**December 27, 2020 Luke 2:22-40**

***A Bucket List***

**Scripture:** Luke 2:22-40 NRSV

*(22)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 firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), (24)and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (25)Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. (26)It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. (27)Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, (28)Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, (29)"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; (30)for my eyes have seen your salvation, (31)which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (32)a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (33)And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. (34)Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed (35)so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed--and a sword will pierce your own soul too." (36)There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, (37)then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. (38)At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (39)When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. (40)The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.*

**Notes:**

1. The one item on Simeon’s List, to see the ***Lord’s*** ***Messiah***.
   1. When Mary entered, Simeon knew, ***Jesus*** was the ***one***!
   2. This child was the salvation of ***all*** ***peoples***.
   3. To say Christ had come for ***all*** ***peoples*** is radically new.
2. Luke, was a ***Gentile*** writing his Gospel to ***Gentiles***.
   1. Jesus bring salvation for ***all*** ***people*** really is Good News!
   2. “Why the emphasis on Jesus’ ***Jewishness***?”
   3. Jesus’ ***Jewishness*** fulfils the Law and God’s promised salvation for ***all*** ***people***.
3. This movie call into question, the ***value*** ***of*** a having a bucket list; and the ***content*** of that bucket list.
   1. What things have you ***avoided***?
   2. What things could you be ***doing***?
4. In Christ you are longing to ***live***!
   1. The first thing on our bucket list should be a sincere hope to see ***Christ*** as well.
   2. Our bucket lists could contain things, flowing from a life of ***faith*** grounded in Jesus Christ.
   3. Discover the ***joys*** of faithful living through things taken for granted and people we see regularly.
   4. As disciples of Jesus Christ, it’s about living ***faithfully*** and ***fully***
   5. It’s about a bucket perpetually poured out in ***love*** for God and ***love*** for neighbor.

**Script:**

It’s the time of year for lists, so why not a Bucket List? A few years ago, I watched a movie titled The Bucket List. It’s the story of billionaire Edward Cole and working-class mechanic Carter Chambers. They are thrown together in a hospital room having nothing alike except a terminal illness. While sharing a hospital room, finding out that they both have less than a year to live, they decide that they should make the most of the time that they have left. Chambers decides to make a bucket list, and Cole decides to join him. The two become close friends and travel the world doing the things on their bucket-list. These men have their ups and downs as they cross things off their individual lists. But after a disagreement and not talking for a while, Cole is asked to speak at Chamber's funeral. Cole decides that he will cross off another item on the list. The end of the movie shows that both of these men, after passing away, have finished their bucket lists, their cremated remains were placed together on top of a very high mountain. Edward finally finds the joy in his life, as Carter Chambers changes a stranger's life forever.

Do you have a Bucket List, a full Bucket List? You know, a list of things you want to do before you “kick the bucket?” Sure, it’s a slightly crude way of looking at our inevitable demise, but it does call us to focus on living and not dying.

In our passage today we see a man who has a bucket list in a way. His name is Simeon and he hangs out in the temple. Everyday he stays there waiting, waiting for a promise to come to pass. Turn with me to Luke 2:22-40 and stand with me as we share in the reading of our text this morning.

Luke 2:22-40 NRSV (22)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 firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), (24)and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (25)Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. (26)It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. (27)Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, (28)Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, (29)"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; (30)for my eyes have seen your salvation, (31)which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (32)a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (33)And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. (34)Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed (35)so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed--and a sword will pierce your own soul too." (36)There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, (37)then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. (38)At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (39)When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. (40)The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Simeon had a Bucket List, a very unusual Bucket List. We’re told that the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would see the Lord’s Messiah before he died. So, it was just that one thing on Simeon’s Bucket List? No trip to Hawaii or climb up Kilimanjaro; no French dinner in Paris at midnight or afternoon with Meryl Streep? Just one thing — see the Lord’s Messiah? That’s a pretty big “one thing.” As it turns out, it was even bigger than Simeon thought. We’re told that Simeon was looking forward to the “consolation of Israel.” In other words, he was looking forward to the salvation of God’s people, Israel. But look at what happens. The Holy Spirit reveals to Simeon (we’re not told how) that he would see the Lord’s Messiah before he died. Everyday Simeon would look for a child born the Messiah. Every day, as parents brought their children to the Temple for the rites of purification, Simeon would look to see if maybe this one was the Christ.

When Mary and Joseph appeared in the Temple with Jesus, Simeon knew, he just knew this was the one! He took the child in his arms and that’s when something happened that no one anticipated, not even Simeon. Simeon gazed into the baby Jesus’ eyes and declared that this child was not only Israel’s salvation, but the salvation of the Gentiles as well! We don’t catch the magnitude of this statement because we’ve been brought up Christian. We believe Jesus Christ came for the salvation of all people, *“(16)For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (17)Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17 NRSV* To say the Messiah, the Christ, had come for the salvation of Israel was one thing, but to say the Messiah, the Christ, had come for all people, well that was something else, that was something radically new!

A couple of things to remember here. Luke, our gospel writer, was a Gentile writing his Gospel to Gentiles. Do you remember how Luke’s gospel begins? Luke states that he is writing to the “most excellent Theophilus…you might know the certainty concerning the things in which you were instructed.”(Luke. 1:3-4) Luke wrote his Gospel to a Gentile audience through a high-ranking official named Theophilus. Incidentally, we don’t know who Theophilus was, but we do know his name meant “friend of God.”

So to hear that the salvation Jesus brings is for all people is really quite striking. It really is Good News! Nevertheless, it appears Luke goes out of his way to show Jesus’ Jewishness. Five times in our text we are told that Jesus’ family observed the Law. Jesus’ life begins with fulfilling the Law and coming to the Temple. The whole family comes to the Temple for their “purification.” Mary, as a new mother, was to undergo a rite of purification 40 days after she had given birth. The usual sacrifice offered after the rite of purification was a one year old lamb, along with a pigeon or a turtle dove as a sin offering.  (Lev. 12:6, 8)  But if the family could not afford a lamb, two turtledoves or two pigeons could be offered. The fact that our text mentions a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” tells us that Jesus’ family was too poor to bring a lamb unless of course we read this symbolically and see the lamb to be offered as Jesus himself.

So we have to ask, “Why the emphasis on Jesus’ Jewishness from Luke, the Gentile?” Well, I think it has to do with the need to connect Jesus with the God of Israel. Jesus was not just a son of a god, he was THE Son of THE God! And not just any god/God, but THE God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of creation. The God of the Exodus. The God of the wilderness. The one and only true God, not one of those fake Greek or Roman gods. It’s through Jesus’ Jewishness, that Luke places his gospel in a larger context, a bigger story. Through Jesus’ Jewishness, the story of the Messiah becomes the story of the Law fulfilled and the living out of God’s promised salvation for all people.

In the movie *The Bucket List*, we find two cancer patients who become the most unlikely of friends and they end up spending three months together; each fulfilling a “bucket list” of things they’d always wanted to do before dying. What they discover is that their bucket lists really have more to do with living fully and faithfully than giving up and waiting for their demise. They end up discovering that what gives them the greatest joy are not the selfish, self-centered items on their bucket lists, but the things they took for granted, like a meal with family or the love shared between friends. For one of these men, they have to learn the hard way. It takes the death of his friend to re-engage with his estranged daughter it takes the loss of a close friend to realize a valuable lesson, to sense the saving grace that flows from forgiveness. There’s nothing earth shattering in the movie, nothing terribly profound. But it does perhaps call into question, the value of a having a bucket list; and the content of that bucket list.

What is on your bucket list? What things have you avoided in living your life wasting valuable time, because you are afraid of what may happen, wasting time because you are too stubborn to ask for or offer forgiveness, wasting time because you are too proud to admit when you may be wrong. What things could you be doing by trusting in the leading of the Holy Spirit by listening to that still small voice, by stepping out on faith and doing what you think you may be called.

Our larger context is the Christian faith. Do you believe that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ? Do you believe that God’s gift of eternal life begins right here and now? Do you truly know the grace of forgiveness? Do you truly know the joy of faith? So maybe a Christian Bucket List is something you ought to consider. Not because you’re afraid to die, but because in Christ you’re longing to live!

Maybe we can learn something from old Simeon. Maybe the first thing on our bucket list, should be a sincere hope to see Christ as well. If that were on our bucket list, it wouldn’t take long to discover the fact that we can and do see the Messiah, the Christ, each and everyday when we look for him. We see God’s saving Son in acts of care and compassion, in the love we share as the family of God, in the forgiveness we experience, and the forgiveness we extend. Beyond that, our individual bucket lists could contain a whole host of different things, but they would all find themselves flowing from this larger context, a life of faith grounded in Jesus Christ.

Don’t get me wrong, there’s nothing wrong with wanting to go to Hawaii or climb up Kilimanjaro, or have a French dinner in Paris at midnight or an afternoon with Meryl Streep. It’s more a matter of discovering the joys of faithful living, that come to us through everyday life, through the things we take for granted, and the people we see regularly. God is at work in our everyday, touching our lives, calling us to greater heights of love, discipleship, and service. For us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, it’s always been about living, living faithfully and fully and not worrying about dying for Christ has done the dying for us. As disciples of Jesus Christ, it’s not even about a full bucket, but a bucket perpetually poured out in love for God and love for neighbor.