

Simeon Says and Anna's Austerity

November 28, 2021

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Luke 2:25-38

Session Outline

1. Dismiss Your Servant in Peace (Luke 2:25-29)
2. The Rise and Fall of Many (Luke 2:30-35)
3. Fasting and Prayers (Luke 2:36-38)

Theological Theme

In this passage, we encounter the themes of hope, peace, and joy, all of which are tied to the glory of God expressed in the coming of the Messiah. The accounts of Simeon and Anna provide a picture of peace in a chaotic world.



Leader Guide

Simeon Says and Anna's Austerity

Introduction

- ❓ Has there ever been a time in your life when you were at perfect peace? Did it have to do with a location or circumstances? Was it the result of a personal relationship?
- ❓ How do people seek to find peace? What are some different things people look to for peace? Where do you think true peace can be found? Explain.

Do you think it's possible for world peace to exist? The thing about that concept is that it is so big, so foggy, and so unattainable that anyone can say they aspire to it without any accountability or commitment. The truth of the matter is that everyone deeply longs for peace, but the problem is that the source of true peace is a mystery to most of the world. No doubt everyone has their strategy or theory about what people really need to have a more peaceful world and hearts, but those are just theories. Unless people find the one true fountain of all peace, Christ, then they will ultimately come up short.

The ancient words found in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible describe two different kinds of peace. There is a peace that is unshakable, unchangeable, and not affected by any temporal circumstance. Christ made this peace on the cross between God and man. It is the reconciliation of a holy God and a sinful soul.

The Scriptures, however, also speak of a personal peace that followers of Jesus should experience in their own hearts. But a person cannot experience true, lasting personal peace in their hearts if they are not at peace with the one true and living God through the shed blood of Christ on the cross. The peace that Christ made between God and man makes the personal peace that we desperately long for in our daily lives possible.

Here is another distinction between the two types of peace that the Bible talks about. The peace Jesus has secured for us is static; it's settled; it does not change and is not affected by flat tires, an argument with your spouse, or a potty-training disaster. Personal peace, however, is affected by all of

those things. Personal peace in the heart of a believer, if not anchored to something deeper than circumstances, is as fickle as the weather.

As we consider the Advent season and recognize the fact that our hearts can never be settled in this world, we must prepare room in our hearts for Christ. It is important to understand that the coming of Christ was the coming of true peace. We should bow in worship because Jesus's incarnation and demise meant reconciliation for us with the Father. Further, the peace with God that Jesus won on the cross is the foundation for personal peace in our daily lives.

Session Summary

Luke told the story of Jesus's presentation in the temple by His parents. This account emphasizes the faithfulness and piety of Jesus's family. Further, their offering of two birds indicates that they were a poor family. Upon seeing the child and taking Him in his arms, Simeon made a startling announcement. He stated that he was ready to depart in peace because his eyes had seen the salvation of the Lord. Then, Anna, a prophetess, began to tell everyone about the infant.

In our lesson today, we will focus on Simeon and Anna and dig a bit deeper into what it means to long for something more and how that longing connects to peace. Peace may be described in two ways: a subjective feeling in the heart or an objective reality between two parties that were formerly in conflict. These two perspectives, as they relate to Christian peace, are closely connected.

1. Dismiss Your Servant in Peace (Luke 2:25-29)

When the angels announced that the birth of Christ ushered in peace on earth, they meant Jesus would reconcile sinful man to a holy God. For those who receive it, this peace is an unshakable, unalterable reality. For those in Christ, peace with God is theirs from now until forever.

In the next section, Luke described an old man named Simeon who experienced a different kind of peace that is also available to Christians. Simeon said, "you can dismiss your servant in peace" (v. 29). Simeon wasn't describing a fixed reality, but a feeling of well-being or wholeness. This is generally what we think of when we consider peace.

Everyone wants to feel peaceful in their hearts. It is an unpleasant, exhausting thing to be filled with constant longing, chaotic uncertainty, or rampant anxiety. This kind of peace is different than the fixed reality of a reconciled state that is true no matter how a person feels.

Nunc Dimittis

Simeon's words in verses 29-32 are traditionally called the "Nunc Dimittis," from wording in the Latin Vulgate translation.

- ❓ What is the connection between a daily feeling of peace and the fixed reality of peace with God?
- ❓ Why is it impossible to truly have one of these without the other?

While peace with God doesn't mean Christians will always feel peaceful, Christians will experience more peace in their everyday lives as they grow in faith. The finished work of Christ on behalf of sinners not only saves their souls from eternal punishment but also makes it possible for them to walk in a new way upon the earth. Christians are free to set aside anxiety and bitterness. They are enabled, by the power of the Spirit, to walk in confidence and peace even when they must pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

Peace with God through Christ makes it possible for Christians to continually experience peace in their hearts. However, it's important to remember that the objective peace we have with God because of Christ's merits is a settled fact. Subjective peace, on the other hand, is a matter of sanctification and daily dying to self. Peace in our hearts is there for the taking, but it won't be forced upon us.

- ❓ Application: Does peace or anxiety rule in your heart more often? Do you experience a continual restlessness or longing in your heart? If so, what do you do you think is the cause of it?

2. The Fall and Rise of Many (Luke 2:30-35)

Simeon pointed to the infant Christ as the world's hope for peace. He said, "For my eyes have seen your salvation. You have prepared it in the presence of all peoples—a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). Jesus was the salvation God had been preparing and revealing since Genesis 3.


- ❓ How would Jesus restore true peace between God and man?

Jesus's shed blood on the cross ushered in peace between the one true and living God and mankind. Paul said, "For he is our peace," and Jesus, through His flesh, broke down the "dividing wall of hostility" so that He could "reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross" (Ephesians 2:14, 16).

Jesus's work on the cross gives us a secure hope and indomitable peace because these were won by His work alone. If Christians could do something to attain peace and hope, then they surely could also do


something to lose it. But they didn't, so they can't. Jesus is the hope of the nations, and He has secured salvation for all who look to Him. Without the cover of Jesus's blood, people will live empty lives with unfulfilled longings, and they will stand condemned on the last day, subject to the wrath of God.

In Ephesians 2:14, Paul wrote about an objective peace made possible by Christ bearing the burden of our sin. God established an objective peace through the sacrifice of Jesus. This removed the hostility between God and man. The Christian's guilt is covered. God's wrath is satisfied. Before there can be a genuine subjective feeling of peace in a person's heart, they must enter the peace won by Jesus's death. Because of that objective peace, Christians can now be filled up with deep and abiding peace. It is through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross that man's deepest longings find their answer.

 Read John 14:6. Why is Jesus the only way to peace with God?


No other way exists to real reconciliation with God, peace with our neighbor, and unity between races and nations, except through Jesus Christ. Jesus said directly that no one can come to the Father except through Him.

Because Jesus is God, He is holy and righteous in every way. Ezekiel 18:4 tells us God, because of His sinless nature, demands that sin be punished. Jesus's holy and righteous life uniquely qualified Him to shoulder the punishment of sinners. Because Jesus pleased God the Father in every way, His substitutionary sacrifice could be accepted by God and satisfy God's justice in regard to the sins of people.

 Application: Do you have peace with God through Jesus Christ? When were you reconciled for God? How did this change your life? If not, how is God speaking to you about this today?


3. Fasting and Prayers (Luke 2:36-38)

When Jesus showed Himself to the disciples after His resurrection, He said to them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). Was Jesus offering them reconciliation with God or a feeling of well-being and wholeness? He offered them both. The peace Christians can experience in their hearts today is rooted in the peace that they have with God through Jesus' sacrifice.

 How do we see Anna experience the peace of God through her interaction with Jesus?


Simeon wasn't the only person who rejoiced to see the Messiah that day. Anna was there also. Luke explained that Anna was a widow and a prophetess. She "did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer" (v. 37). Anna saw the child and may have even heard Simeon's words about Him. Anna's natural response to Jesus was telling others about Him. Of course, she didn't have all of the information. She didn't know about the miracles He would perform or the teachings He would give. She didn't know He would be betrayed, crucified, and raised again. But she knew He would be the "redemption of Israel," and the joy and peace she experienced compelled her to tell others about Him.

There is nothing more natural than to go and tell others when we are affected deeply by something or someone. You may remember the Samaritan woman at the well who encountered Christ in John 4. After Jesus spoke with her about her spiritual need, she went and told the whole town about Him. When the demoniac was delivered from his affliction in Mark 5, he went into the region of the Decapolis to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him.

 How might the Advent season be a season of evangelism for Christians today? How is this related to the peace we have with God and experience each day in Jesus?

Followers of Christ ought to always be about the business of making disciples among all sorts of people (see Matthew 28:18-20). The Advent season, however, provides unique opportunities in Western culture to share with others the reason for peace in our hearts. There are a great number of Christmas traditions that may be used to open the door to a spiritual conversation with someone who is lost in their sins and in desperate need of a Savior.

One simple way to share with people is to ask them if they have ever heard the origin of the Christmas story. People are often interested in knowing the story behind traditions. You may invite a group of friends over one evening in December to sing Christmas songs and then read the account of the birth of Christ from the book of Luke. This would also be an excellent time to share the gospel. You may also gift your guests with a Bible of their own or a book that explains more fully the meaning of Christmas.

 Application: What opportunities can you take to share the truth about Jesus with others this Christmas season?

Conclusion

When God spoke the world into existence, He brought order to a formless and void reality (Genesis 1:1-3). All of His creation was very good. The general term “good” included peaceful. God, man, and His creation were in perfect peace. Everything was whole and in order. A quiet goodness pervaded all of creation. But that peace was shattered and replaced by conflict, restlessness, and fear when sin infected the hearts of Adam and Eve.

Apart from God, people are lost and broken. This explains why people search for something that might fulfill them. The deepest longing of the human soul is for God Himself, yet sinners have no way of enjoying a relationship with God on their own. Instead, they face endless wandering and searching for a true home, something they will never find apart from Christ. Thankfully, Advent reminds us that God has met this need in Christ and He calls us to share this good news with those who deeply need it.

- ❓ How peaceful would you say your life is on a daily basis? How is your experience of peace affected when you regularly focus on the truth that Jesus has made peace between God and man for all who have trusted Him?
- ❓ How should this peace change the way we interact with one another in the church? How does this put our temporary conflicts in right perspective?
- ❓ Who do you know who needs to hear about the peace God offers in Christ? What steps will you take to share with them?

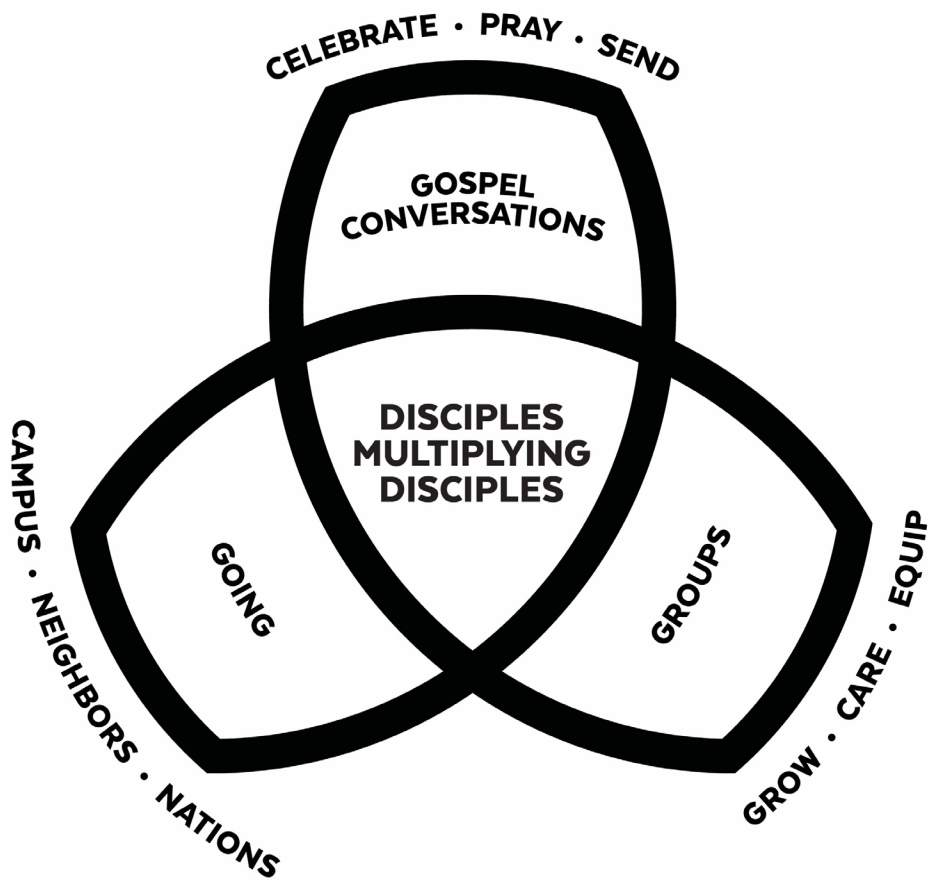
Prayer of Response

Close in prayer, thanking God for the peace offered in Christ. Ask Him to move our hearts to share this good news with others, so they too might experience the true peace their hearts long for.

Additional Resources

- *Joy to the World* by John Piper
- *The Cradle, Cross, and Crown* by Billy Graham
- *Come Let Us Adore Him* by Paul David Tripp

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Session Title

- Longing For Control

Main Passages

- Genesis 11:1-9

Session Outline

1. The Light of Your Own Fire (Genesis 11:1-4)
2. A Name for Ourselves (Genesis 11:4-7)
3. The Lord Scattered Them (Genesis 11:8-9)

Memorize

³⁰ *For my eyes have seen your salvation.*

³¹ *You have prepared it*

in the presence of all peoples—

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

- Luke 2:30-32

Historical Context of Luke

Purpose

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched (1:3), selective presentation of the person and life of Jesus Christ, designed to strengthen the faith of believers (1:3–4) and to challenge the misconceptions of unbelievers, especially those from a Greek background. Its portrait of Jesus is well balanced, skillfully emphasizing his divinity and perfect humanity.

Author

The author of the Third Gospel is not named. Considerable evidence points to Luke as its author. Much of that proof is found in the book of Acts, which identifies itself as a sequel to Luke (Ac 1:1–3). A major line of evidence has to do with the so-called “we” sections of the book (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; 28:1–16). Most of Acts is narrated in third-person plural (“they,” “them”), but some later sections having to do with the ministry of the apostle Paul unexpectedly shift to first-person plural (“we,” “us”). This indicates that the author had joined the apostle Paul for the events recorded in those passages. Since there are no “we” passages in the Gospel of Luke, that fits with the author stating that he used eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus (1:2), indicating he was not such an eyewitness himself.

Setting

Traditionally, the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after both Matthew and Mark. Those who date Matthew and Mark in the AD 60s or 70s have tended to push the dating of Luke back to the AD 70s or 80s.

Since Luke wrote both the Third Gospel and the book of Acts (Ac 1:1–3), it is relevant to consider the dating of both books together. The events at the end of Acts occurred around AD 62–63. That is the earliest point at which Acts could have been written. If Acts was written in the early AD 60s from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned for two years (Ac 28:30), the Third Gospel could date from an earlier stage of that period of imprisonment. The other reasonable possibility is during Paul’s earlier two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (Ac 24:27). From that location, Luke would have been able to travel and interview the eyewitnesses to Jesus’s life and ministry who were still alive.

The Third Gospel is addressed to “most honorable Theophilus” (Lk 1:3), about whom nothing else is known other than that he is also the recipient of the book of Acts (Ac 1:1). The Greek name Theophilus means “lover of God” or “friend of God” and implies that he was a Gentile, probably Greek. He seems to have been a relatively new believer, recently instructed about Jesus and the Christian faith (Lk 1:4). The title “most honorable” indicates that, at the least, he was a person of high standing and financial substance. It may also reflect that he was an official with some governmental authority and power.

Special Features

The Gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. Focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, this Gospel is part one of a two-part history, the book of Acts being part two. Both were dedicated to “most honorable Theophilus” (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1).

Extended Commentary

Luke 2:25-38

2:25–26. Two persons—pious, devoted servants of God—met Jesus in the temple and explained his calling and ministry. Both explanations came through the Holy Spirit. Simeon appeared first. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:6), he was righteous. He conformed to God’s expectations and lived in a right relationship with God. He was devout. He feared God and showed reverence for God. He took God’s promises seriously.

God had promised consolation for Israel, a time of comfort and renewed hope (see Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9; 57:18; 66:10–11). Simeon expected that to happen any day. In his daily walk with God, Simeon had heard God’s Spirit speak. God’s personal word to Simeon guaranteed him the Christ, God’s comfort in person, would come before Simeon died. God kept his promise to a man known in history only because he waited obediently for God to keep his promise.

2:27–33. The Spirit controlled everything Simeon did. He spied Mary and Joseph, Jesus’ parents, as they entered the temple. They were simply obeying God’s law. Simeon intercepted them and took the child in his arms. He gave them a blessing they did not expect. Praising God (cf. 1:68), Simeon first claimed his dismissal from God’s army. His tour of duty was done. God had fulfilled his promise. Simeon could now die and claim his eternal peace. He had seen God’s salvation. Named Jesus, “Yahweh is salvation” (v. 21) and proclaimed by the angel as Savior (v. 11), Jesus was what Simeon had longed for and looked for all these years—the salvation, the deliverance of his people.

Such salvation is not a human act or human possession. It is God’s salvation. He prepared for it clearly on the stage of world history where all people could see. He made it a light for revelation to the Gentiles. Yes, salvation was more than fulfillment of Israel’s nationalistic hopes. Salvation was a light revealing God and his purposes and ways to all people, Jew and Gentile alike (see Isa. 40:5; 42:6; 46:13; 49:6; 52:9–10). Israel did have a special place. They were your people. In Jesus they received glory, for the Gentiles saw them as the important instrument God used to bring salvation to the whole world.

Shepherds amazed Bethlehem with their message (v. 18). Simeon amazed Joseph and Mary with his. News about Jesus is never ordinary, daily newspaper stuff. News about Jesus leaves the audience wondering: How can this be? Who is this?

2:34–35. Simeon continued his blessing, not directing it to the parents but to God. The words hardly sounded like blessing. They described pain and separation. Israel must fall and fail in the face of Jesus before they would rise as he arose (see Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; cf. Luke 20:17–18; Rom. 9:32–33; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). Some would never rise, for Jesus’ own people would reject him. This is clear at the start of the gospel story, not part of a surprise ending. God’s incarnate symbol and instrument of salvation would be sneered at, spoken against, rejected. True Israel will be revealed, for hearts and minds will become clearly visible. Those of faith and those without faith will be clearly distinguished.

Such response to a Son is difficult for a mother. Her heart would be pierced as if by a sword, broken apart because of the treatment her Son must suffer. God has provided a Savior, but salvation is not automatic. People must believe, trust, and embrace God's Savior and his salvation. Gentiles will; many in Israel will not.

2:36–38. Simeon acted like a priest, much like Eli in 1 Samuel 1–2, but he received no official title from Luke. He was simply a dedicated servant of God led by the Spirit of God. Anna immediately received a legitimating title. She was a prophetess, one with great age and experience, apparently having been married seven years and widowed eighty-four (NIV textual note), perhaps being 105 or so as she stood in the temple. She made the temple her permanent home; worship, prayer, and fasting, her occupation. Without invitation, she approached the baby Jesus just as Simeon returned him to his parents. She recognized what God was doing in the person of this baby and gave thanks. This term appears only here in the New Testament.

Anna then turned to other worshipers and spoke her prophetic words about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem (see Isa. 52:9). Not all Jews rejected Jesus. Simeon waited for God to comfort Israel (v. 25). Anna and the other worshipers looked to God for Jerusalem's redemption (cf. 1:68). Israel raised praises at Jesus' birth, looking forward to what he would do in his death. There he died, giving his life in payment for the death penalty all people deserved because of their sins.¹

References

1. Butler, Trent C. *Luke*. Edited by Max Anders. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

Author Bio

John Piper (Joy to the World)

John Piper is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is the author of more than 50 books, and more than 30 years of his preaching and teaching is available free of charge at desiringGod.org.

Billy Graham (The Cradle, The Cross, and Crown)

Billy Graham, world-renowned preacher, evangelist, and author, delivered the gospel message to more people face-to-face than anyone in history and ministered on every continent of the world in more than 185 countries. Millions have read his inspirational classics, including *Angels*, *Peace with God*, *The Holy Spirit*, *Hope for the Troubled Heart*, *How to Be Born Again*, *The Journey*, *Nearing Home*, and *The Reason for My Hope*.

Paul David Tripp (Come Let Us Adore Him)

Dr. Paul David Tripp is a pastor, event speaker, and a best-selling and award-winning author. With more than 30 books and video series on Christian living, Paul's driving passion is to connect the transforming power of Jesus Christ to everyday life. He and his wife of 45+ years, Luella, live in Philadelphia; they have four grown children. For more information, visit PaulTripp.com or follow Paul on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Trent Butler (Luke)

Trent C. Butler is a freelance author and editor. He served ten years on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and for twenty-two years as editor and editorial director for Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay. He wrote the Word Biblical Commentary volume on Joshua, the Layman's Bible Book Commentary on Isaiah, the Holman Old Testament Commentaries on Isaiah and Hosea through Micah, and the Holman New Testament Commentary on Luke. He served on the editorial Board of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and edited the Holman Bible Dictionary. Dr. Butler has a Ph.D. in biblical studies and linguistics from Vanderbilt University, has done further study at Heidelberg and Zurich, and has participated in the excavation of Beersheba.