

The Light That Delivers & Divides

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 October 2023

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] with me please and turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 2. This morning Luke reveals to us what happens when godly parents bring their child to the Lord's house to present him to the Lord. And extraordinary things happen. This is a story right after Jesus was born, of course.

We saw that Jesus was born and laid in a manger and the manger became the focal point of that story. Um, now in this next story what Luke presents to us are the parents who begin and end the story and are in the middle of the story amazed by the things that are said about their son. So that's what I want you to hear, what is said. So if you're able, please stand as we read from Luke chapter 2.

Beginning verse 21 and we will read through verse 39. Luke 2 21, at the end of eight days, when he, Jesus, was circumcised, he was called Jesus. Oh, there you go. The name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. 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. 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, 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. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

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 being opposed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin. And then as a widow until she was 84. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

[4 : 26] And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, help us to see what Luke wants us to see. Help us, more importantly, hear and receive what you want us to hear and receive.

Help us to be, to marvel at what was said about Jesus. Help us to recognize your sovereign timing and these extraordinary people who come to see him.

May we, Father, see what Simeon sees. And may we, Father, be those who experience both the fall and then the rise, having met him.

[5 : 42] We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Today's message.

Today's message, I believe, is hope for those who feel hopeless. For those who have lost their way, who have a sense of no purpose.

Or for those who are oppressed and enslaved to destructive urges. Maybe you today feel an outcast, excluded, alone, and unworthy.

Are you stuck in an unending situation that feels hopeless? Are you living a life where you feel very alone?

Are you in a misery of an endless cycle of harmful compulsions? Do you feel excluded from joys and privileges that others seem to enjoy?

[7 : 03] There's hope. Luke promises that the light of Jesus delivers from darkness, from hopelessness.

And those who come to this light are set free. And those who hate the light are shattered. Luke gives us the simple story as we read it, kind of as John was talking about.

We kind of read, but we don't really dig in. And if we just read the story, we hear the story of Jesus presented at the temple. And some things are said about him. But as we dig into the story and we begin to, as John mentioned, we do inductive, right?

Instead of reading in, we draw out what the Word says. We let the Word speak for itself. We let the Word, what Luke has written, give us the structure and the message and the point of the passage. And so, here we have a story that Luke tells us and frames it in such a way that if we're observant, we can't miss the point.

[8 : 22] We just can't miss it. So, I want you to notice that Luke builds a framework. He carefully structures this story.

He presents it in the form of a chiasm. We've mentioned that before. We see that Hebrew writers all through the Old Testament use this method, this structure.

Because it was an oral tradition, it was easier to remember. So, the story of Abraham is a chiasm. The story of Jacob is a chiasm. The story of Joseph is a chiasm. The story of redemption in Exodus is a chiasm.

And we saw weeks and months ago when we did the survey of the whole Old Testament, the whole story of the Old Testament, surprise, is a chiasm. And a chiasm is where the theme and the topic, the subject is presented, is laid out, and then it's repeated in reverse.

So, we see that in Abraham's life, Joseph's life, etc., etc., etc. And Luke does the same thing. I didn't know it until you read the beginning of the story and you see in verse 22, 23, 24, it mentions according to the law, according to the law, according to the law.

[9 : 40] Okay, they're following the law. The law is important. And then you read verse 39, the end of the story. Oh, they performed everything according to the law. So, you see this framework, the whole story is framed in this where these parents are coming to Jerusalem to do according to the law.

And then when they finish, they've done everything according to the law. Now they journey back to, they go back home. And I thought, could there be a chiasm here?

Because he's beginning and ending with these phrases. And then I look and then in the middle of the story you see, oh, there's this man, this extraordinary man called Simeon. He's righteous and holy and he's waiting for the consolation.

And he's there when they come to present Jesus. And then a little later, toward the end of the story, oh, lo and behold, there's another person called Anna. And she's very extraordinary.

Very extraordinary. She's there too. And Luke says, oh, it just so happened she's there at the very hour. Gee, it's kind of like when Ruth appeared at, you know, just happened to go to Boaz's field.

[10 : 47] Just, of all of you, just happened to go to Boaz's field. As if that's luck. So, what I want you to see. So, Luke structures it so we can see what the point is.

Beginning and ending with the parents who are doing according to the law. Here are godly parents. They follow the way of the Lord. They walk in the law of the Lord.

They are devoted to do what the Lord wants. Joseph and Mary. Simple Jewish couple who have an extraordinary child. And they're going to still follow the law. They're going to get him circumcised on the eighth day.

Then on the 40th day, after Jesus is born, they're going to come to the temple. And they're doing two things, Luke tells us. In verse 22, they're, according to the law, they're doing purification.

Right? Leviticus 12. So, she has had an issue of blood. There has been a child born. God requires a purification. After 40 days, offer a sacrifice for the purification.

[11 : 48] Luke 12. But they're also doing something else. In verse 22, they're presenting Jesus to the Lord. They're fulfilling Exodus 13, where the firstborn is to be presented to the Lord.

Because every firstborn coming from the womb is the Lord's. He belongs to the Lord. He's holy. And they offer a sacrifice to redeem him. Right?

So, they're following the way of the Lord. Then in the middle of the story, we have these two righteous people. We have Simeon, a righteous man, comes to the temple. He's waiting for the consolation.

We have at the end of the story, Anna, a prophetess, comes to the temple. Both are waiting. Both are waiting for this Messiah. And one has been told, you're going to see him before you die. And the impression of the story is, you know, he sees him. Now I can go. Now I can depart in peace. So, in other words, you get the impression that he's toward the end of his life.

[12:50] And then Anna is presented as, she's not just old. She's advanced in years. And then we get the tabulations. She's seven years married. And either she's a widow from the time of her husband's death to the age 84.

Or the text could read, she's actually seven years married, 84 years a widow. And if she was married at age 14, which was normal, she's about 105 now.

I could read. That would sound more like advanced in years. I don't know. But she's extraordinary. So, there's two extraordinary people. Again, we have in the gospel of Luke, old people.

Right? Old people who are significant. Zechariah and Elizabeth. Now we have Simeon and Anna. And they have something to say. Then in the middle of the story, we see Simeon has two things to say.

[14:02] In verse 28, he says a blessing. When he holds the child in his arm, he blesses the Lord. And he makes this statement about Jesus being the light. And then there's a pause in verse 33, the very heart of the story, where the parents, mom and dad, who hear what Simeon says, are amazed at what he said.

What amazes them are the words. And then, again, verse 34, Simeon says a second blessing. And this one he says just to Mary.

It's kind of an aside. Mary, did you know? No. Mary, you need to know. This child. This child. This child. Going to be some conflict.

Going to be some trouble. Going to be some heartache. A sword's even going to pierce your heart. This is going to be painful. He's a light, but he's also a divider.

So, be ready. So, there's the heart of the message. And so, as we're doing inductive studies, we're letting Luke tell the story and then interpreting the story based on how he has structured it.

[15:19] We see that what he emphasizes is what is said. What Simeon says, the double message that Simeon says is the heart. That's what he wants us to hear.

And it's couched in these two individuals who are extraordinary. And then it's framed, bigger frame is the parents.

So, it's about the parents. It's about these two extraordinary people. But it's particularly about what is said about this child that's just a baby being presented in the temple.

He doesn't even speak yet. We don't know. What does he? I don't know. No crying he makes right now. I don't know. You know. This baby Jesus. Already these amazing things are being said about him. Okay.

So, let's dig in. What Simeon has to say ultimately is the fulfillment of the promises that God has spoken many, many years, many, many centuries before this time.

[16:22] Simeon proclaims that this baby Jesus will fulfill, is fulfilling Israel's hope and Israel's division.

Simeon. He reveals two things. Two things that will impact. One is a positive impact. He will be a light for the Gentiles.

He will show the way for the Gentiles to come to salvation. That's positive. He'll make a positive impact. But then to Mary, he says, the other impact he's going to make is he'll be a sign.

There's going to be a rise and fall. There's going to be opposition. He will be a sign which will be opposed. He will bring division. And he himself will reveal whether you're for God or against God. He is appointed from that point on to be the division of all humankind. Starting with Israel. Your destiny depends on your relationship to Jesus.

[17:35] Period. God has determined it. So that's it. So let's look at those two. So first of all, Simeon's first blessing in verses 25 to 33, that Jesus is the light.

Right? He holds Jesus in his hands and he says, now I've seen your salvation. Jesus is the salvation and he's the light. He's the light that reveals salvation to Gentiles.

I would put it this way. He's the light that reveals rescue to outsiders. Because who are Gentiles? Outsiders. Outcasts.

Those excluded. Those in the dark. Those unworthy. He's a light to those in darkness. Okay? He is hope, in other words, for the hopeless.

So let's break this down. He presents to us, verse 25, a man. There's a man. And once again, as I said, we see an older individual who's deeply devoted to the Lord. In fact, he tells us that he's led by the Spirit.

[18:45] Here's a man that he's righteous and devout, reminds us of Zechariah and Elizabeth, reminds us of Joseph and Mary, reminds us of other people devout and righteous and waiting.

But here we have a man who the Holy Spirit is upon him. And then verse 26, he's had a revelation by the Holy Spirit. He's waiting for the consolation, we're told, verse 25.

What is that? What's the consolation of Israel? What's the comfort of Israel? They're waiting for Messiah, the one to come and save them from oppression. Bring comfort. They're under oppression.

They're under misery. They're in darkness. They need a Savior to bring them out. So they're waiting for that consolation, the comfort. So here's a man that knows the promises, that a Christ is coming, is promised, who will rescue and comfort the oppressed.

Verse 26, why does Simeon happen to come to the temple at that moment? Well, it says that it's been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

[19:55] And then verse 27, and he came in the Spirit. So here we have the Holy Spirit mentioned again, right? We've seen that theme in Luke already, right? We see the Holy Spirit working all through Elizabeth.

The baby, you know, baby Jesus is going to be born by the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit from the birth, right? From conception, we see now the Holy Spirit working again in Simeon.

He just happens to come as the parents are there. So we see he's had this promise that he'll see the Lord's Christ, and he comes, verse 27, in the Spirit, the Spirit leads him, the Spirit's driving him, and he comes into the temple.

Just when the parents are bringing Jesus. And so this promise that God has made to Simeon is fulfilled.

Now he has seen the Christ. He comes, and he knows because he's got the Holy Spirit on him. He knows that this child being brought during the purification presentation, that's him.

[21:08] He knows. How does he know that? This is just some Jewish couple from Nazareth. How does he know? He's got the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has shown him this is him.

And so he actually takes him. I wonder how Mary and Joseph feel about that. Here comes this man. Do they know him, right? And he takes the baby from them, and he holds him up, right? Now I can depart.

And there's an interesting concept. I can depart in peace. Think about your death that way. Do you think about your death at all? You think about departing in peace? Here's a man.

He's just got one thing he's waiting for. I just want to see the Christ. I've checked off my bucket list, so to speak. Now I can go. I'm just waiting for that.

So what Luke shows us is that he says he's waiting to see the Christ. And when Simeon takes the baby and holds him up and gives a blessing to God, he says, Now I have seen your salvation.

[22:11] In other words, if I've seen the Christ, I've seen salvation. Now I've seen the Christ. He's just in a little package right now, right? He's not all that he can be yet. But he's the one.

And now I can depart in peace. Now, Lord, you can let me depart. You can let me go. In peace. And then the significant thing happens from verse 30 through 32.

He says, My eyes have seen your salvation. What is this salvation? Verse 31. It's the salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples. Verse 32.

It's a salvation that is a light. A salvation that gives light. A light for revelation, unveiling to the Gentiles.

Now, there's a surprise. In Luke chapter 1, what Zechariah, what Mary had to say about this baby were all about Israel's people. About Israel. And all of a sudden, Simeon talks about Gentiles. [23 : 18] He's not a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. So it's both. But here's the first mention in Luke of Gentiles.

So he's a light. Verse 31 says, I've seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples. That's interesting. What's that? What's that? I would think he would write or he would say your salvation, which has been prepared from, right, the foundation of the world or something like that.

But he's saying this is a salvation which is prepared in the presence of all people. What's that mean? Well, it's like later when Jesus starts his ministry, he comes out of Galilee, and Matthew says, there it is.

He's fulfilling scripture. He's the light in darkness. He comes out of the land of the Gentiles. And the people in darkness have seen a great light. Salvation is being prepared in the midst of all people because as they see him, they see the light, and they're able to come out of their darkness.

God sends his son into a world of darkness. He sends his son into a world of turmoil. And as he speaks and as he ministers, his light begins to shine, and people either see that light and come to it or hate that light and hide from it.

[24 : 47] One or the other. And he's a glory to Israel. So he's a light to the Gentiles and a glory to Israel. That's how so.

Well, the Messiah comes from who? Israel. Right?

The Jews. Salvation is from the Jews, right? God chose Abraham. And then he chose not the first son of Abraham, but second son of Abraham.

And then he chose not the first son of Isaac, but the second son of Isaac. And then he chose not the first or the second or the third son of Jacob, but the fourth son of Jacob, Judah.

And at that point, when Jacob has 12 sons, we have a nation. We have the birth of a nation. By the time they get to Egypt, they're a big nation.

[25 : 52] But they're being suppressed, right? So you, but the Messiah is coming through Israel. So it's glory. It's glory to Israel because there comes the light.

The light comes from Israel. Doesn't come from anywhere else. Comes from Israel. Comes from Jacob. Comes from Judah. Comes from David. Comes from Joseph and Mary. Comes from Jesus.

That's what he means. By the glory. Coming from Israel. And by the way, we read in John 3, 16, you know, that Jesus says, you know, God so loved the world that he gave his only son, right?

That whoever believes in him shall have eternal life. God didn't love the world after Jesus came. Well, that verse tells us that God so loved the world that he sent his son.

So when did God love the world? When did God decide to love the whole world? Because he picked the Jews, didn't he? Did he not love the world then? Yeah, he loved the world because he was planning through the Jews to bring salvation to everybody.

[26 : 58] Right? What did he say to Abraham? I will bless you. I'll make your name great. And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. Right? So his love for the world was from the beginning. It was before Israel was a nation.

God loved the world. So. So that he's a light to Gentiles. So, okay, Abraham talks about this promise going out to all the families of the earth.

Does the Old Testament speak about the Messiah being a light to the Gentiles? Well, surprise. Yeah, of course it does. Isaiah. In fact, Isaiah 40, what we call Isaiah chapter 40 through chapter 66, are a section of the prophecy of Isaiah.

It's one scroll of Isaiah that particularly highlights God's reaching out through Israel to the world. And he emphasizes that he's sending his servant.

My servant. He keeps repeating that over and over again. My servant will come and bring comfort. My servant will come and bring a light. My servant will come. Right? So, let me take one passage, two passages from Isaiah.

[28 : 20] Isaiah 42. Again, 42.1. God, speaking through Isaiah, says, behold, my servant. Who's my servant? Well, my servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him.

He will bring justice to the nations. Nations. Gentiles. A little bit later. I am the Lord. I have called you, my servant. I have called you in righteousness.

I will take you by the hand and keep you. And I will give you as a covenant for the people and a light for the nations.

Or Gentiles. A light for the nations. How? I want you to look at the next words because this explains how the light functions.

In what way is Jesus the light? In what way is this servant, the Christ, being a light to the nations? A light for the nations, what? To open the eyes that are blind.

[29 : 21] To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon. From the prison, those who sit in darkness. That's why I said at the beginning, this is a message for those who feel hopeless.

Who are in the dark. Who have lost their way. Who have no peace. They feel, they're in a prison. They feel enslaved to destructive compulsions. Or enslaved to their hopelessness. Enslaved to their loneliness.

And God has provided a light. Come to the light and be set free. Isaiah 49.6. God's plan has always been for all the world.

He seeks all the lost. He's always offering light to those in darkness. He says in Isaiah 49.6. It's too light a thing. Again, speaking to his servant.

[30 : 24] Speaking about the Messiah. It is too light a thing that you should be my servant. And raise up the tribes of Jacob. And to bring back the preserved of Israel. That's your mission.

Your mission is to go to Judah and Israel. Your job is to go to the Jews. But it's too light a thing that that be the only focus that you go.

You need to be bigger than that. I will make you as a light for the nations.

See? Not just raise up Jacob. And not just bring back Israel. Yeah, you're doing that too. But you'll be a light for the nations.

Why? So that my salvation. There's the connection of light and salvation once again. That my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. I'm not just looking at this little parcel of land in Israel.

[31 : 26] I'm looking to the end of the earth. I want every tongue and every people and every nation to know the truth. To see the light. So once again, light and salvation are connected here in Isaiah.

Which is what Simeon connects as well. God saves by sending light to open eyes and free the slave. God loves sinners.

He has sent his son as light in darkness. And so those who come to the light are set free as God works on it. Remember how 1 John talked about that? Remember how 1 John talked about God is light?

Right? And that we come to the light. But when we come to the light, what happens? It shows our sin. Right? And so what does John say?

We confess. And then we're clean. So naturally, what we do when we see light is if we're wanting to hide our darkness. Right?

[32 : 28] We hide. Or we... Right? So following Christ means to do something that's counter natural.

It's to come into the light. And we don't like doing it. But that's how we get clean. That's how we have fellowship with God. We come... He cleanses us.

Right? So... And that's the light. That's the cleansing effect of the light. It takes people out of the dark. Because light exposes. And so we either respond to light by coming to it and taking its cleansing effect.

Or we... We push it away and we hide. And when we push light away and we hide in the dark, how's it go?

You know? How are we doing when we do that? Right? We live in our guilt and we live in our shame. And then we're in the dark so we don't even really know what's going on.

[33 : 38] Right? So God is offering light that exposes but cleanses and sets us free. So those who come to light are set free.

But the light is also an exposure. And those who love the darkness hate the light and refuse the light. So the first impact, what Simeon's first blessing shows that this Jesus is the light that reveals rescue to those in darkness.

Those who are outside. Those who are excluded from, you know, the privileges that others have. And then verse 34, he has a second blessing.

Right? Then in verse 32, excuse me, 38, he took Jesus up in his arms and he blessed God. So it was a praise. Now in verse 34, Simeon blessed them.

So he's blessing the parents. He's blessing Joseph and Mary. And then Luke tells us that he said to Mary his mother. So this message is for Mary.

[34 : 44] That's interesting, isn't it? Why Mary? Well, we're going to see Mary through the rest of the gospel of Luke. And she's going to be involved in Jesus's ministry in different ways.

And in fact, next week we'll see the first little episode. Right? When Jesus is 12 years old. How do 12-year-old boys act? Well, Jesus is not a normal 12-year-old boy.

But Jesus was still a 12-year-old boy. And mama has trouble with that. So anyway, we'll get that. So here's the second one.

The second one. The impact is to Mary and others. And it seems to be a negative one. He says that Jesus will be...

Well, he says he's appointed. This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel for a sign that is opposed. And a sword will pierce your own heart so that many hearts are revealed.

[35 : 50] So let me summarize it this way. The second blessing is Jesus is a sign that reveals opposition of many hearts. Just kind of summarizing the whole thing.

He's a sign that reveals opposition of many hearts. So it's called a blessing. It says he blessed them. But then he... Is that a blessing?

It sounds more like, you know... That's kind of a rough blessing, right? I guess that's like Jesus always had, you know, blessed are the poor, blessed are the hungry, blessed are the persecuted.

I guess that's still blessing, right? So he says this sign is appointed. He's laid. He's destined. This is his purpose. This child is a sign that will cause division.

He is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel. Excuse me. I keep reversing that. Simeon said he's a sign...

[36 : 56] No, he's appointed for the fall and rise. It might be significant that he says fall and rise first. Because we all have to fall, don't we, before we rise. We all have to be broken before God lifts us up.

But I think he's also saying there's going to be... For some in Israel... For many in Israel, many are just going to fall and that's it. But there will be those who rise. There's going to be a division. So I guess I want to make this statement.

I see here a really strong statement. That one of the purposes of Jesus coming, not only then but now, is that everyone, all are separated by how they respond to Christ.

You will either be revealed as a sheep or a goat. You will either experience life or death. You will experience peace or conflict.

You will either love the light or you will hate the light. You will either experience healing or you will experience shattering by your response to Jesus.

[38 : 13] He is the sign of the rise and the fall. He is a sign. So what do you mean by sign? Well, a sign, you know, we think of a sign.

A sign indicates something, right? A sign is a marker. It's a pointer. It points out something. It might say go that direction, right? Or merge left or stop, you know, or go. Signs.

So Jesus is, in some sense, a sign that indicates something. And what he's indicating is there will be opposition. That when he shows up, when his name is mentioned, when he is proclaimed, whenever he is encountered, he will cause division.

And he will say that himself later, right? He'll say, hey, families will be divided over me. So Mary, did you know?

He's an indicator. And what he indicates is that there is being opposition. Actually, Simeon says it in the present tense. It's already being, he's already being opposed.

[39 : 23] Even as a child, he's already being opposed. That's weird. It's kind of like, he's just a child. How can he already be opposed? But there's already people there who are set against the Messiah.

At least this Messiah. We all want a Messiah hero that rescues us and delivers us from all our troubles and anxieties, right? This isn't the guy.

He's that guy ultimately, but first, he's going to stir things up. He's opposed. First, those who will speak against him, those who will deny him, those who will dismiss him.

And then a little aside to Mary, verse 35, and Mary, by the way, a sword will pierce through your own soul also. Wow, what does that mean? That doesn't sound good, does it?

A sword will pierce through your own soul. So it's very personal. Your son, Mary, will pierce your soul. So what's the soul? He didn't say heart, he says your soul.

[40 : 26] He's going to talk about hearts later, but now he talks about soul. What's soul? When the Bible uses the word heart, what's it talking about? Feelings?

No. Thoughts and intention, right? He's going to say later. He's going to reveal the thoughts of the hearts. So the heart in Hebrew is the thought, the intentions.

So what's the soul? David says, my soul, what? Is in despair. My soul also thirsts for God.

So what's my soul? It's my deep affections, right? It's my deeper emotions. Where I have affection. Where I can go high and I can go really low.

I can be in despair. I can be downcast, right? So Mary's affections are going to be pierced. In other words, she's going to feel pain.

[41 : 25] This son is going to bring her grief. He's going to majorly conflict with her expectations of what he's supposed to be.

And we're going to see that down the line. All right? We're going to see stories where Jesus is talking to his disciples and somebody comes in and says, hey, your mother and your brothers are here. They want to talk to you.

And what does Jesus say? Who's my mother and my brother? What? Who's my mother and my brother? I'll tell you who my mother and my brother. They're the ones that listen to me and do what I say.

Which implies what about mom and brothers? They're on the outside. They're in conflict. They're there.

They're trying to follow him, but they don't like the way he's going. Honey? Jewish mom, right? Honey?

[42 : 21] Let's get you off right focused, right? Honey, let me save you some pain. This is how you're supposed to do it. Started at a wedding, remember?

He's going to cause some disturbance for her. Why ultimately is Jesus this sign? Why is he appointed for the rise and fall and a sign of opposition?

The whole purpose, he says at the end of verse 35, is that so that thoughts from many hearts, hearts may be revealed. See, what Jesus is going to do ultimately, he's going to cause division, but ultimately what he's doing is revealing the thoughts of the heart.

He's exposing what people really think. Because however they act, remember Jesus says out of the heart comes what? Everything, right? All your intentions, all your thoughts, out of the heart comes all.

That's the source of all that you do. He's going to expose that. He's going to expose your doubts. He's going to expose your motives. He's going to expose your ideas, your intentions, your rebellion, your sinful state.

[43 : 39] He's going to reveal, all of that's going to be revealed when you're encountering Jesus. And everyone, this is not my opinion, this is what scripture is, everyone responds to that one way or another.

You either accept it, embrace it, because you go, yes, or you're offended and you repel it, you dismiss it.

Even when you say, I don't care, I just dismiss it, that's still a response. And it shows that you hate that light. Now, you may not believe that's... And by the way, all of our encounter with Jesus, our first encounter with Jesus, did that not...

Was that not our initial response? I mean, that was my initial... Growing up, my initial response is... I don't care for that.

I don't know. We had swords in the heart and flies in the hair. It's a wasp. Oh, a wasp. Yeah.

[44 : 45] Just keep it out there. That's a sign of... I don't know. So then he kind of closes the story in verse 36 through 38 with this woman that comes.

Suddenly, there's this prophetess who comes. She's an elderly widow. It's debatable whether she's actually 84 at this point or she's 105.

Because the text reads... Where am I? 36. Prophetess Anna, daughter of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin. By the way, you know, seven-year marriage. It had to be hard for her. Don't you think? I mean, it's hard to lose your spouse anyway, but after only seven years, that'd be tough. That'd be tough. So she's not a woman that's, you know, callous to pain.

[45 : 54] And then, verse 37, then she's a widow until she was 84. Could also read, she was a widow as much as 84 more years.

So if she was married at 14, add seven, she's 21. Then add 84, she's 105. It doesn't matter. But for me, I like that because then advanced in age means, you know, way older. Sorry. It doesn't matter. What strikes us about her is the last statement in verse 37.

She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. What a woman. What an extraordinary, extraordinary.

For decades. Spending her what could be time of misery and loneliness and, and, and I don't know. [46 : 57] I don't know what that's like. I can only imagine. Naturally, absolutely despairing. But she spends it in the temple.

Fasting and praying. That's not normal. Right? But it's exemplary. And then verse 38. Because she's always in the temple. And undoubtedly, Mary and Joseph have seen her many times because she's always there. They probably met her. She's probably blessed them before.

She's, and then all of a sudden she comes up at that very moment. Just so happens. Right? Right when they're presenting. And Simeon's still talking probably. And here comes Anna.

And she's the prophetess. So we expect her to have a message. Isn't that interesting? She's the prophetess. And we don't get to see what she says.

[48 : 03] We hear what Zechariah, I mean, Simeon says. But she does speak. So at that very moment, she gives thanks. Right? And then she speaks of him, of this child.

She speaks of him to all who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. So she prophesied. She was a prophetess. She's going to be preaching Jesus to everyone who will listen. He's here.

The deliverer's come. Our salvation is here. He's here. He's here. Okay. He's only 40 days old, but, you know, he's going to grow up. And then, you know, things are going to happen. This sense that Jesus reveals opposition, this sense that Israel's Messiah will be rejected is not new news.

Again, in Isaiah, God talked about this. This was not a surprise. This is something God intended. God intended his son to come and be a savior, a light to the world, but to be rejected.

Because then his rejection leads to what? His death on a cross, which accomplishes what God really wanted. It was necessary for him to be hated and rejected so that he might be killed and might take our place and accomplish the true salvation that sets us free from our real darkness.

[49 : 49] Here's what Isaiah 8 says. The Lord spoke to me again. Because this people has refused. This is God talking about Israel, his own people, rejecting him.

Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloh that flow gently. And instead, they rejoice over Rezin and the son of Ramaliah.

Therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing against them the waters of the river, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks.

And it will sweep on into Judah. And it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck. And its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land.

Oh, Emmanuel. There's a little sarcasm there. Oh, God is with us. Oh, you think God is with us? You've rejected God.

[50 : 52] It's now going to sweep over you. You reject the gentle waters that I give you. You want waters? I'm giving you waters from Babylon or from Assyria.

In a sense, he's saying you trust something else more than the Lord. You seek security and peace elsewhere. Guess what? A crash is coming. In fact, he goes on.

He says, be broken, you peoples, and be shattered. Give ear, all you far countries. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing.

Speak a word, but it will not stand. For God is with us. For the Lord thus spoke with me, spoke with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, meaning Israel, saying, Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy.

Do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.

[52 : 05] Let him be your fear. Let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel.

A trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken.

They shall be snared and taken. This, God speaks to his people. And I say to you, it's the same today.

If you do not turn to the Lord, you will stumble. You will fall. Your plans will not stand. You shall be shattered and you shall be shaken and broken in pieces.

Do not seek life, hope, security in anything other than Jesus. Because the only light that delivers from your darkness is Jesus Christ.

[53 : 19] What difference does all this make today? I don't usually do this, but I saw... But I saw four applications.

I don't usually do applications at the end, right? It's kind of like try to weave them in there or know that you're intelligent enough to get it. But I saw four here in this story that just jumped out at me in the story of Luke that are both light and sword that pierces several kinds of people.

First of all, what I saw was older people and a widow. It struck me. Here's some unusual folks. And both are waiting for the comfort of Christ.

If you're older... I don't know. When do you get... I don't know. Or if you're a widow in that, you could be a widow long before you're older. How...

How... Look... All I say is look at these two people. How they spent their time.

[54 : 27] Especially Anna. Wow. Devote your time in life to serve the Lord.

Then there's an application to the outsider. This light to the Gentile, right? So the outsider. To the outcast. The person who's in darkness.

The person who doesn't really know anything about all this Jesus stuff. Except maybe what you heard and dismissed. But there's an application for the outsider who's in the dark and have lost their way.

And maybe are enslaved to these harmful compulsions. Right? That I can't break the shackle of this sin. That not only...

Not only... Enslaves me, but... Is destructive in my life. How do I get free from that?

[55 : 24] It's a picture of those in prison, right? What I say to you, the application is Christ can rescue you. Christ can set you free.

He can open your eyes and He can set you free. There's an application for parents. Did you see it? You saw it already, didn't you? An application for parents who bring their child to the house of God. And walk in the way of the Lord. Who... And for us, we keep Jesus in front of our children. We keep Jesus in front of our children.

Constantly. And we resist the temptation to do other things and show our children a distraction from the Lord.

Instead of maintaining an obligation... Not an obligation. Please don't. But a devotion. That our kids can see this day is important.

[56 : 25] This time is critical. Because it's not the single days that we come. It's the... It's the... The buildup of it.

It's not a single sermon that makes a difference necessarily in someone... You know, 10 days down... Maybe just 10 days down the line. You're not going to remember anything I said.

But... It's not that. It's the spirit of it. It's the ongoing exposition of it that makes the impact. And for parents today, I'm worried.

Parents today that don't see the devotion to this time, this hour as absolutely critical. And then we're going to get 20 years down the line and wonder, why don't our kids ever go to church?

Why don't they care? And that can happen even if you're devoted, but... I'm not saying that, but... You won't have to...

[57 : 28] And then finally... There's an application... For the opposer. Maybe you're fighting Jesus.

Maybe you're fighting the idea of Jesus. Maybe you don't think of it as fighting because you don't even think it's important. You just dismiss it. It's like, you know, I don't believe any of that. Well, in God's eyes, that's fighting and that's opposing.

And for all who come to Christ, that's actually a first step. It's okay. But... But... Recognize this. The application for the one who's hating the light or dismissing the light, know this, that you will rise or

fall by how you are related to Jesus.

You will live or die. You will experience joy or misery. You will experience peace or conflict by how you respond to Jesus. Jesus. He's the light that sets you free.

He's also the light or the sign that brings you to a point of decision that will determine your destiny.

[58 : 43] So, let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. I thank you for the care and meticulousness and the...

As Luke said, he set out to write an orderly account. Well, boy, he has done it orderly. So that we can see and then we can ponder and we can think about this.

So, we can appreciate the godly parents. We can appreciate the godly people in this story. But what must fill our minds are the words that Simeon said about this child.

Help us to encounter those words and take them with all seriousness. And Father, I pray that for each one of us, all of us has some hardness.

All of us has some part of our life maybe we want to hide in the darkness. Expose that, Lord. Make us willing to bring it into the light.

[59 : 57] So that we might be set free and stop believing the lie. This we ask in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.