

Contrasts in Waiting

In Samuel Beckett's 1950's absurdist play, "Waiting for Godot," a pair of tired, forgetful and cantankerous bums try to kill the time as they wait for a mysterious individual named Godot. Each day they try to remember why they were waiting for Godot in the first place. They talk about leaving but never quite get around to it. They contemplate other things, but never quite get around to them. At the end of each day a small boy arrives to announce that Godot will not be able to make it today, "But definitely tomorrow." And so they wait. While Beckett, the playwright, denied it, the most common interpretation of the play is a standard theme in popular and artistic culture: that we are waiting for a God who is not coming to intervene in our desperate situation.

The Bible tells the story of another sort of waiter. In the gospel of Luke, Simeon was told that he would not die before he saw with his own eyes the Messiah. He finally saw Jesus in the temple and responded, "my eyes have seen your salvation." The story could not be more different than Beckett's tale. Simeon saw that God had recognized our desperate state and staged a gloriously humble invasion. As we look at Simeon's story this week, we are reminded that we wait on a God who hears and acts and is worth waiting on.

Monday – A Man of the Spirit

"Let us pray that we too might stand in the temple, hold the Son of God, and embrace him, and that we might be worthy of release and going on to better things." – Origen (second century theologian)

1. Think of something you had to wait a long time for. What was your waiting experience like? Read Luke 2:21-35. What was Simeon's waiting experience like?
2. How many times does Luke mention the Holy Spirit in this narrative of Simeon? (vs. 25-28) Why do you think mentions the Spirit so many times?

Digging Deeper – Why do you think Simeon seems sensitive to the leadings of the Spirit? Is there a connection between the things the scriptures tells us about him and his apparent connection to God?

Tuesday – Salvation in the Presence of All Peoples

"Salvation for all sorts and conditions...He was manifested to the wise and powerful [the Magi as kings] as well as the simple and lowly [the shepherds]; both righteous (Simeon and Anna) and...[wizards like the Magi]; to men... [and] women. Thus he showed that no condition...is excluded from Christ's salvation." – John Saward, "Cradle of Redeeming Love"

1. Read Simeon's response in Luke 2:29-35 (focus on 29-32). Who does Simeon say Christ has come for? Why might it have been surprising that Israel's Messiah also had a redemptive purpose beyond Israel?
2. Can you think of other non-Jewish characters in the Christmas story? What do these observations suggest about the scope of God's plan in Christ?
3. What three things does Simeon say Jesus will do or be, in verses 29-31? Choose one of these and consider how it was actually fulfilled in the life of Christ.

Wednesday – A Mother's Fears

"[Simeon] tells Mary that the child shall cause a sword to pass through her own soul, a figure that is made more graphic because the term chosen for sword...designates a very large broad, two-edged sword. The figure points to Jesus' bringing extreme emotional pain to his mother." – Darrell Bock

1. Read Luke 2:22-35. Read verses 33 and 35 carefully. How do these verses contrast with each other?
2. One of the primary characters of the Simeon story is Mary. What does Simeon tell her regarding her newborn Son? What does God's call on her son require of Mary?

Digging Deeper – Are your relationships with children or parents more characterized by verse 33 (marveling) or 35 (piercing)? Is there someone close to you that has followed a path somewhere (good or bad) that has pierced your heart? If you have children not yet grown, have you considered the need to give them up to God for his purposes? Just as he did for Mary, God can guide you through the good and the bad of family relationships.

Thursday – A Dark Cloud Over the Proceedings

1. Read Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2: 29-35. One theologian said of Christmas, *"The cross casts a long shadow over the crib."* Where do we see that theme emerge in this passage?
2. What do you think Simeon meant when he said, "This child will cause the rising and falling of many?"
3. Most Hebrews at this time expected the Messiah to be a popular conquering war hero who will free Palestine from Roman occupation. Does Simeon seem to have similar expectations? Does he expect the Messiah to be well received? Do you find the Messiah to be well received among the people you know today?

Friday – Nowhere to Hide

"Only in the choice is the heart disclosed and this, indeed, was why Christ came to the world – to disclose the thoughts of the heart." – Søren Kierkegaard

1. Read Luke 2:35. Then read what Christ said years later in Luke 12:1-3.
2. We think that our thoughts and words are unknown to all but a few. Rarely do we consider them to be more public than they are. If we really believed what is being said here about Christ, how would it change our way of living?

Digging Deeper – Knowing that he knows everything about you, and yet still loves you enough to pursue a relationship with you, what does that say to you about the nature of grace? What does it tell you about our need for grace?

The Scrolls are designed to work in tandem with our Sunday services to maximize the benefit of God's Word in our lives. The Scrolls can be used with a Spiritual Life Notebook, which is available Sunday mornings at the info. table in the Plaza. The Scrolls, along with companion materials for small groups, are also available online at www.fbcdavis.org.