

## **In Pursuit of A King Part 2**

We continue our Advent series this morning, In Pursuit of A King. Last Sunday we looked at the magi, a group of non-Jews who came searching for the king of the Jews. We compared their story to that of anyone who comes in pursuit of a king, searching to find and to know God.

This morning we are looking at a different kind of God-seeker, one who already knew the Lord. He wasn't a gentile like the Magi coming from a distant land. He was a Jew, living in Jerusalem. He was a godly man, devout and righteous, a student of the law and the prophets. He was also a man with a secret and a passion, for this man had a promise from God that kept him focused, that kept him pursuing God for a lifetime. It is amazing how a word from God can keep you going even when you have to wait a long time for its' fulfillment.

This man's experience, his pursuit of the king reminds us that seeking the Lord is not a one-time event, rather it is a lifetime commitment to continue to grow in our relationship and in our knowledge of the Lord.

The man we are talking about this morning is Simeon and his story is found in Luke 2. Simeon teaches us not only about the importance of seeking God, pursuing him, but about the importance of pursuing the will of God and the fulfillment of God's plan for our lives. There are several lessons we learn as we study Simeon's pursuit of the king.

Like the Magi, we don't know a lot about this man outside of what Scripture tells us. Tradition says he was 113 years old. The bible says he was righteous and devout, coming daily to the temple to worship, to study the scripture, seek the Lord, and to wait. You see the bible tells us "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ." So day after day he waited and watched, literally he was a God seeker, seeking for the one who would be Messiah, the Savior of the world.

**"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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in**

**the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’” Luke 2:25-35**

Luke gives us our only glimpse into the first days after the birth of Jesus. Luke 2:21 tells us Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and given the name Jesus. This was according to the law and the instruction the angel had given Joseph and that could have been done in Bethlehem. But verse 22 tells us the time of their purification had been completed (another Jewish ritual) and so 40 days after Jesus’ birth the family made the short journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to the temple to obey the Old Testament Law concerning first born sons. It was at this moment that Simeon encountered the Holy family and began speaking to them.

Think about this. Simeon didn’t know when this would happen, when the Messiah would be born, so he waited, faithfully, going to the temple everyday. Imagine, going to the temple everyday, watching people come in, wondering if that could be the Messiah. Imagine him reading the words of the prophet, “And a virgin will conceive and bring forth a son and call his name Immanuel.” “What can that mean Lord?” “Those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned...for to us a child is born, a son is given...” What does it mean? When will it happen?” Simeon must have thought, “I wait in darkness, but I know you’ll reveal your light at the right time and when it happens, I will be here!” He was committed.

Simeon waited, not knowing who he was waiting for, or how he would know him or recognize him, or how old he would be. He just knew his assignment, his mission, his purpose was to pursue the king, to seek after the Lord. Simeon was a God seeker and you need to know, **God seekers aren’t concerned with how much time it takes.**

Seeking God, pursuing the Lord and a deeper relationship with him is not a hobby, not hit or miss. It is a life consuming passion and mission. God seekers aren’t concerned about how much time it takes because they are enriched by the journey. It’s a lifetime of discovering the riches of his mercy and grace. Seek him and you will find him. That’s his promise. **“Call on me and come pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:12** God seekers are transformed by the process,

enriched by the journey, confident of the outcome. If you are a God seeker, keep seeking, keep pursuing him and a deeper, richer relationship with him. Don't ever stop pursuing Jesus!

Simeon knew God had promised he wouldn't die until he had seen the Messiah, but time was passing, he was growing older. Where did he get that confidence, that faith to keep trusting, to keep seeking and pursuing without doubting or giving up? Let me show you three things that allowed him to keep pursuing the king while he waited for his arrival.

**Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit.** Notice what the Bible said. **“The Holy Spirit was upon him...It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit...moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts.”** Simeon was focused on being led by the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit reveals the plan and purposes of God to the believer. The Holy Spirit takes all that Jesus has secured for us by his victory at the cross, all he has for us and makes it known to us, He brings it to us and births it into our life. The Holy Spirit is the one who speaks a word of promise in your heart, that makes God's word come alive in your life and spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that directs, reveals, teaches, convicts and convinces, that produces the character of Christ in us. The Holy Spirit wants to lead you into God's truth, he wants to direct your steps, your conversation. He wants to use you and lead you every day. If you are in-tune with the Holy Spirit, trusting him and his guidance, he will lead you and direct you, even if you have to wait. Allow yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit. Simeon trusted the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It was the Spirit that spoke to Simeon that morning. “Go to the temple courts.” “Moved by the Spirit” the bible says. But if he was moved by the Spirit, it means Simeon was listening to the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Lord, direct me, direct my steps, help me to listen and to say yes to your guidance today.” But how did he know for sure it was the Spirit of God speaking to him?

**Simeon was taught by the word of God.** Simeon knew the promises of God from the word of God. He knew what the prophets had said concerning the birth of a coming king who would be called Immanuel, wonderful counselor, Mighty God. Simeon was attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but being attentive to the voice of the Lord may not be enough if we don't know how to distinguish God's voice from all the other voices that are speaking. Walter Wangerin wrote, **“We must learn Scripture in order to distinguish God's voice from, say, the voices of our own yearnings. Even just to know that it is God talking – and not our**

**strong desires, which can delude us after all – we must hear him speaking where we know for sure it is him: in the bible.” ...Walter Wangerin**

Simeon needed more than just a thought in his mind or even a witness in his heart. “This feels right to me.” He needed to know the word of God! “Is a Messiah coming? What will be the sign?” And Simeon knew the word, trusted it to give him direction and definition and that gave him confidence to wait patiently for the Messiah’s arrival. You must know God’s word!

**Simeon was obedient to the will of God.** It’s just that simple. Simeon didn’t despair, he didn’t give up, he didn’t tire of waiting because he was committed to obey! “This is what God told me to do so this is what I’ll do. This is what God’s word says to do so this is what I’ll do. This is how I’ll live.” A lot of people know what the Bible says, they just don’t do what the bible says. But they still expect God’s blessing and favor in their life even though they are living in disobedience. It doesn’t work that way. Victory comes as a result of obedience to God and to his word, his plan, his purpose.

Like Simeon, to be God seekers, in pursuit of the king for a lifetime, we need to be led of the Spirit, to know the word of God and obey the will of God. As a result, Simeon saw the salvation of the Lord and the glory of his people Israel. Simeon held the Son of God in his arms and blessed him and rejoiced. I would say seeking God and obeying him paid off for Simeon. God was faithful to Simeon and he will be to you as well. But remember, Simeon still had to wait and for most of us, that’s the hardest part. Simeon waited day after day, year after year to see the promise of God fulfilled in his life. Still seeking, still pursuing, but still waiting while the fulfillment of the promise was delayed. What do you do while you wait on the promise of God to be fulfilled in your life?

**Acknowledge God’s sovereignty and by doing so, accept his timing.** First of all, let’s agree that God is Sovereign. He stands above every other power and authority and He rules and reigns with ultimate knowledge of all things, past, present and future. If we believe that to be the case, that he is above all and is all knowing and all powerful and eternally present, then we should be able to accept his timing in the events of our lives.

We don’t understand God’s ways or his delays. We get frustrated and angry, upset because things don’t happen when we want, or the way we want. We start to think God doesn’t care about us because what he promised or what we’ve prayed for hasn’t happened yet. It hasn’t happened in our timing. Bear in mind, in the same passage in Isaiah 55 where the Lord tells us

to seek him, he also reminds us that his thoughts are above our thoughts and his ways are above our ways. We expect God to act according to our calendar, but God acts in what the bible calls the “fullness of time.” God knows when and how and why and what’s best, so we should trust him, his ways and his timing. Simeon knew God was in control so he could rest in Him and trust in His timing. We should too!

**Acknowledge God’s sovereignty and by doing so, accept his faithfulness.** Because God is God we know he is trustworthy and faithful. He is the one who sent his Son to die on the cross for us, while we were still sinners. He loves us and we can trust him! People may let us down, they may fail us and betray us, but the bible says, **“God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” Numbers 23:19** God said it, God promised it, he spoke it so he will bring it to pass for Simeon, for you, for your family, in your circumstances, because he is faithful. It’s who he is! In Jeremiah 1:12 God tells the prophet that he was watching over his word to see that it was fulfilled. God is going to do what he promised. Trust him and then you can wait patiently. Here is something else I believe Simeon knew that we need to remember.

**Don’t doubt in the darkness what God spoke to you in the light.** I’m sure there were seasons in Simeon’s life when he must have thought he had missed God. “I’ve waited for years and still God’s promise hasn’t been fulfilled. I must have misunderstood.” In the dark, he had to rely on what God had said to him in the light.

Some of us know what it is to cling to the Lord in the darkness, to keep pursuing the Lord and following him when you can’t see the next step. “Where is he? Where is the promise? When is he going to come through for me like he said?” Tired, weary, but we keep on waiting, we keep on trusting because we know what God said to us in the light. The Psalmist said, **“Commit your way to the Lord...Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath...for evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land...and enjoy great peace.” Psalm 37**

Keep pursuing the King. Keep looking to Jesus, even in the dark. Keep trusting him, that what he promised, that what he spoke to you, he is going to do it. Evil people and their schemes seem to be succeeding, but don’t be overwhelmed, don’t give up. He is faithful. He will keep his word. He is going to show up at the right time, just as he did for Simeon. You’re

going to discover his peace if you'll keep seeking him and keep trusting him. Don't stop! Don't give up! And, while you wait for the fulfillment of God's promise to you...

**Remain determined to be led by the Holy Spirit.** The longer you wait for the promise to be fulfilled, the easier it becomes to be distracted by a thousand different things. We start to be led astray by our own heart, by our own feelings, emotions, desires. "What difference does it make? I can't see that pursuing God is making a difference. I've been waiting for the answer to my prayer forever and nothing has changed. God has forgotten me." We tune out instead of tuning in to the voice of the Holy Spirit and His leadership in our life.

What if Simeon had said, "I'm done. I've been going to the temple everyday for years and the Messiah hasn't shown up. I'm finished with it all. I'm staying home from now on." What if he had given up? What if he had ignored the leading of the Holy Spirit that moved him to go to the temple courts that day? He would have missed the answer to his prayers. He would have missed the very thing he had been waiting for. He would have missed the fulfillment of the promise. Remain faithful and keep listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit as he leads you.

**Remain determined to be righteous and devout.** That was the description the bible gave of Simeon. Sold out, committed to serving Jesus, to living a life of holiness and faithfulness to God. There was no compromise in Simeon. It had been a long wait, long years of serving the Lord, pursuing him and his purpose with no sign of the promise, but he never wavered, never stopped, never gave up.

Have you thought about giving up? Walking away from Jesus, from the faith, from the promise? I think if you asked that of Simeon he would have said, "Giving up? Why would I give up now? The longer you wait, the closer you are to the victory. I'm almost to the finish line. I can almost see the light of his coming glory. The fulfillment of God's promise has got to be nearer than ever so this is no time to quit. Instead, it's time to double down, to be even more faithful, more steadfast, more committed than ever."

Church, now isn't the time to quit. If you are a God seeker, press in. It's later than it's ever been. We are closer to eternity than we've ever been. We are closer to the coming of the Lord than we have ever been. If you are pursuing Jesus, then you should be closer to him than you've ever been. His glory is about to be seen in ways you haven't seen before. Get closer because he has blessing and provision you haven't experienced before. It's no time to quit.

**Remain determined to be a worshiper.** God seekers are worshipers. You can't help it. The more you seek him, the more you know him, the more you want to worship and praise and honor and give thanks to God! Simeon took Jesus in his arms and began to worship and praise God! "Sovereign Lord, you've kept your promise! This is your salvation, the Savior you've sent." Simeon worshiped and gave thanks at that moment because that's what he had been doing all along. Everyday in the temple, praising, worshiping, thanking God, seeking the Lord, pursuing the king, expecting the fulfillment of the promise.

During the long nights, waiting for God's timing, waiting for the promise, keep worshiping, keep praising, keep thanking the Lord. Keep acknowledging him and his faithfulness and his goodness and his timing. He is worthy of worship and praise.

And finally, what happens for those who persevere, who refuse to quit, who pursue Jesus and keep on seeking him? God seekers see God! **Those who pursue the King see the King!** The wise men saw the king. Simeon saw him! God honors God-seekers with Himself!

Keep seeking. Keep pursuing the king and he will reward you with himself and when you have Jesus, you have everything! Hear the word of the Lord again from the prophet Jeremiah. **"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity."** **Jeremiah 29:13-14** From that place of brokenness, that place of bondage, that place of pain or hopelessness or despair, that place of exile and loneliness, he will bring you back, to a place of healing, hope, laughter and peace! Keep pursuing the king. Keep seeking him and his ways and his will for you and for your life.

Have you grown discouraged? Have you abandoned hope? Have you given up on God's promise? Be encouraged. God is calling you to trust again, to hope again, to live again, to believe again. You can't see the way forward right now, but trust him! His glory will be revealed, his plans and purposes will come together at the right time. Learn the lesson from Simeon. Keep pursuing the king for those who seek him will find him!