

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 27th December 2020
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: One off for the Sunday after Christmas
Title:
Passage: Luke 2:22-35
Outline: **Identification** – Jesus’ obedience
Salvation – Jesus’ sacrifice
Revelation – Jesus’ divisiveness

INTRODUCTION

- As COVID has taken off in Sydney once more, upsetting the Christmas plans of so many... state borders closed again...
- ...as overseas... so many being infected every day – dying every day – and a new strain of the virus in the UK which is ever so much more infectious than the initial strain has been discovered...
- And as we head into a new year filled with so much uncertainty... we can’t say we’re starting afresh... we have no confidence that that indeed is the case...
- someone said they will unusually stay up to midnight on new year’s eve this year not so much to see the new year **IN** but to make sure the **old one leaves....** But in reality – we are in much the same position at the beginning of the year as we were at the end of the old one...
- and as I ponder these challenges and all the uncertainty with which we are living... // it becomes every so much clearer to me that the world needs to know of the **salvation that Jesus came to bring... //**
- Our reading today... is a great blessing... because it reminds as we continue in the infant narratives... it reminds us of just how significant Jesus’ mission and purpose is...
- so from Luke 1:22ff, there are three things I want to show you briefly this morning...
 1. **Jesus’ obedience**
 2. **Jesus’ salvation**
 3. **Jesus the divider**

1. JESUS’ OBEDIENCE vv22-24

- Have a look with me at vv22 – *When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord....* And we read of the sacrifices that were required under the law in association with the **consecration** of the **first born** to the **Lord**.
- But let me ask you **why?**
- He **WAS** the Lord...
- Why did this need to happen for Jesus?

You will remember Galatians 4:4 tell us that *when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law...*
- Jesus was under the law **too!**
- So Jesus and his **parents, obeyed the law!**

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- We see this when Matthew records Jesus' baptism: do you remember that John protests saying "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this **to fulfil all righteousness.**"
- **Jesus** needed to fulfil all **righteousness**... //
- Bishop Glenn Davies when he came for confirmation at Roseville... (he's now the archbishop of Sydney)... used to ask the candidates, "if Jesus had died as a **child**, would he still have **saved** us?"
- And he pointed out that Jesus **saves** us not only by his **sacrificial death** but by his **perfect life** – i.e., by his **obedience** to the **law**...
- He kept the law **for** us which we **could not keep**, and then **died** the **death** we **deserve**...
- Jesus' **keeping** of the law is part and parcel of his **saving work**... it is him doing **perfectly for** us what we could **never** do for ourselves!! //
- Can **you** keep the law? / Can you keep the **10 commandments**? / Can you name all the 10 commandments? Can you keep Jesus' summary of the two commandments? **Do** you love God **perfectly** with all you **are** and your neighbour as **yourself**? //
- I can't
- I can't go a day.
- but Jesus has done it **for** us...! /
- So – Jesus' obedience
- Secondly:

2. JESUS' SALVATION vv25-32

- In this section of our passage - from v25 - you'll see **Simeon** - described as 'righteous and devout' – and as waiting for the "**consolation of Israel**..."
- What did **that** mean?
- I'll tell you what it meant for **most** Jews at the time...
- ...that they were waiting for the overthrow of the **Roman occupying forces**...!
- But that is **not** the **salvation** Jesus came to **bring**... //
- Now God **HAD** delivered his people from human enemies **many** times throughout Israel's history... delivered them from the bondage of the **Egyptians**, or the raiding parties of the **Philistines**... he had delivered them from **hunger** and **thirst**... he had brought them through the **Red Sea** and over the **Jordan River**... and every time it was clear that **God** had won the **victory** over their **enemies** when they had **no** hope of saving **themselves**... //
- But the salvation Jesus turned up in person to bring, was of a **different order**.
- *Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the powers of this **dark world** and against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the **heavenly realms**.* (Eph 6)
- And salvation from **THOSE** enemies... comes through **Jesus' defeat** of **evil** at the **cross**... which makes possible, the **forgiveness** of our **sins**...! //
- People talk about **salvation** all the **time** today...
- We are to the **save** the **environment**

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- Save the **rain forest**
- Save the **whale**
- Save the **planet**
- Save the **economy**
- Save the **world** from **climate change**...
- Save the **refugee**
- Save the **drug problem**
- Save **clean water** and **sanitation issues**...
- And we could go on...
- And of course... I have no **argument** with those issues... they are all **important** and significant **issues** of our **time**...
- But they are **not** what **Jesus** came to **bring**...! /
- Because Jesus did not come to bring us the salvation we **DESIRE** but the salvation we **REQUIRE**...!! ////
- Some churches promise Jesus will save you from **financial ruin**, or **business failure** or **family breakup**; or save you from your poor **self-esteem** or from your **cancer** or **other** health issue... but that is **not** what Jesus promised to **bring**... //
- **Imagine**... Simeon was holding a **tiny 8 day old boy** in his hands... and he says '**my eyes have seen your salvation**'
- *A light to the **Gentiles** and the **glory** of your people **Israel**...*
- please don't **minimise** or **trivialise** what Jesus **came** and **lived** and **died** and **rose again** to **bring**...!
- He came to bring *knowledge of **salvation** through the **forgiveness** of **sin**...*
- Simeon says 'now let your servant depart in peace'... I can die **content** – **I can go now** - I've seen the one who will **bring** your salvation... //
- ...the salvation that people require – the forgiveness of sins – the defeat of evil -
- Are you able to say with Simeon – "I've **seen** your salvation..."?
- Not because you've held Jesus the **baby** in your **arms**... but through the **Bible** – you've stood at the **foot** of the **cross**... and you've stood **gaping** at the empty **tomb**...!! - you've gazed at the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and you've said 'thank you Lord'.
- Thank you Lord that Jesus' life, **death** and resurrection means that I can **die** now because I have seen your **salvation**...
- ...I **understand** what Jesus came to do...
- ...I understand that the problem I have is not **external** to **me** but **internal** – that I am in need of your **forgiveness** and you've **provided** that **forgiveness**... /
- The Bible says that anyone who calls out to him in **that** way, God will **never ever turn away!**
- Do not pray – *Lord now let your servant **die**...* unless you can **also** pray – *for my eyes have seen – my heart has understood and received - your **salvation**...! ///*
- Well, Jesus' obedience; Jesus' salvation and third:

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

3. JESUS THE DIVIDER vv33-40

- Well after Simeon praised God and declared that in seeing the baby Jesus, his eyes had seen God's very salvation, Simeon turns to speak directly to **Mary**...
- Will you have a look with me at v34? *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,³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*
- Simeon wants Mary to know that when God steps into the world, as he had in the baby Jesus, he has a **polarising effect**.
- Jesus will be a great **divider** – a **cross roads** in the lives of those he encounters.
- Now – we had already seen something like this in Mary's **own** song... the Magnificat. She knew that God was a divider of people
- She said of God: *his mercy extends to those who fear him BUT he has scattered the proud in their inmost thoughts*
- *He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble*
- *He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty*
- But now Mary is told her own **Son** will be someone one people find impossible to be **neutral** about...
- People will decide **for** him or decide **against** him.
- Jesus himself knows this... in John 3 - *For God did not send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to **save** the world through him.* Ah – we like that bit... but then Jesus immediately goes on - *18 Whoever believes in [me] is **not condemned**, but whoever does **not** believe stands condemned **already** - because they have not **believed** in the name of God's one and only **Son**.* /
- Jesus, the divider. Believe in him – you stand - not condemned
- Do not believe in him – you stand condemned already.
- Yes Mary, *this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.* //
- It's that **exclusivity** of Jesus which cuts and offends isn't it?
- *I am the way, the truth and the life, **no one comes to the Father except through me!***
- You see if the Christians in the **1st** century could just talk kindly about Jesus and say he was one of **many** gods on offer... everyone could **relax**... but they **didn't** and they were **martyred!** /
- And if the Christians in the **21st** century could just be happy that Jesus was **ONE** way to God but not the **ONLY** way – everyone could just **relax**... but we **can't** /// and we **WILL** be **ridiculed**... and in some places... **locked away** and **killed!**
- The Apostles didn't face death merely for reminding people of a well-meaning **carpenter** - and **neither** will **we!**
- Talk about Jesus as a lovely bloke and a good teacher... and people may **yawn**, but they won't **react!**
- But if you insist that God has made **Jesus** both **Lord** and **Christ** and the **only way** to the **Father**...
- ...well / **that** kind of talk will not be **tolerated** today... ////
- ...but friends, **that it is** the Gospel that we are called to **proclaim and share**... /
- Now of course, we have to make sure that if there is any offense take it is only from the Gospel itself

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

and not because we **ourselves** are stupid and **offensive**...

- but we must learn to speak of Jesus in such a way that people cannot simply say ‘*oh well, so what?*’ ‘good luck to you’, ‘that’s nice dear’! //
- I am charged to speak of Jesus as **life** and **death** – with **so much clarity** about who he is, that either people find themselves **digging** their **nails** in to their **chairs** outrageously angry and **infuriated** by who I am claiming Jesus **to be**...
- OR...
- they find themselves **bowing down before** the Lord Jesus and coming before him **filled with wonder** and awe and saying ‘sorry’ and asking for his **mercy!** // **...and turning over their lives to him...**
- If you only ever share Jesus in such a way that people can **take** it or **leave** it – then you’ll either get a rousing **applause** or a huge **yawn**... and it will send people **away** in the same way they came... / – **unchanged!** ///
- Brothers and sisters... may the Lord embolden us to speak of Jesus as he **really is**... **Saviour** and **Messiah** and **Lord**... and that there is **no other name** under **heaven** by which we can be **saved!**

-
- So where does this leave us this morning? – let’s re-cap...
 - **Jesus’ obedience** to the law... he keeps the law perfectly for us!
 - Second – **Jesus’ salvation** - the salvation that we **require**, not the salvation the world **desires**...
 - But in so doing... in defeating death, in claiming victory over evil, in bringing us to new life in Christ, Jesus is the **only ONE** in the end
 - ...be **hope** for **suicidal teenagers**
 - ...be **strength** for **grieving mourners**
 - ...change **greedy hearts** to **generous**
 - ... turn **swords** into **ploughshares**...
 - ...bring **renewal** to **creation**
 - ...**justice** for **mass murderers**
 - ...**hope** to the **hopeless**
 - ...and **light** for those living in **darkness**...
 - His is the salvation we truly **need**...! /
 - And finally... we saw Jesus the **divider**.... // Simeon reveals to **Mary** that Jesus will **divide** people... and be a sign **spoken against**... /
 - You don’t end up being **neutral** with Jesus – even listening to this message – you’re either **for** him or **against** him... there’s no **middle way**... ///
 - Simon holds a **little baby boy**.... And declares – “my **eyes** have seen your **salvation**...”
 - My **prayer** is that you **too** look to Jesus – **through** the **pages** of the **Bible**... and declare with **Simeon** – my **eyes** have seen your **salvation**...
 - ... and I have heard and **received** and **embraced**.... the best news ever - of the **forgiveness** and **new life** Jesus came to **bring**...!!