

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
CONSENTING TO LOVE
LUKE 2:25-33

Good Morning

Prayer Needs – Mark Stafford, Ann Heidenreich, Preston Fries, Louise Hughes, Ronald and Nuri Hernandez – San Pablo Taco Chico El Salvador.

Luke 2:25-33 – read - Consenting to Love

'Most of us...take life for granted. We know that one day we must die, but usually we picture that day as far in the future. When we are in buoyant health, death is all but unimaginable. We seldom think of it. The days stretch out in an endless vista. So we go about our petty tasks, hardly aware of our listless attitude toward life. The same lethargy, I am afraid, characterizes the use of all our faculties and senses. Only the deaf appreciate hearing, only the blind realize the manifold blessings that lie in sight. Particularly does this observation apply to those who have lost sight and hearing in adult life. But those who have never suffered impairment of sight or hearing seldom make the fullest use of these blessed faculties....

Now and then I have tested my ... friends to discover what they see. Recently I was visited by a very good friend who had just returned from a long walk in the woods, and I asked her what she had observed. "Nothing in particular," she replied. I might have been incredulous had I not been accustomed to such responses, for long ago I became convinced that the seeing see little. How was it possible, I asked myself, to walk for an hour through the woods and see nothing worthy of note?... Those who have eyes apparently see little.' At the age of 53 Hellen Keller wrote this piece for The Atlantic Monthly from her book "Three Days to See."

In it she reflected on what she would do if she were given three days to see.

Helen Keller was born in June of 1880. At 19 months a disease took her sight and hearing and plunged her into a world of isolation and darkness. She was famously helped by the tireless efforts of Anne Sullivan and eventually developed ways to communicate with others. She would go on to graduate from Radcliffe College, the all-women's counterpart to the all-male Harvard.

She remains a clear example to the fact that **there is more to seeing and hearing than biology** - she went on to write 14 books that included her encounters with God she described this way;

"I know that life is given us so that we may grow in love. And I believe that God is in me as the sun is in the color and fragrance of the flower, the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence."

Those who have eyes can often see so little....seems more relevant now in a world filled with millions of images of people and yet so filled with fears, wants and judgments that those very images can separate each other into parts and perceptions that have so little to do with actually loving people...have you seen social media?

In our text Luke tells us about an encounter of a poor couple bringing their 8 day old child to be dedicated to the Lord. And here in the temple come this unremarkable family in the midst of all of the activities of the temple and Luke tells us about a man - likely a very old man - by some traditions a man beyond his 90's who had most likely lost his physical vision. This man is led by the Spirit of God...who now takes the child and proclaims...**my eyes have seen the Your salvation**. Simeon some say he was the son of the great rabbinic teacher Hillel. It will be his colleagues who do not see Salvation but a heretic!

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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Simeon with no apparent political or military importance. No references to his financial resources. Likely the rich, powerful, well-connected saw little in this man Simeon.

But what did the Lord see in Simeon?

- First, this was a good man. “Righteous and devout” (Luke 2:25).
- These two words together are meant to be a summary for a godly man and a good man. “Righteous” speaks to how he treated people with ‘justice’, “devout” speaks to his love for God. There aren’t many labeled “devout” in the Bible. Only three other times in the NT.

Because the seeing can often see little.

- To see more than a poor couple fulfilling a ceremonial purification to see beyond the task, the temple crowd - to see something that transcends, transforms, reveals light, life and beauty...
- To a man whose eyes are likely darkened by age has seen more...he sees the vibrancy of love revealed - **something has opened the eyes of his heart** - the Hope of the Promise of God.

Lets not miss the obvious in this account - Simeon did not see 'the plan of Salvation' he sees a Person!

- **The person of love who has consented to reveal the love of the Father - Jesus Christ and its enough!**

To see Salvation is not what you see with your eyes but rather what you see and surrender to with your heart - to consent to the Victory of the love of God revealed in Christ is enough - then, now and always. And that beloved is good news!

This photo by Ron Dicianni is says so much - titled ‘**Simeon’s Moment**’ - it says so much, do you notice his eyes are closed?

The Anticipated Christ (3rd day of Christmas)

*Simeon and Anna. An old man and an old woman in the Temple on the day that Jesus was dedicated. These two old prophets spoke of the infant Jesus as salvation and redemption. Indeed, Jesus will save both Simeon and Anna, **but neither of them know how**—in fact, neither of them really know what salvation truly is. But this is not a problem. Salvation is not based on theological acumen; salvation is based entirely on trust. Salvation is not found in believing the right things, but in trusting the right person. What matters is not if Simeon and Anna know the "plan of salvation" (they don't), but that they know the right person. What they know is that however salvation comes, it will come through the little baby that a Galilean couple are dedicating in the Temple. As the old saying goes, it's not what you know but who you know.*

Lord Jesus, we have come to know and believe that you are the salvation of God. We may not know how salvation will come and what it will fully look like but, Jesus, we know you. We confess that you are the Savior of the world. Amen.

Trust beloved is about consenting to the plan of God;

- I don’t know all of how this will happen but my eyes have seen the Salvation of the lord..
- This carry’s even more impact if indeed as some imply his physical vision was all but gone.
- I was praying into these verses early one morning this past week saying something like this and I

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felt such a peace in proclaiming something like this -

- *Jesus I don't know all of the how's but I agree that the Victory of the Love of God revealed in Christ is enough, then, now and always!*

Now think about this - **Simeon holds in love what will in love hold him.**

- He did not see it 'all' yet he see's the **consolation** of the pain, brokenness and dysfunction of generations.
- Part of what is portrayed well in this picture is this sense of surrender in Simeon as he holds the answer that he cannot fully explain - yet he knows he is now become part of the story as he consents to the victory of Love - **eyes closed - seeing what cannot be fully seen in that moment!**

And isn't this a picture of what the gospel means in our life?

- Seeing we can often see so little...if something has not captured our heart and our imagination - the Hope of the Good news of this Gospel.
- This is why we participate regularly in the sacrament of confession and communion.

To See beloved is not about certainty or knowing all the way life is going to work out; is to consent to the Victory of the Love of God revealed in Christ as enough - then, now and always.

What does it mean to to show up and consent to the Victory of Love as enough and present right where I am?

- My first passion is not on what others see or dare I say even what I see - but on what has captured the vision of my heart!
 - ***Jesus when did we see you...***(not in the trappings of success and power) hungry, a stranger and invite You in, or naked and clothe You?
 - ***When did we see You sick, or in prison and come to You?***
...Truly I say to you to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.

How do we see Jesus?

In my world so filled fears, wants and judgments that can separate each other into parts and perceptions that keep me distant from being present to love.

To surrender to the Victory of love revealed in Christ is enough for me and everyone I touch...that I value the worth of every one made in the image of God.

As we begin each day - what do I see?

Who will I see?

So that morning I began to pray the **Prayer of St Patrick in this way** -
Lord Jesus we acknowledge and consent to you Love as enough.
Christ above me in the vast expanse of the measureless universe
revealing the measureless reality of your love, mercy and grace.
Christ below me in the depths of darkness and brokenness
revealing light, life and beauty.

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Christ before me in what I can see, discern and understand
Christ behind me in what I cannot see, discern and understand
Christ to my right in every gift of strength in my life.
Christ to my left in my weakness revealing power perfected even in weakness
Christ all around me in fill all things in all ways.
Christ formed within me by faith - I consent to your love as enough!

What does holding Jesus look like? How do we 'consent to love'?
Three words come to mind; Faith, Hope and Love

Faith

- *The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. MSG*
- *To the People of the Tribes of Wrestles with Creator 11:1 FNVNT*
Trusting Creator is the solid ground our hope rests on. It means we can be sure of the things we do not yet see.
- Faith is about trust and surrender to the activity of loving God - that means I am surrendered to a mystery I don't control - but it also means that I don't trust everything I see with my eyes!
- I see something different - I can look and see life, beauty and restoration.
- We walk by 'faith' not by sight.

Hope

- In the margin of one of my Bibles that I had taken to a Pastors Prayer Summit - I have this written on Isaiah 43:5-6 'If I am your man then release Your Word' - first in pen 2006 4 years later in 2010 - truth of that story is that we actually laid that hope down completely one year later...but then something just did not feel right - and in wrestlessness I began to search...for a family that had successfully adopted in Nicaragua.
- 3 months later we first meet our daughters following a 9 year story of hope.

Love

- In a world so built around systems of power we as followers of Jesus proclaim this amazing truth we serve a King not born in a palace but a manger, a King who later rides on a donkey proclaiming peace who is crucified and put to death by His own creation is not a very good rendition of a 'Hero' in any movie series - **but it reveals what God knows and Christ reveals.**
- **Love is enough then, now and always - its enough to change my world today.**
- Even my weakest attempts have more impact than you can possibly imagine - this is the mystery of the gospel made manifest in us - consenting to love as enough.

It changes everything...even how I hear these words (What a Wonderful World – L Armstrong)

I see trees of green

Red roses too

I see them bloom

For me and you

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue

And clouds of white

The bright blessed day

The dark sacred night

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

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The colors of the rainbow
So pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces
Of people going by
I see friends shaking hands
Saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying
I love you

I hear babies cry
I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
Than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world

Lets look at that picture again - Simeon's Moment

Here is the truth - not only is Simeon holding Jesus - but the power of this encounter is that Jesus will be holding him - and us...here is the way someone suggest this would sound like – invite you to close you eyes and hear

JESUS WHISPER

Go ahead and laugh with me as you hold me. You carry the source of all victory. And this is truly worth shouting about. I haven't forgotten your prayers and desires. I love reading your heart like a long-studied map. In my plan, you're never alone. Even as you carry me now, I carry you safely home

Consenting to the Victory of the love of God revealed in Christ - my eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord...

To see Salvation is not what you see with your eyes but rather what you see and surrender to with your heart - to consent to the Victory of the love of God revealed in Christ is enough - then, now and always. And that beloved is good news!

Closing Prayer and Communion

God of glory,
you have given us a new name and robed us in salvation.
May we like Anna find our home in your presence,
and like Simeon recognize Jesus as the Christ,
so that, in joy and thanksgiving at becoming your children,
we may join with all creation to sing your praise. Amen.

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