

The revelation of God

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Luke 2:22-32, 36-38

Some of you may be approaching this new year with a sigh of relief. You have felt a lack of comfort and direction in your life and you think, "At last, 2022 is over. Maybe 2023 will be different."

The Christmas season brought some joy and happiness. In millions of homes, and praises were sung in thousands of churches around the world, the season of celebration took place.

There was rejoicing throughout the world because a little baby was born in a manger. For a moment it was as if the angelic song that the shepherds heard was re-echoed in every heart. The great message "Fear not!" brought some comfort to our hearts.

But that is done now, isn't it? We are in a new year. Many people already have almost entirely forgotten the first note the angels sang—"Glory to God in the highest!" We are ready to move on. It is a new year: 2023!

I hope today's message will help us to prepare our life for 2023, through today's message I pray that we will refocus our life on God again.

In the Christmas carol night, I preached on the night how Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem but couldn't find a place to stay because there was no room for them. There was no room for hosting Jesus the king of kings and Lord of Lords, the creator of the universe. Why? Because people of that town were not expecting the King, and they miss the opportunity to have Jesus in their place.

In contrary here we see two people who have different result than those in the town of Bethlehem because these two people were ready in life and expecting Jesus to come. Because of that they were blessed with joy and fulfilment.

Luke 2

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

In V 22-24 here set the scene of the situation, they were in the temple as it was required by the law to offer their first born to the Lord. So, they offer dove or pigeon to redeem their child. From the items they have offered it shows that they were not that wealthy. There is a study for this, but my focus is not on this. My focus is on verse 25 onwards.

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It had been

revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ 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,

In the verse we just read we see various attributes of Simeon. I believe because these attributes God revealed and guided Simeon to accomplish God's one of the greatest revelations.

1. God reveals His secret to his people v25-26

a) God reveals his secret to the righteous people. V25-26

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout.

V 25 we see that Simon was a righteous and devoted person.

What does the word "righteous" means?

1: acting in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin

2a: morally right or justifiable; a righteous decision

b: arising from an outraged sense of justice or morality.

That mean God will be most likely to reveal his secrete to those who obey the law of God, that is the Bible or live a life that the people or society would think is right. It means we do not have guilty conscience or guilty feeling in our life because we don't do things or say things that we know it is wrong.

Of course, the standard of righteousness is not based on the society's standard because the Bible ways no one is righteous, we are all sinners. So the standard of righteousness should be based on God's standard, his word

Another word whatever the bible says, we do it, even though it doesn't make sense.

E.g. I don't know about you but we were taught to have high integrity by our old church, and God by the bible since we were teenager. The first test came when we bought some fried chicken and the person in the counter gave us a wrong change, she gave us more than what should be. We already left and gone back to our church across the road. If it was you what would you have done? Would you have thought, "Well I have gained some money, I am having chicken with discount, it is her fault that she made a mistake", or will you start to battle in your mind and feel sorry for the person because at the end of the day there will be some money missing in the telly machine.

What will you do? That day myself and my brother's conscious tell us we need to go back. The person was very surprised when we explain the situation to her, we said we did this because we are Christian. Our conscience was set free. That was the foundation of my life. As the Bible says in

James 4:17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

I find that when my conscience is free from guilt God speaks to us. I would communicate with God through the day and he speaks to me, he has become part of my life, wherever I am whatever I do.

b) God reveals his secret to the devout people v25, v36-v37a

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and **devout**.

What is devout mean?

1. Having or showing deep religious feeling or commitment.

Pious, religious, devoted, dedicated, reverent, God-fearing

2. Totally committed to a cause or belief.

Loyal, faithful, true, steadfast, constant

Simeon was devout man, the bible didn't say how he was devout but we can assume he would have lived what was required in the law as he was a priest.

Another devout person was Anna.

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Anna was a devout woman. When Anna lost her husband, she could have married to someone else but she chose not, may be because he loved her husband so much that she felt she couldn't marry another person. Maybe she felt she wanted to dedicate her life to seek after God, as Paul said in book 1 Corinthians 7, it is better to be single as they can focus in serving the Lord. Anna never left the temple and worshiped God night and day, she was devout to God.

God reveals to devout people who would follow him, no matter the cost. Did it cost Anna to go to the temple night and day? If we start a Sunday night service would we all turn up? Not to mention only once a week is a Sunday.

The length of time didn't stop her going to the temple day after day, year after year. Let say she married at 20 years old and her husband died at 27, the Bible says she was 84, that mean 57 years, or if she married in 22 than 55 years of going to temple without stopping. Her age didn't stop her to be devout person to go to seek God in the temple. I don't think she would have said, "I am too old, sore here sore there."

Gregory, even though blind he insists someone to pick him up to bring him to church.

E.g. My dad is 78 years old. He started 5 Evangelical Formosan Churches (EFC) in Auckland, probably the most well-known evangelical Chinese church in Auckland. He has helped solved many problems arise between senior pastor and elders. He is very well respected, well known by the Chinese church pastors and Chinese church community. My dad is such a devout person to God, I am so proud of him.

Devout people will not stop following God even it is hard and challenging. Devout people will not back down from their belief in God, even though people persecute them. Devout people are faithful to God in their ministry. Devout people are people that God can trust to reveal His secret, people who received His secrete will not just leave it and but act upon it. May we be that kind of people.

c) God reveals his secret to the one with expectation. V25b
“He was waiting for the consolation of Israel,”

The word *consolation* means *comfort*. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel, the comfort, that God had promised to Israel. And the Holy Spirit had told him that one day he would see it.

He was looking forward to the consolation of Israel. While the multitudes were comforting themselves with what God had done in the past, Simeon lifted his eyes to the heavens awaiting the fulfilment of the promise, not what God had done, but what God was yet to do.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ, Saviour. Once Simeon had received the promise, he waited for its fulfilment.

How often Simeon must have walked to the temple waiting for what God had promised to do. Would the consolation of Israel be a great warrior king like David or a great prophet like Isaiah? Perhaps he would be like Moses, calling down horrible plagues upon the Roman government that was currently oppressing them as the Egyptians had done centuries earlier.

Simeon demonstrates what it means to be a believer. Faith is being sure of what we hope for (Hebrews 11:1). That means waiting in faith, not for what God has already done, but for what God has promised he will do. Expect that God will do the miracle, look forward to what God will do for you. Don't listen to the enemy's voice saying, "It won't happen, see how long you have waited." Rebuke the discouraging thought and lies of the enemy.

d) God reveals his secret to the one seeks after His heart. V26

Simeon may be a priest because he received the baby Jesus and blessed him. If he was a priest, he would have served in the temple.

Anna as mentioned before, “She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”

²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

What an amazing assurance from God. When there is the assurance from God, we will not be discouraged or lose faith. When our life is right and seek after God, the Holy Spirit will speak to us, reveal God’s will to us.

When I lost my late wife, I thought that was end of my flourishing ministry, end of my perfect family structure. In the most darkest time of my life God promised me my situation is to bring blessing to others, to comfort those who are broken. Though it is painful, even now time to time, but because of God’s promise I didn’t see the loss of my late wife as disaster but opportunities, a blessing to others. I can feel the pain of losing the loved one, I can feel the pain of seeing your loved one in sickness. When I pray, I can pray with more compassion than before.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the early part of this year, what do you want God to reveal to you? Your path, your job, your marriage, your ministry, any of your decisions you need to make.

Do you want God to reveal his secret to you? Do you want God to reveal his promise to you? Then spend time in his presence, read God’s word and let him speak to you.

We would not be in fear when we have God’s revelation, no matter how challenging it will be, we will go forth, no matter how hard it will be we will not give up, no matter how it seems impossible we will not lose faith or hope. When you have that conviction from God, guard that conviction no matter the cost until you see it come true.

Do you have that assurance from God? God want to speak to you, wait on him, and receive his assurance, be patient on what he is doing for you.

2. God will fulfil His promise v27-v32

²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

When our life is right and seek after God, the Holy Spirit will direct us. Just like God directed Simeon.

After long years of waiting and expecting, one day it happened, the Holy Spirit moved him to go to temple court. Then he met Mary and Joseph.

As good Jewish parents, Mary and Joseph brought their firstborn son to the temple when He was forty days old to dedicate Him to the Lord. As they came into the outer court to make

the necessary sacrifices, they were met by an old man. Much to their amazement, the old man asked to hold the baby. Even more amazing are the words that he spoke:

²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

**²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.**

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

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

Understand what an incredible moment this was, the Old Testament saint held in his hands the New Testament, the Word become flesh. Simeon was seeing with his own eyes what God's people had waited centuries to see. He was holding in his arms the salvation of God: not a great king, prophet, or priest, but a little baby. What others couldn't see Simeon was able to see. When you are in God's presence you start to see things that people don't see, you start to understand what other don't understand.

Here was this young peasant girl and her husband making the most meagre sacrifice. They were so poor that all they could afford to sacrifice was a pair of doves, but in her hands was the greatest sacrifice of all—the sacrifice that would give light to the Gentiles and glory to the people of Israel.

Simeon did not have any doubt that this was the promise of God fulfilled. He looked at the tiny baby with the eyes of faith and realized afresh the wonder, sovereignty, and faithfulness of God. He had seen God's salvation. He held it in his arms.

What an amazing moving scene. Simeon was able to praise God from his heart because he has finally seen the promised Messiah, God has fulfilled his promise.

God has fulfilled in my life too. Now God has given me a wonderful helper for my life, and for my ministry. God has given a wonderful mother to my children, and a new extended family.

There will be great joy when we see God fulfil his promise. Not just because we received what we wanted or hoped for, but the joy of experiencing his faithfulness, his love and miracle. We could say, “Wow Lord, you are amazing!” And marvel at his work.

The day will come when all the righteous living, all the devotion, all the waiting are all worthwhile. The day will come when you could rejoice in God's faithfulness and his answer to your prayer. God will reveal and direct you to the promise he has prepared for you. It may not happen while on earth, but it will certainly be fulfilled in our eternal home in heaven.