

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Luke 2:22–40**

**Sermon: “Looking for a Sign”**

The Christmas season for many is over on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December but this is still the Christmas season after a few short weeks of Advent we celebrated and still celebrate the coming of our King and God, Jesus Christ. He was first recognized by the angels and the shepherds, but shortly after his birth he was recognized by Simeon and Anna. It is Simeon’s blessing to God that is directly quoted and used in our Divine Service in the Nunc Dimittis.

Simeon saw the salvation of the world wrapped up in the Christ Child, we see and receive the gift of God in Christ Jesus through Holy Communion. Simeon then responds to God’s goodness with rest in knowing that all God’s promises have been fulfilled.

We, too, respond with that gratitude and rest because of God's work in Christ Jesus that he shares with us through Communion. It is through this gift that we have seen God's promises of Christ fulfilled in our time and presence.

Have you noticed how sometimes it's difficult to see something even when it's right in front of your face. Have you ever stared at one of those 3-D hidden pictures? When you first look at it, it's just a bunch of dots, usually blue and red or maybe some lines on a page that make no sense at all. But as you stare, as your eyes begin to water, as you begin to go cross-eyed, a picture starts to emerge. The image was right in front of you all the time, but it's not easy to recognize. Even more difficult to recognize sometimes is a sign of what God's doing right in front of us. Nothing wrong with the sign; God's put it right here in front of us. Immanuel, God with us.

The problem is, by our own understanding, we can't recognize what that sign means for us. What's more, when folks do see it, many don't want to. Being able to see what God's doing and how he fulfills his promises isn't an easy thing, but, then again, God's Word teaches us that it's not really contingent on us. This recognition happens through and because of God's Holy Spirit.

Simeon was given this promise of seeing the Christ in the person of Jesus before he died, and God fulfilled his promise. But the thing to note here is that Simeon recognized it: ***"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. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said."***

Before we get into what Simeon said, did you catch that? The reason Simeon recognized this sign that God was fulfilling in Jesus was because he ***“came in the Spirit.”*** Simeon was connected with the Holy Spirit. He was described in v 25 as ***“righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”***

Is that where you are? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Yes! In Christ, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to be our Comforter, to be our Counselor, to be our Paraclete—the One who walks with us daily.

When we were baptized, God gave us his Holy Spirit. Every time we hear the Word of Christ proclaimed, the Holy Spirit is active, working in our hearts, opening our eyes.

At the Lord’s Table, it’s the Holy Spirit who assures us Christ’s

body and blood really do give forgiveness and eternal life.

We have the gift of the Holy Spirit because of Jesus' promise and gift to us. Simeon didn't have the Holy Spirit because he was righteous and devout. But Simeon was righteous and devout because he had the Holy Spirit. Simeon responded to the Holy Spirit's presence through a life of listening, responding, and recognizing God's works through the Holy Spirit. He listened to God's Word, listened to what the Holy Spirit revealed to him through the Scriptures, and listened to the Holy Spirit as it moved him to go to the temple that day. He responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting by going and doing what the Spirit said. And he recognized what God was doing because the Holy Spirit revealed it to him.

So, here's what he said: ***"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes***

***have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel”*** (vs 29–30).

The Spirit revealed his action and work in Jesus Christ to Simeon, which opened his eyes and his heart, allowing him to respond in faithfulness, obedience, and devotion. That's an important distinction. It's God's work and action that always comes before our response. God has revealed this sign of Jesus to us, his Spirit has worked this faith in us, and we respond with thanks and praise in a way like Simeon.

But sometimes God's action doesn't evoke such a positive response. Where Simeon responds with this amazing praise to God, so that even Mary and Joseph marvel, Simeon points out that Jesus is salvation to some but can also be a stumbling block.

***“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,***

**'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed'" (vs 34–35).**

The apostle Paul later saw this as well—that Jesus is the source of salvation, but some would respond like Simeon, while others would not. **"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"** (Rom 1:16).

**"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, [while] to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"** (1

Corinthians 1:18, 22–24).

Some will believe, and some won't—even when the same sign from God is right there in front of them. When some see this sign from God, Jesus Christ in the flesh, Jesus Christ crucified, Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead, some will respond with disbelief, disgust, skepticism, and scoffing. The incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection are stumbling blocks to people largely because it makes us pause and look at our own sin.

When we see such a great work that God has done for us, we come to realize that we can't save ourselves. It's God's work and action that does this. It takes the control out of our hands. It takes the power of salvation out of our abilities. It brings us to a point where we have to admit that we can't do it, we can't save ourselves. Simeon's point was about this. We don't have to do

this on our own. It's okay to be dependent on God. That's how he designed it all along. Even in the Garden of Eden when everything was perfect, it was perfect because Adam and Eve rested in Yahweh and relied on him to provide and take care of them. Once they turned toward themselves, thinking that they could find wisdom in their own thoughts and knowledge, that things got all messed up.

But the Gospel, the message that Simeon proclaimed, pointed back to God's salvation and work in Jesus. Not only did Adam and Eve's salvation come in Jesus, but their daily sustenance, their daily walk, their daily leading, counseling, consolation, and redemption came from Jesus through his Holy Spirit.

It's easy to get caught up in searching for signs and looking for God to give us explicit instructions in what to do next, what

job to take, how we're going to get through the next month or week financially. But in all these things God is giving us this assurance that he is here providing for us daily. We need not look to anywhere or anyone else for this. So, rest in him. The signs are all around us, see them feel them know them know Him through the power of the Holy Spirit, Immanuel, God with us. Amen