

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

Date: 24th March 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewanin and Peregian (via video)
Series: Luke: you can be certain
Title: ... that Jesus brought God's salvation
Passage: Luke 2:22-40
Outline: **Identification** – Jesus' obedience
Salvation – Jesus' sacrifice
Revelation – Jesus' divisiveness

INTRODUCTION

- It's been quite a week hasn't it, as our news bulletins have continually covered the Christchurch situation...?
- and there have been many and various ways **commentators** and **law enforcement people** and **politicians** have reflected on **what** has happened and **why**...
- so **many** statements about what is **needed** now...
- **greater understanding** of religious **minorities**
- better **monitoring** of **social media sites**
- tighter **security** around **religious hubs**
- stricter **gun laws**
- **less immigration**
- **more integration**
- **greater compassion**
- **deeper understanding**
- the **death penalty!**
- ...many ideas about how to **save** us from this ever happening again...
- And **yet...** / and yet we understand from our Bibles, that only the **radical transforming work of the Lord Jesus and his Holy Spirit**, can, in the end, change **hearts and minds**...
- we can **legislate**, we can increase **security**, we can **comb social media sites**, we can monitor known **extremists**... but we **cannot change human hearts**...
- and that is why more than ever, the world needs to know of the **salvation Jesus brings**...
- I have **three** significant questions for you about our passage from Luke 2 (p 832) this morning... which I hope I then may be able to answer...
 1. Why if Jesus was **perfect**, why did he need to be **circumcised** and undergo the **purification** rites proscribed by the **law**?
 2. What exactly is the nature of the **salvation** Jesus came to **bring**... because people were confused about that in the **1st** century and they are just as confused about that in the **21st** century...
 3. And is it possible to walk out of here this morning, **neutral** about Jesus? Ambivalent? / Or when Jesus is properly understood, will there be a response either for or against him?
- So I want to explore with you this morning...

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1. **Identification** - vv22-24
2. **Salvation** - vv25-32
3. **Revelation** - vv33-40

1. IDENTIFICATION vv22-24

- In 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 then the passage outlines that first born males were to be consecrated to the Lord and a sacrifice offered...
- But **why**?
- Why did Jesus need to do this?
- How well do you know your Bibles? 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**
- So Jesus **identified** with his people... by undergoing the **same rites they did**...
- We see this when Matthew records Jesus' baptism: John protests when Jesus asks him to baptise him 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 my old church... (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**...
- So actually my heading (*Identification*) is **part** of the story but not the **whole story**... Jesus **is** identifying with us by his keeping the law... but his keeping of the law is also part of his **saving work**... it is him doing **perfectly for** us what we could **never** do!! //
- Can you keep the law? / For example - as presented in the **10 commandments**? /
- If you're like me, you can't go a **day**... but Jesus has done it **for** us...! /
- So let's look **secondly** at:

2. SALVATION vv25-32

- I said in the introduction that people neither the in the **1st** century or the **21st** century have a clear understanding of the salvation Jesus **comes to bring**...
- In v25 you'll see **Simeon** - righteous and devout - was 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**...!
- even Jesus' **disciples** made that mistake... and **kept** making it... do you **recall**?
- Peter eventually concludes Jesus is the Messiah – the promised one... but when Jesus in Mark 8 tells

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him that because he **is** the Messiah, he is going to *suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again....* Peter took Jesus aside and **rebuked** him...

- Now we don't know the **nature** of the rebuke... but it probably something like – “Jesus - that's just **negative** talk... we're not going to win the day over the Romans if you keep talking like **that!!**” /
- Even **after** Jesus' death and after the resurrection and at the point of Jesus' **ascension** to the Father, the disciples ask in Acts 1 – “*Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*” – meaning – **finally now Lord** // – are you going to overthrow the **Romans??**
- But that is **not** the **salvation** Jesus came to **bring**...
- now the mistake was **understandable**... God had delivered them 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 salvation **here and now** was of a **different order**.
- We saw – if I may remind you again – from Zechariah's song - that the salvation Jesus brings, **IS** a salvation from our **enemies** - yes – but not the **Romans** - but the very powers of **hell!!**
- *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** over 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**
- 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 the **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*

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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** to **bring**...!
- He came to bring knowledge of **salvation** through the **forgiveness** of **sin**...
- He did not come to bring us the salvation we **desire** – but the salvation we **require**!!
- Simeon says 'now let your servant depart in peace' ... I can die **content** - I've seen the one who will **bring** your salvation... //
- Are you able to say with Simeon – "I've **seen** your salvation..."?
- Not because you've held Jesus the **baby** in your **arms**... but because of the **Bible** – you've stood at the **foot** of the **cross**... and you've stood **gaping** at the empty **tomb**...!!
- ..and you've said, thank you Lord... that your **death** and your 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** to me – that I am in need of **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 your salvation...!*

3. REVELATION vv33-40

- Well after Simeon praised God and declared that in seeing the baby Jesus, he had seen God's 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 life of those he encounters.
- Now – we had already seen something like this in Mary's **own** song... 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... he will say 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 goes on immediately - 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.** /*

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- What about if you're **undecided**?
- No – if you're **undecided**, you're among those who **don't believe**... and stand **condemned already**... *because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son*... have not turned to and trusted **Jesus!** /
- Yes Mary, *this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.* //
- It's the **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 be happy that Jesus was one of **many** gods to add to all the **others** 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 and not the **ONLY** way – everyone could just **relax**... but we can't and we will be **ridiculed**... and in some places... **locked up** and/or **killed!**
- The Apostles didn't face death merely for reminding people of a simple Galilean **carpenter** - and **neither** will we!
- You can go **tomorrow** to any place – any context and tell people about the **altruism** and the **compassion** and the **kindness** and the **genteel nature** of this Jesus and how he was a wise teacher – they won't mind... They may yawn, but they won't react!
- But if you insist that God has made this **Jesus** both **Lord** and **Christ** and the **only way** to the **Father**...
- ...well that kind of talk will not be **tolerated** today... //
- ...but **that it is** the Gospel that we are called to **proclaim and share**... /
- Now of course, we have to make sure that we only offend people with the **gospel** and not because we **ourselves** are **offensive**... sadly I'm the reason people are offended!
- but we must learn to speak of Jesus in such a way that people can simply say '*so what*'?
- 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** so **infuriated** by who I am claiming Jesus **is**...
- OR...
- Find they themselves **bowing down before** the Lord Jesus because they are so **thrilled** by his **wonder** and his **mercy!** //
- If you only ever share Jesus in such a way that people can take it or leave it – you'll either get a rousing applause or a huge yawn... and it will send people **away** the same way they came... / - **unchanged!** /
- Simeon said Jesus will cause the rising and falling of many... so if being **neutral** is not an option... how come the church preaches Jesus and people end up **neutral**?
- Because many churches give the impression and that Jesus is just **one option** among **many** – you *can* take or leave him – makes no **difference** in the **end!**
- 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!**
- This is entirely **consistent** with the words of the Apostle Peter – do you recall? – 1 Peter 2: 7ff -
⁷Now to you who believe, this stone [ie Jesus] is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected

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has become the cornerstone,"

⁸ *and,*

*"A stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall."*

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

- The picture is clear... as though a **rock** has been put across the road to protect the traveller from danger, but the traveller goes on his way and in carelessness or in scorn he **refuses** the warning and stumbles to his **death**...
- So the **strong** and the **mighty** who rely on their own merit, will come crashing **down** because they do not see or care to admit their sin – and therefore, they do not take **refuge** in **Christ** - but the **humble**, who turn to him in **confession** and **trust**, will be those who are **raised up** to **eternal life**!
- And by that means, as Luke says in v35, the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed... ie – **your** reaction to Jesus... reveals the **thoughts** of your **heart** – how you see **yourself**, how you see the **world**, how you see the **Bible**, how you see the **future**! //

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- So where does this leave us this morning? – let's re-cap...
 - Jesus **identifies** with us by observing the law – but more than that... he keeps the law perfectly for us!
 - Second – Jesus brings the salvation that we **require**, not the salvation the world **desires**...
 - But in so doing... Jesus is the only one who can 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...
 - The salvation we **need**... /
 - And finally... we saw Simeon reveal to Mary that Jesus will **divide** people... and be a sign **spoken against**... /
 - You don't end up being **neutral** with Jesus – even here this morning – you're either **for** him or **against** him... there's no **middle way**...
 - And my prayer is that each and every one of us may be able to pray **Simeon's prayer**... Lord – when it is my time... let me depart in **peace**... for I **too** have **seen** – I have **embraced** – I'm so **grateful** for... Jesus – your **salvation**!