

“The Announcement To The World”

Luke 2:21-38

Series: “Announce His Coming” [#4]

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Theme: **God Wants You To Announce Christ’s Coming To Your World.**

Introduction

It’s just two days until Christmas! Activity and anticipation are peaking. As one little boy put it, “There’s only two more *hoping* days until Christmas!” Yes, there are all kinds of hopes, wishes and dreams about Christmas.

Today we wrap up this series, “*Announce His Coming!*”, which has been based on the announcements of Christmas, of Jesus’ coming, found in the gospel of Luke. First, we looked at “*The Announcement to Zacharias.*” Then, at “*The Announcement to Mary.*” Last week, “*The Announcement to the Shepherds.*”

And today, “*The Announcement to the World.*” We see this through a man named Simeon. Like others in the Christmas account, he appears briefly without much introduction, and then is gone. But there is much we can learn from him. The central lesson from him for us today is that *God Wants You To Announce Christ’s Coming To Your World.*

God is always interested in quality, and there is no exception here. We see some of the qualities God looks for in the messenger and the message through Simeon. Let’s begin with looking at the qualities in the messenger.

Qualities God Looks For In The Messenger.

The first is Godly character. This is always God’s first concern. He looks at our *heart*, rather than our outer appearance; He looks at what we really are, at our character (*cf.* 1 Samuel 16:7). It is our character which defines us and our actions. And so, God tells us to “watch over [our hearts] with all diligence, for from [the heart flows] the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Jesus’ teaching in the Beatitudes begins with character and then moves to action, as He talked about being...

- poor in spirit
- mourning over our sin
- being gentle
- hungering and thirsting for righteousness
- being merciful
- being pure in heart

- being peacemakers

(Matthew 5:3-9)

We see the same principle and dynamic in the fruit of the Holy Spirit,

- love
- joy
- peace
- patience
- kindness
- goodness
- faithfulness
- gentleness
- self-control

(Galatians 5:22-23)

It starts with the heart, with our character.

Let's look at this in Simeon. Go to verse 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; & the Holy Spirit was upon him.”

Simeon was *righteous*. He was right with God. Here the emphasis is on how he lived, the conduct which flowed from his character. This does not tell us Simeon never sinned, but that he lived the truth of God he knew. He accepted God's instruction, direction, conviction and challenges. Having a righteous character is foundational to Godly character.

Secondly, Simeon was *devout*. This term does not mean to be *very religious* in the sense of carefully and regularly following certain religious practices, as it frequently does today. Its basic meaning is *to take hold of something well or carefully*. It tells us Simeon took a firm, good, careful hold on his relationship with God.

God Wants You To Announce Christ's Coming To Your World. And the first thing He looks for in you as a messenger is your character. Perfection is not required, not even some kind of mythical *supersaint* quality. The quality of character God looks for is to be solidly grounded and committed in your relationship with Him, allowing Him to develop the character of Christ in you.

You and I cannot expect to be used greatly by God unless we allow Him to change us

greatly, and continually. Anyone with ideas, dedication and enthusiasm can generate *results*. It takes those with Godly character to accomplish things for eternity.

The second quality of the messenger God uses is trust in His Word. Verse 25 tells us Simeon was “looking for the consolation of Israel.” The term *looking for* has the ideas of: taking, receiving and welcoming someone/thing; and, also, then waiting for, expecting it.

Simeon welcomed and accepted God’s promises and was waiting for the consolation of Israel—*the Messiah!* God had promised the Messiah would come. In this season we often think of the prophecies through Isaiah. Even though God gave this word through Isaiah more than 700 years before his time, Simeon accepted them and expected God would still fulfill His word. Simeon trusted God’s Word.

God wants us to announce Christ’s coming to our world. To do this great work effectively, we must have the same kind of trust in God’s Word that Simeon had. Sometimes the downstream pressure of our world, the ongoing pain in our hearts, the troubling questions in our minds cause us to question, doubt or even set aside the statements and promises of the Bible. To effectively announce Christ’s coming to your world you needed to have a genuine and proven trust in God’s Word, for it is the *word*, the *gospel* which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16).

The third quality of the messenger we see through Simeon is trusting God’s leading. Look at the end of verse 25,

“... 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.” (25c - 26)

Simeon not only trusted the truthfulness and certainty of Scripture, he trusted God’s leading. Luke tells us, “the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Remember, prior to the church age, the Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell believers, but came to them, or upon them from time to time for specific purposes in their lives.

We aren’t told how the Holy Spirit gave Simeon this message, but he told Simeon the Messiah would come during his lifetime.

Before we move on, think about it for a moment. Think of how amazing this revelation was to him, and how risky it could have seemed. “What would people say when he told them?” After all, even Joseph and Mary, who have known that Jesus is the Messiah, *were amazed*, verse 33 tells us, at what Simeon said about Jesus when he held Him. And, as we have seen, Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds had been in the same position as Simeon.

Do we trust God’s leading as Simeon, Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds did? The first thing to note here, is that the leading he saw as coming from God lined up with God’s word, the Scriptures. God will never lead anyone in any way contrary to His word. Whether it is the choices we make or the doctrine we believe, always remember “God will never lead anyone in any way contrary to His word.”

So, the starting place of testing any possible *leading* of God is the Bible. It must line up with Scripture. When you sense God leading you to speak to someone, to talk about spiritual things, to help someone, to serve or give sacrificially, how do you respond? People God uses to effectively announce Christ's coming into the world, to reach others for Christ, trust His leading.

Let's move now from the messenger to the message.

Qualities God Looks For In The Message.

The first of two qualities we see here is that the message must be God's message, not our own.

Let's go back to verse 26 again to see this in Simeon. This is where God's message to Simeon began, "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."

When the day came that Jesus was presented at the temple, the Holy Spirit somehow clearly directed Simeon to be there and to recognize Jesus, the Messiah. Simeon's message here consisted of what God had told him, along with Scripture about the Messiah. Go to. v. 29,

"then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel.'"

Simeon stayed on message. And he continued to stay on God's message as he spoke directly to Mary, "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—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'"

Simeon did not add to, leave out, or weave in his own ideas. I am sure it was easy and pleasant for him to give the message of praise to God. But he also gave the message that was not easy—the message that the many who would oppose Jesus would be revealed and judged by Him for what they are, and for that, fall; that Mary herself would experience great pain.

Yes, Simeon gave God's message, not his own. It was not that he was a mindless machine, nor that he limited himself to quoting Scripture. He was true to God's message—he did not distort it in any way or fashion.

For us to proclaim Christ effectively, we must always ensure our message is God's not our own. There is always the danger that we can add to or leave out part of God's message, or weave in our own ideas.

For example, we can play down or skip over essential truths which may not sit well with

many people today, such as the reality of punishment for sin and hell. Or, in our efforts to communicate effectively to some people, we can use pictures and ideas that actually compromise the essential truth of the gospel. For example, in trying to communicate with people who struggle with or disagree with the reality that there is truth which is always true for all people in all times and places, some have backed off the universal and exclusive claims of the gospel giving the impression, if not taking the position, that there may be other ways to God than through Jesus Christ.

Now, don't become paranoid here. Rather, always be careful that the message you give is God's, from His word, based on and true to the Scriptures.

The second quality of our message that God looks for is that His message is for all. Simeon saw Jesus, the Messiah his people longed to see, the Messiah God promised him he would see, and he responded to God by saying in verse 30, "...my eyes have seen Your salvation."

Then he continued to describe what this means,
"Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel."

The hope and consolation, the glory of Israel—*Yes!* But more, also to the gentiles... to all peoples... *to the world!*

While the prophets made this point clearly, most of the Jews of Simeon's day despised and hated non-Jews. They wouldn't go out of their way to reach them for God. In fact, many did what ever it took to avoid all but essential contact with gentiles. God's love in sending His Son into this world to pay the price of sin, to bring forgiveness and life forever with Him is for all. Simeon recognized and proclaimed this message.

So in Simeon we see "*The Announcement to the World.*" He *announced Christ's coming* to his world. And, *God wants you to announce Christ's coming to your world.*

It makes sense to start with the people we know best and care about the most. In fact, if I do not share the good news of Jesus with people I say I care about, I really don't care as much as I may think I do.

At the close of WWII, soldiers released from a prison camp lined up to catch a ship back home. The weather was bad, the space was limited. Some would have to be left there for a time. Those who made this ship, the last one available for some time, were told they could bring only their most important *piece* of luggage (*yes*, just one). One soldier chosen to go quickly emptied his duffle bag and told his best buddy to get in. He boarded the ship carrying *his most valuable possession*. His action proved he cared.

But if we stop here, if we include only those whom we know and care about, and those with whom we feel comfortable, then both we and our message do not meet the standards of God's *Quality Control*.

I'm sure you don't have to think very long to picture some people that you don't like that much, and others who seem to be not at all likeable. We are to announce the message of Jesus Christ to *all*, to *everyone* in our world.

Conclusion.

As we bring this to a close, recognize that our desires and feelings can outpace our commitment and action.

Martin Luther once touched on *unfulfilled visions of grandeur*. He wrote, "There are those of us... who think to ourselves, 'If I had only been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby [Jesus]. I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!' Yes we would. We say that because we know how great Christ is. But if we had been there at that time, we would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem... Why don't we do it now? We have Christ in our neighbor?"

In these next moments, reflect on the truth given us through Simeon, and respond to God. Thank God that the news of Jesus, and Jesus Himself, is for *all*. If this were not so, you and I would be on the outside, with no way to get into the family of God. Ask God to help you to grow

- in Christlike character;
- in trusting His Word in your day to day choices, dreams and problems;
- in depending on Him, not yourself, to guide your way;
- and to give His message to all who are in your world, to fulfill your mission.

And then, with only two more days until Christmas, make sure you "*Announce Christ's Coming*" to your world. Specifically, think about one person you will be seeing in the next few days of Christmas who does not know Jesus. Decide, and tell God, "I will tell this person about the reality of Christmas, about Jesus."

And then also ask God to keep your eyes and heart open to people you meet in these days who need to know Jesus.

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