

RECAP **SLIDE** ANGEL TREE

- Over 100 kids - 60+ families
- Thank you gift buyers, delivery team, communication card writers.
- Youth group/FCA - Pastor Kyle & Jordan Wright - stockings
- Mickey & Jeannine Clemons. Maryse Martin. Karena Bost.

INTRODUCE **SLIDE** ADVENT

Alright, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Luke chapter 2.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Luke 2,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Luke 2 on page **857**.

INTRODUCTION: ADVENT

So, Advent is kinda weird for me,

- because I didn't grow up in the church,
- and so the word Advent had very little meaning to me.

In fact, before getting saved when I was 16 years old,

- I think the only association I had with the idea of Advent...
- was an Advent Calendar...
 - which for us, wasn't the Christian thing...
 - with devotionals you do each day...
 - to prepare for the arrival of baby Jesus.

No, it was this cardboard thing my mom bought at the grocery store:

- filled with chocolates!
- Which helped us countdown the days
 - until a fat white guy,
 - broke into our house,
 - ate some of our food,
 - and left us stuff that we certainly thought we deserved,
 - but really didn't.

ILLUSTRATION: FIX MY LIFE

And then I started following Jesus...

- and I thought that since I had Jesus in my life...
- now things would get fixed!

'Cause I heard that Jesus was called the **Prince of Peace**...

- and so, and if he brings peace,
 - and I've got him,
- then my life should be peaceful....
 - especially at Christmas time!

But when I started to look at my reality...well...it didn't look like that.

Like, it was only a couple years after becoming a Christian...

- that my parents got divorced.
- and that first Christmas after was when I realized...
- that it was forever changed.

And it was my second Christmas after marrying Maryse...

- when she got very sick,
- and it began a 10-year journey with an undiagnosed illness...
- which marked our first decade of marriage.

And it was the day after Christmas in 2011...

- when my mom was rushed to the emergency room...
- with extreme pain in her abdomen...
- and we got the news that no one wants,
 - least of all at Christmas...
- that she had cancer.

You see, all this stuff happened right as we are celebrating **peace on earth!**

- And it's like, *"Hey, where's my peace, Jesus!"*

You see, for some of you,

- He's supposed to be the Prince of Peace,
- but when you look around your life,
- it isn't looking super peaceful.

TRANSITION

Well, we've been preaching through Luke 1 & 2 for our Advent season,

- And today we are introduced to a man named Simeon...
 - and a woman named Anna.
- **SLIDE SIMEON & ANNA**

And there's something in here about the KIND of peace that Jesus brings.

So, let's get into this. Luke chapter 2, starting in verse 21:

LUKE 2:21

[21] And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

EXPLAIN: CIRCUMCISION

Now, just to catch you up to where we're at in the narrative:

- Jesus,
 - the Son of God,
- is born in, basically...the alley behind a La Quinta.

We'll talk about that next Sunday.

But this text is AFTER his birth,

- and now he is being taken through the ritualistic acts...
- necessary for Jewish births.
 - They would circumcise boys on the eighth day.

Verse 22:

LUKE 2:22-24

[22] 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 [23] (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") [24] and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

EXPLAIN: PURIFICATION

Now, those verses are a compilation...

- of a couple more Jewish rituals...
- necessary after the birth of a child.

The circumcision happened. But after that:

A purification ritual was necessary for Mary.

- Because after childbirth,
- women were considered unclean,
- and needed to present an offering for their cleansing.

And then, it says that they were **presenting Jesus to the Lord**.

- Which is a practice from the books of Exodus and Numbers...
- concerning the firstborn son.

It's kinda similar to what we do in our child dedications.

EXPLAIN: TURTLEDOVES

Now, an interesting thing to note in these verses is the sacrifice made.

- It says they offered **a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons**.

Leviticus 12 is a chapter called "Purification After Childbirth"

Ever wonder why you give up on your Bible Reading Plan in Leviticus!?!

- Well, it states that the mother of a male child...
 - 40 days after giving birth...
- was to go to the tent of meeting
- to offer a sacrifice of one lamb AND one turtledove!

But then, according to that same chapter:

- if she couldn't afford a lamb,
- then her sacrifice was to be two turtledoves...
 - or three french hens...
 - and a partridge in a pear tree.

And like I said two weeks ago,

- this is how we know that Joseph and Mary were poor.
- They offered the offering of the poor.

Again, God did not, and does not, come to the self-sufficient.

Ok, now onto the strange part of this section. Verse 25:

LUKE 2:25-26

[25] 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. [26] 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.

EXPLAIN: SIMEON

And so, already, we see in the text that this guy Simeon is a little out there!

- Cause he's the guy telling people...
- that he's not going to die...
- until he sees the Messiah...
 - kinda like the end of the world guy!

For the record,

- at this point,
- it's been 400 years...
- since they've heard a word from God.

And he's saying that the Messiah's coming before he dies!

But the part of those verses that is so important is stated multiple times:

- all this **had been revealed to him...**
- **by the Holy Spirit.**

POINT 1

And it's my first point about this text:

SLIDE JESUS IS REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

Luke says that it was the Holy Spirit...

- who gave Simeon the insight...
- about this baby being the Christ.

And that's actually the only way anyone ever accurately identifies Jesus.

- You need the Spirit of God...
 - to open your eyes to the majesty of Jesus.
- You don't do that on your own!

APPLICATION

So, some of you aren't believers in Christ,

- and you think you're kinda...searching for him...or something!

But I'm telling you...theologically,

- the only reason why you're even interested in searching...
 - is because the Spirit is drawing you...
 - and opening your eyes!

And if you do believe that Jesus is Lord...the Holy Spirit put that in you.

And that's good news!

- That's really good news for me, as a pastor and preacher,
 - 'cause that means it's not up to me...
 - and my sermons to reveal Jesus to you.
- But that's also good news for all of us.
 - 'Cause listen, there are people in your life...
 - who you want to become Christians...
 - and while you have a part to play in that...
 - it's not on you to make them believe!

That's the Spirit's job!

But that also means...

- that everything that happens to you...
- that might disrupt your peace...
- is under his sovereign control as well.

TRANSITION

So, that's who we've got in Simeon.

The Spirit has revealed that he would see the Messiah.

Verse 27:

LUKE 2:27-29

[27] 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, [28] he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, [29] "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

EXPLAIN: WILD!

Alright, now think about what's just happened:

Mary and Joseph show up to church on child dedication Sunday...alright?

- And some crazy old guy in the Temple,
- runs up and snatches baby Jesus from momma's arms,
- spins around,
- and starts saying, "Now I can die!"

THAT'S WILD!

And listen, you try to pull that here...

- I mean we've got security here, man...
 - you come in here...
 - and grab a baby...
 - bro, we'll tase you!

I mean, this is a wild scene!

Verse 29:

LUKE 2:29-32

[29] "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

[30] for my eyes have seen your salvation

[31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

[32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."

EXPLAIN: WAITING

So, the text says that Simeon...

- was waiting for "the consolation (comfort, the relief) of Israel."
- And now he sees it in Jesus...this baby.

This was the PEACE that Simeon longed for.

- You see, the Jews longed for political deliverance.
- For nearly 700 years,
- Israel had been subject to oppression by foreign powers.
 - It had started with the Assyria and Babylon exiles;
 - but then came the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans
 - under whose rule they were now...

Hey, anyone looking around at the world today wondering...

- *“What is happening to the world?”*
- *And God, when are you going to bring peace on earth?”*

That was the PEACE that Simeon was longing for.

- And the Spirit reveals to him...
- that this little baby Jesus...
- was the solution.

Hey: He is for our world, as well!

Verse 33:

LUKE 2:33-35

[33] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. [34] 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 [35] (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

POINT 2

Now here’s where things get confusing.

Consider all that Simeon says:

- This child is God’s salvation...
- a light for revelation to the Gentiles...
- for the glory of Israel.

BUT...

- Many will fall.
- Many will rise.
- And a sword will pierce your own soul.

Now these messages seem incongruent.

- God's salvation and light and glory...
- will pierce and expose and divide.

It's my next point. **SLIDE JESUS BRINGS PEACE THROUGH CONFLICT**

Like I said in my intro,

- sometimes I look around and think,
 - *"Well, if he's the prince of peace..."*
 - *he's not doing a very good job of it!"*

But that's because...

- I don't think we really understand
- HOW it is that Jesus brings peace.

He does it through CONFLICT.

- Jesus came to bring peace THROUGH...
- a sword that goes right through your heart.

Jesus says this very thing in Matthew 10:34...

SLIDE MATTHEW 10:34

[34] "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

ILLUSTRATIONS

Uh...so, that kinda messes with that whole Prince of Peace thing...

- Jesus says, *'I did not come to bring peace...but rather a sword!'*

Can you imagine how this would mess up our Christmas marketing?

- Three french hens, two turtle doves, and a SWORD?!?

But this is HOW Jesus brings PEACE...

SLIDE JESUS BRINGS PEACE THROUGH CONFLICT

So, Maryse and I just rewatched Band of Brothers...

which is an excellent show about the 101st Airborne in World War II.

- But HOW did the US military bring PEACE in Europe?
 - They picked a fight!
 - They entered the conflict!

HOW does a surgeon bring peace to your body when it has a tumor in it?

- The surgeon spills your blood.
- The surgeon cuts you open.
 - It's the only way for your body to have PEACE.

So, what is it?

- Does Jesus come to bring PEACE or a SWORD?
 - Yes.
 - It's both.
- He comes to BRING PEACE THROUGH CONFLICT.

EXPLAIN: WHAT KIND OF PEACE?

And what's important is what you mean when you say the word PEACE.

You see, what most of us think about when we think about peace:

- is we think about a CIRCUMSTANTIAL PEACE
 - We think about favorable circumstances,
 - or comfort,
 - or safety,
 - or self-satisfaction.

That's primarily what we mean when we talk about PEACE.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL PEACE.

But the Biblical understanding of peace is much richer than that.

The Bible talks about the idea of **Shalom...**

- that's the Hebrew word for peace.
 - It means everything as it should be...
 - wholly connected with God.

And so, Jesus is saying,

- *"If you're only looking for circumstantial peace..."*
 - *I didn't come for that...*
- *I came to bring all things back into unity with God...*
- *And that's gonna require some conflict.*
 - *Cause we're at war!*
 - *There's a surgery that's necessary!"*

TRANSITION

Now, let's look at verse 36, and our second character.

LUKE 2:36-38

[36] 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, [37] and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. [38] 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.

EXPLAIN: ANNA

And those verses are literally all we have about Anna...

- She gets a whopping three verses!

And really, only one verse is about what she DID. Right?

- Verse 38 says that Anna comes up...
 - at that very same hour as Simeon did...
 - on the day that Christ was presented.
- And in response to witnessing Jesus' dedication,
 - she gives thanks,
 - and she praises God.

She sees what so many there missed:

- that in this child was the Redeemer of Israel!
 - Same as Simeon!

But, verses 36 & 37 are very interesting.

- They don't chronicle WHAT ANNA DID...
- but rather, WHO ANNA WAS.

EXPLAIN: ANNA'S EXPECTATIONS

We're told that she was married for seven years,

- so assuming she was married at age 13 or 14,
 - which would have been normal in the ancient Near East,
- she would have been widowed by her early 20s.
- And then for the next sixty-some years she lived as a widow.

It's safe to say that no girl dreams of her life turning out this way...

- having your husband die young.

That's happened to some in our church...

But especially in those days.

- Widows usually had few ways of providing for themselves,
 - which meant they were often very poor,
 - with no one to take care of them.

I think we can say Anna represents someone for whom life has turned out very differently than she expected or hoped.

POINT 3

And it's here that I'll make my final point.

SLIDE JESUS REDEEMS OUR EXPECTATIONS

- JESUS IS REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT
- JESUS BRINGS PEACE THROUGH CONFLICT
- And JESUS REDEEMS OUR EXPECTATIONS.

So, back to the last point,

- if Anna had put all her hope in circumstantial peace,
- her life would have been over six decades earlier!
 - All her EXPECTATIONS would've been shattered...
 - with the death of her husband.

But that's not what happens!

- For six-decades she dedicated herself to ministry in the temple!

Now, that's not prescriptive for all widows...

- But it does show...
- that you can find peace...
- in the midst of broken expectations.

APPLICATION

Hear me, if you're looking for circumstantial peace, you'll never find it.

- You won't find it in your work...
- you won't find it in your hobbies...
- you won't find it in money...

- you won't find it in experiences...
- you won't find it in parenting...
- you won't even find it in marriage.

And hey listen...even if you did...

- Even if you find the circumstantial peace,
 - which you won't,
- but even if you somehow do...
 - if you make all the money...
 - and you ski every mountain...
- if you have tons of friends...
- and toys galore...
- and a long happy marriage...
 - and you and your spouse both die together...
 - in your sleep on the same night...
 - like in The Notebook...
 - which listen, doesn't happen!
 - Cause it's fiction!

But listen, even if you get it...you'll lose it.

Jesus says, in Mark 8:36,

- what does it profit a man to gain the whole world...
- and forfeit his soul?

You see, back to Simeon...

- the only way you can depart in peace...
 - the only way you die in peace...
- isn't to find circumstantial piece...
- it's to be in a relationship with the Prince of Peace.

We live in a world that cannot satisfy.

BUT...if we can get beyond circumstantial peace,
and look at the Prince of Peace...

- then we can begin to comprehend
 - that he is better...
 - that he is in control...
- even over our circumstances...
- even over our unmet expectations.

Jesus did not come to bring circumstantial peace...but rather he is peace.

- Jesus doesn't promise to make everything better in your life,
- he says, I am better than life.

And that's what I see in Anna.

- All her expectations...
 - for how life should've worked out were shattered...
- and yet, they are redeemed by this little baby...
 - her savior.

CONCLUSION: SURRENDER

- So, what's the answer?
- What's the solution to the PEACE problem?

SLIDE W/PADS SURRENDER YOUR PEACE TO JESUS

You have to surrender your circumstances to the Prince of Peace.

You surrender your PEACE to Jesus.

I don't know what kind of pain you have in your life right now...

- Maybe it's the loss of a loved one...
- or prodigal children...
- or you're about to go home for Christmas
 - to a family that's broken...

- or this is the first Christmas without that person...
- or you're not sure how you're gonna pay for this Christmas...

Whatever it is...

Have you surrendered all those circumstantial things over to Jesus?

- Do you realize that when you surrender your life to Jesus...
- you are primarily surrendering control?

You're opening your hands, and saying,

- *"God, my circumstances are all jacked up...*
- *but I trust that your ways are better than my ways."*

Jesus says this very clearly in John 16:33:

SLIDE JOHN 16:33

[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

- Not in your circumstances,
- but in JESUS you may have peace.

And then he goes, in the very next sentence....

SLIDE

In the world you will have tribulation.

He's just said, *"In me you will have peace...AND, life is a mess!"*

- Some of you are like, *"that's my Christmas."*

But finally, Jesus says...

SLIDE

But take heart; I have overcome the world."

ENDING

So, if you are in a situation this Christmas,

- and you need the Prince of Peace...
- to rule and reign in what seems to be circumstances...
- that are completely out of control...
- it's not lost on me today.

There are all sorts of things here that make this season difficult.

- I don't want to take anything away from that.
- I understand those things.

I have those hard things associated with this season AND I'm not naïve to the brokenness that is represented among our church.

- So, whatever it is...
 - I don't want to minimize your circumstances...
- BUT I do want to call you to find peace...
 - that transcends those circumstances.

So in just a minute, what I'm going to invite you to do,

- is to go back to one of our prayer team members...
- and have them pray over you.

We offer this every week,

- but as we enter into the Christmas week,
- I just want you to take advantage of the opportunity...
- to be prayed for.

True peace is the offer that's on the table.

- But peace is a person.
- Not a change in circumstances.

Let's pray together.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Bock, Darrell L. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Luke 1:1-9:50.
- Chandler, Matt. *Jesus Brings Peace*.
- Greear, J.D. *The Christmas We Weren't Expecting*.
- Hughes, R. Kent. Preaching the Word. Luke.
- Keller, Tim. *Peace Through Conflict*.