



The Patient Man (Luke 2:21-39)

What time were you up this morning? How many times did you disturb your mum and dad to ask them what time it was? If you lived in Portugal, you'd find people are more impatient - they open theirs at midnight!

What about this guy Simeon? He had been told by God that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah - the person that God was going to use to rescue his people. We don't know how long he had been waiting but it was probably some time.

He's another of the unsung heroes of the Christmas story. If you were here on Sunday you would have heard about Joseph and how God had given him the special honour as acting as an earthly father to His Son, even though he was not Jesus' biological father. God takes ordinary people and makes them special.

So who was Simeon? We don't know very much about him other than this:

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 upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 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,

He was just some guy living in Jerusalem who was told to get himself down to the temple courts. So what do we know of Simeon?

■ He sought to be close to God

Because Simeon sought to be close to God, he found that God wanted to be close to him. And he got to know things that had not been revealed to Herod or the Pharisees or the teachers of the law. In fact, unlike the shepherds or the wise men, he had a pretty good grasp of what was going on.

How close are you to God? Whether you are a Christian, or someone seeking after God, or just interested we have found that a theme in our Christmas services this year is that God desires to be close to us.

The Father's statement of intent was the entry into this world of His Son Jesus Christ to die for us. The Son is described in John's gospel as being the Word of God. In coming to this world, the Word was a statement of God's intent and desire to know us and pour out His love and grace upon us.

There is an old chorus that says "*Draw near to God and He'll draw near to you*". It's so true. If you don't know Jesus this morning then the good news is that He wants to know you! Why not come to Him and find that He's done everything necessary to deal with all the things that keep you separate from God, to find forgiveness, to find eternal life and to be made a son or daughter of the living God.

But if you are a Christian this morning and feel distant from God - then which one of you moved. You did! But praise God, as a loving Father He still wants the closeness of His company. At this Christmas-time, come and find His closeness.

☐ He obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit

Simeon was different to almost all the rest of them as he was one that actively sought God. Most of the people in the Christmas story needed an angel to tell them what was going on. But the Holy Spirit was on Simeon. He didn't need someone to be specially sent from heaven to get the message. He walked close enough to God to hear the Spirit's prompting and get to the temple. He knew the voice of God and followed what was said it would appear without asking questions. And what he found there was Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus who had just arrived to present Jesus for circumcision. God speaks to us. Are we listening? What are we doing about it? When we hear, and obey then we see what an amazing God we have!

☐ God revealed His mind to Simeon

What's interesting about Simeon is he knew exactly what Jesus had come for. By that I don't mean what He was there for then, but what He was on earth for. So as he lifted Jesus into his arms he testified what he knew:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." 33 The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him.

Mary and Joseph wondered what it was all about - they didn't know the score really. But this guy Simeon had the whole plot. He was close to God and God's mind had been revealed to him. Jesus was to be the saviour of all people, not just Jews, but Gentiles - everybody.

Simeon is the model of the patient man. He waited on God and for God and God revealed His mind to Him, and the day when Simeon held Jesus in His arms was the most amazing day of his life because he understood the meaning of it all. And he was happy to die from that point on *Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.*

God wants you to know the deepest things of His heart. In other parts of the NT we are told how God has made known to use the mysteries - the secrets - of His will. That's God's desire for each one of us, whether we know Him already or whether we don't. God wants us to spend time with Him as Simeon did and let the Holy Spirit speak to us and make us understand.

That's the message to us in Christmas 2003 - to be people who actively seek the presence and mind of God. What about you? Maybe you need to accept Jesus for the first time. Maybe you've known Him for years. Whatever, the deepest things of the heart and mind of God are unfathomable and without limit. Wherever we are there's more to go.

Let's be Simeons this Christmas and seek and know His will, for His glory.

