring glory to God in the way they live. They’re trying to be a good example to others.**

**The Bible actually has another word that is synonymous for this kind of living. It’s called Sanctification.**

**(Slide)**

***Sanctification:***

**Being set apart from sin, to holy living, for God’s use.**

**To live a sanctified life means you seek to reject sinful living and you’re seeking to live a holy life so God will use you for His purposes. Now there’s actually two parts to Sanctification.**

Sanctification is both positional and it's a process. When you place your faith in Christ at that moment God sanctifies you – he makes you holy in His sight when He forgives you of your sin – that's the positional side of sanctification.

But sanctification is also a process in that God wants you to live a holy life from that point forward – and He helps you do that as you live in submission to Him – and that's a process that each of us experience til the day we die and go to heaven.

There's a verse in the Bible that actually shows us both the position and the process of sanctification.

**SLIDE:**

*“Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever (positional sanctification), those who are being made holy (the process of sanctification).*

**Hebrews 10:14**

Simeon was ready to worship Jesus fully when He came because He was living a sanctified life. He was living a life that was set apart from sin. He was striving to honor God with holy living.

Maybe the reason so many of us miss the real meaning of Christmas is because we aren't living the way God wants us to live. It's kind of hard to worship Jesus at Christmas when we're still hungover from the company Christmas party the night before isn't it?

It's kind of difficult to worship Jesus at Christmas when we're making choices that dishonor God instead of honoring Him.

It's hard to worship Jesus at Christmas when our heart isn't where it ought to be because we've come to love material things, or money, or to love anything other than the Lord Jesus.

Worshipping Jesus like Simeon did is impossible when we're focused on pleasing ourselves instead of living to please the Lord. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord this Christmas let's be like Simeon.

Let's set aside anything that displeases God or that is contrary to His Word, and let's commit to living godly lives, holy lives that reflect our standing with God as His people, and let's seek to continue to grow in the process of sanctification with His help til we meet Him in heaven.

Finally, if we're going to worship Jesus fully this Christmas like Simeon did, we've got to...

**(SLIDE) 3. Live expecting to see Jesus – Lk. 2:25b (READ)**

That means Simeon was expectantly watching and waiting for the Messiah to come. When someone is watching and waiting for something, they are ready when it happens.

**PUSH BUTTON FOR WORSHIP TEAM**

e.g. A few years ago we took the Youth Group to Kansas City for the weekend and I tagged along. We took the church bus, which is always an iffy proposition! 😊

All the way down to KC and all the way home again the bus was having issues.

On the way home, the more we kept driving the more the bus lost power – the headlights grew dimmer and dimmer. We made a pit stop for gas at a Kum 'n Go in Bethany, Missouri. That turned out to be the end of the line.

The bus died when we stopped and never started again. So we found a local tow truck who agreed to tow it all way back here to the church.

In the meantime, we called the parents of all the youth and many of them drive down to Bethany to carpool everyone back home. There's wasn't much to do while we waited the hour and a half for the parents to arrive.

The youth were watching and waiting for their parents to come and pick them up, and when they did they were ready to go, they were excited to see their parents, they were excited to be going home after a long tiring weekend.

That's the way we ought to live. Jesus is coming back to take us home to be with him in heaven. It could happen at any moment. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus, expecting Him to return.

And when He does, we will experience the final step in the process of becoming like Him. We've seen that the process starts with our justification, it continues with our sanctification and third, it is completed with our glorification. What is glorification?

**(Slide)**

***Glorification:*** The act of God whereby all believers spiritually become like Jesus and are with Jesus for eternity.

***“And those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Romans 8:30b***

**Glorification is the completion of the spiritual process of the work of salvation that God does in us. It’s the culmination of what God does IN us here on this side of heaven, in preparation for what God is going to do WITH us for all eternity in heaven.**

**If you know Christ as your Savior tonight, that day is coming for you when your spiritual journey in this life on earth will finally be complete and you will join the Lord Jesus in heaven where you will be spiritually complete in Him with no sin nature – in that way you will be like Jesus - and you’ll have a body made to last forever.**

**As followers of Christ, this is what we anticipate and look forward to, and it’s all because of Jesus. Jesus is coming again to take us to heaven where He will accomplish His work of glorification in us.**

**When Jesus came the first time, Simeon was ready because not only was he in right standing with God, not only was he living a godly life, but he was expecting Jesus to come.**

**At Christmas we celebrate the first coming of our Savior. But God also wants to live expectantly for when He comes again. If we’re truly going to worship Jesus fully this Christmas, we need to live with the attitude that not only did Jesus come but He’s coming again, and it could be tonight.**

**I need to be living like that could happen today. I need to be expecting His return. I need to be living a life of worship today so that when He returns the only thing that really changes is WHERE I’ll be worshiping.**

**Instead of worshiping Jesus here on earth, I'll be worshiping Him in His presence in heaven.**

**I believe it would honor God this Christmas if we would be like Simeon and live in right standing with Him, seek to live a godly life and to live with an attitude of expectancy for the return of our Lord.**

**So this Christmas, how can you begin a personal relationship with the Lord through salvation and spend eternity in heaven? The most famous verse in the Bible makes it clear what you must do...**

**(SLIDE) John 3:16:**

***"For God so loved the world..."* – God loves every single person in the world. That means He loves you! And because He loves you, He did something very special for you...**

***"...that He gave his one and only Son..."* – God came in the person of Jesus to die on the cross for our sin. The Bible says everyone sins. No one is guiltless before God.**

**And our sin deserves punishment. That punishment is separation from God forever. So Jesus came and died to take our punishment for us and to forgive us of all our sin. How can you have your sins forgiven?**

***"...so that everyone who believes in him..."* – Believing in Jesus is believing that He died on the cross to pay for your sins and that He rose again and it's believing that He's the only one who can take away our sins.  
(forgiveness)**

**“...will not perish but have eternal life.” – If you believe in Jesus, you won’t be separated from God forever, you won’t go to hell with those who reject Jesus as Lord, you’ll go to heaven and you’ll be with Jesus and all those who also believe in Him by faith.**

**Everlasting life is a gift from God that no one can ever take away from you. If you want Jesus to be your Savior tonight, all you have to do is tell Him that, and whether you’re here in person or watching us online, you can do that right now.**