

Resound: Advent 2023 Series Discussion Guides

December 2023

Week 1 - Resound | Simeon's Song



Teaching Text

Luke 2:25-35

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling

and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Sermon Recap

This week, Pastor Suzy Silk began our Advent series with a message from Luke 2:25-35, which recounts Simeon’s encounter with baby Jesus in the temple. While not much is known about Simeon’s life and history, the Bible makes it clear that his life was marked by his faith in God and longing for the promised Messiah. Despite several decades of waiting with no change in his circumstances, Simeon lived a life of unwavering faith in God’s promises rather than one of doubt. Like Simeon, we all have our own longings and desires that we’d like God to fulfill. However, they may not be rightly oriented according to God’s Kingdom. As we look at Simeon’s life, we find a blueprint for holding onto hope in the midst of waiting.

First, Simeon studied the scripture, where he found the character and promises of God, including His promise to redeem Israel through a Messiah. Second, Simeon lived in obedience to God’s laws—the Bible describes his character as “obedient and devout.” This obedience and dedication led him into a special intimacy with God, allowing him to experience intimacy with God and a deep desire for the Kingdom of God.

Through his faithfulness to the Lord despite so many years of waiting, Simeon was finally able to see not only his personal prayers answered, but also recognize the greater picture of God’s redemption of the world through Jesus. Like Simeon, when we rightly order our desires, we can have confidence in the midst of waiting, knowing that one day His promises will be fulfilled. By knowing God’s character and cultivating intimacy with Him, we can experience His comfort, even in difficult seasons where it is hard to “feel” His goodness. Finally, by spending time in the Word, we can even see His redemptive plans for the world and rejoice, knowing that our story ends with victory in Christ.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What practice, activity, or place makes you feel “the Christmas spirit” the most, and why?

Character

Ask someone to read Luke 2:25–35 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?

2. What does Simeon's story reveal about God and His faithfulness?

Consider

1. Pastor Suzy talked about three different types of comfort that Simeon was looking for in this passage. A present comfort for the suffering at hand, a promised comfort that would fulfill God's words to His people, and a Comforter in the form of God Himself.

Where in your life do you long to feel God's comfort? And/or what are a few ways you have experienced God's comfort recently?

2. Simeon's strategy for waiting involved reading Scripture, living a life of obedience, seeking intimacy with the Spirit, and persistently pursuing the Kingdom. Reflect on this strategy and how it relates to your own life. What elements of this strategy do you think you can grow in?

3. Which parts are you currently living out right now and how have you seen God work through those practices?

Cover

What is something in your life that you are longing for or waiting for? Break into groups of 2-3 and pray for each other. Ask God how you can come alongside each other and encourage one another to wait well.



Teaching Text

Luke 1:67-80

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Sermon Recap

In this week's message, Pastor Jon Tyson led us through Zechariah's song, found in Luke 1:57-80, that broke forth after Zechariah and Elizabeth received their promised, long awaited son. Zechariah and Elizabeth serve as examples of waiting well, a discipline that receives little regard in our world of instant gratification. Pastor Jon shared that an inability to wait often robs believers of spiritual development and the maturity needed to carry the responsibility of God's blessings when they come.

In this season of Advent, we are invited to reframe waiting as an asset to our faith, not a punishment, and resist the urge to short circuit God's process by trying to take before He is ready to give. Time often reveals the intensity of our desires, and clarifies our motives before the Lord. Isaiah 40:31 points to the fact that when we wait upon the Lord, our strength will be renewed. He will shore up our resolve in the tension of the in-between, and solidify our integrity and sincerity of our praise.

In Zechariah's story we find that his years of waiting for a child and the months of waiting for his voice to return, produced an obedient heart that clung to the promises of God, that spilled out in a song of hope. Like Zechariah, marinating our minds in the promises of God allows us to look past spiritual deception that entices us to give up our hope, even in the midst of suffering. This refines our reliance on God, and our desire for Him above what He can do for us. Zechariah and Elizabeth endured their years of waiting with a tragic optimism by rooting themselves, not in a hope that they would get what they wanted, but in a hope rooted in God's faithfulness. Through this obedience in waiting, God produced hearts in them that were able to recognize what God was doing and declare it to the world around them.

By attuning our thoughts to the Lord, worshiping Him together with preemptive praise, and spending time in the promises of His Word, we can follow this example. When we persevere in these practices amidst turmoil and uncertainty, we can not only remain strong in the waiting but be strengthened by it, to endure today and to make ourselves ready for Him and what He has in store.

Week 3 - Resound | Mary's Song



Teaching Text

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said:

*“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.*

*His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.*

*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”*

Sermon Recap

This week, Pastor Suzy Silk continued our Advent series, Resound, with a teaching on Mary's Song recorded in Luke. The accounts of the Christmas story given in Luke's Gospel are intentionally noted as eye witness accounts, establishing the story of Jesus' birth as historical fact, not fable or fiction. His approach invites us to receive the Good News of the birth of the Messiah, as true, and respond as Mary did, with great joy.

Mary is a humble, teenage girl in the backwaters of the Roman Empire, but she carries in her heart the deep longing of her people, that God would send a Savior. So when the angel Gabriel comes to her with the news that the Messiah was not only coming, but that she would have the honor of carrying Him in her womb and raising Him up as His mother, a song of wonder and relief bursts from her lips.

Pastor Suzy highlighted five characteristics of God Mary declares in her song. Through Gabriel's message Mary receives the truth that God is mindful of her, and He is mindful of His people. The Lord is able and willing to meet her personal desire to be seen, known, and loved, and He longs to do the same for us today. Mary then acknowledges God as holy. He is set apart, without sin, and consistently good. Yet, His holiness and mindfulness come together in His mercy towards those who fear Him. He is both fully aware and fully gracious towards His people, because He desires intimacy with them. The love the Lord offers is the only one that offers forgiveness at every single turn, making room for us to grow and be loved even in the midst of change. Mary continues by declaring God as just and generous, as He is actively repairing the world and His people by lifting the lowly and emptying the prideful to draw them into eternal life. He desires the full restoration of His creation and His people. Finally, Mary sings of the faithful God who keeps His promises. She is receiving the loyal love of the Father of her ancestors in the form of His very Son, the Promised Messiah.

Jesus is the embodiment of the best love, and the fulfillment of every longing in the human heart. Mary will watch Jesus live a perfect life and conquer death, and witness a love that can receive rejection and offer grace in return. In her song, we find the appropriate response for recognizing and receiving the news of Jesus, offering our whole lives to Him with magnificent and utter joy.

Week 4 - Resound | The Angel's Song (Lessons & Carols)



Teaching Text

Luke 2:8-16

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Sermon Recap

This Sunday, we gathered online for our traditional Lessons & Carols Service. Lessons & Carols is based on a 150 year tradition of telling the story of the birth of the Messiah through the reading of Scripture and the singing of traditional Christmas hymns. To close out our Advent series, Resound, Pastor Jon explored the angels' song that broke forth over the fields where the shepherds were watching their sheep the night Jesus was born. The angels' announcement was a supernatural disruption that brought good news of great joy for all people. The God of glory took on flesh and came to not only dwell among His people, but to save them from sin, satan, death, and hell. Like the shepherds, we are invited to "go and see", and experience anew the wonder of Jesus' miraculous birth this Christmas. Let this story encourage you to join the resounding chorus of Heaven: Jesus, our Messiah King, has come!

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