Part 1 of 8 Gospel According to St. Luke - Fr. Herman October 25, 2026

Christ is among us >> He is and ever shall be.

Today we are beginning an eight part journey through the Gospel according to St. Luke. We will follow Jesus from the announcement of his birth through his teaching, suffering, death, and resurrection. The Gospel of Luke begins with scripture. He introduces the priest Zechariah, his wife Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mary. The announced births of John and Jesus recall the stories of the Old Testament. The story of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel from Genesis 17, 18, Judges 13, and 1 Samuel. In each case, God fulfills His promises when human circumstances seem to make them impossible. Luke also introduces in his Gospel a conflict which will continue throughout from beginning until the end. Will those who possess scripture recognize and obey God's word? Today we will consider **three** things. the authority of God's prophetic word, the salvation revealed to all the nations and the response demanded by Jesus coming.

The authority of God's prophetic word. Luke begins in Jerusalem. An angel announces to the priest Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth, although barren and advanced in years, will bear a son named John. This child will prepare the way of the Lord, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi the prophet, the last book of the Old Testament. Zechariah asks how he can know that this will happen since both he and his wife Elizabeth are advanced in years. Gabriel responds that Zechariah will remain silent until the promise is fulfilled. Why? Because he did not **believe** the announcement. His voice returns only when he acknowledges the name God has appointed for this child. H serves as a priest in Jerusalem's temple and yet his position gives him no authority over God's message. He must submit to the word of God just like everyone else. Mary the Virgin, however, provides a very significant and striking contrast. A young woman when Gabriel announces that she will bear Jesus, the promised son, in fulfillment of 2 Samuel, for example, chapter 7. She also asks a question, how can this be since I have no husband? But Gabriel explains how God's promise will be accomplished. And Mary responds, "Behold, I am the handmade of the Lord. Let it be to me according to thy word." The Greek word δούλε (doule) translated here handmade means slave. Mary receives God's Word as His servant, as His slave. The contrast, therefore, is not between asking questions and remaining silent. It is between unbelief and obedient reception of the promise.

We may possess scripture, hold religious authority and remains maintain sacred customs in our church. But none of these places us above God's word. Now our modern society prizes, titles, credentials and public recognition often confusing prominence with sound

judgment. Yet neither education nor ordination, nor years of service places anyone above the teaching of Scripture. God's Word is the authority. We are its servants, not its masters.

The Word Mary receives is the same Word whose fulfillment Simeon will announce in Jerusalem. And what he proclaims indeed is salvation which is revealed to all the nations. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Jerusalem according to the law of Moses, fulfilling Leviticus 12 and Exodus 13. Their obedience shows that his coming fulfills what God commanded through Moses and the prophets. There they meet Simeon who awaits Israel's consolation. Recalling the words of Isaiah 40 verse 1 which says, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Taking Jesus into his arms, Simeon blesses God with the words we still proclaim at every vessel according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Simeon holds an infant without earthly power, with no status, yet recognizes God's salvation there, which was prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of thy people Israel. These words recall Isaiah's proclamation that the Lord's servant would be a light to the nations. Isaiah 42 and 49. God's mercy toward the Gentiles does not diminish his faithfulness to Israel. It fulfills what Israel's prophets proclaimed.

Notice where Simeon speaks in Jerusalem's temple. Yet the salvation he announces extends far beyond Jerusalem. Jesus will grow up in Galilee and his mission will confront Jerusalem's religious authorities time and again. God's Word cannot be confined by those claiming exclusive authority over it. It is not bound, but we are bound to it. Simeon's words confront us with a question. Have we begun to treat what God entrusted to us as though it belongs to us? We rightly treasure the church's traditions, but what happens when preserving them becomes more important than hearing the Word they serve? We received scripture, but we did not create it. Yes, I know there are even people in high ranking places in our church that have said things like, "The church wrote scripture." No, the church did not write scripture. Prophets and apostles wrote scripture. And it is from their words that the the church was created. And how can that which was created by the Word have produced it or be above it? We proclaim the Gospel, but we do not control its content or its destination. We are entrusted with God's Word. We are not its owners. But Simeon's proclamation does not end with the promise of salvation to all the nations. He also warns that this child will be a sign spoken against. The salvation offered to all peoples will expose how they respond to God's Word. Indeed, the coming of Jesus exposes the hearts of those who hear. Simeon declares, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against." He adds that a sword will pierce Mary's soul that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed. Notice the connection. Simeon has just proclaimed salvation for all peoples. Now he warns that the one who brings salvation will encounter opposition.

The same coming that fulfills God's promises will also expose the hearts of those who hear. Some will recognize God's promised fulfillment. Others will resist the Word they

claim to defend. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus proclaims good news to the poor. Many outsiders receive his Word while some entrusted with scripture resist him. Here is the conflict that continues throughout Luke. Will God's word be obeyed or subjected to human authority? Simeon's warning also anticipates Jesus suffering. Even Mary, who receives God's word obediently, will experience great sorrow. Her son will be rejected, crucified, and raised from the dead. Yet his rejection cannot defeat God's purpose. Scripture itself bears witness to his suffering and vindication as is found in again the Old Testament. And without the Old Testament, there is no New Testament. Isaiah 52 testifies to it. Isaiah 53 testifies to it. And Psalm 16 testifies to it. just to name a sample.

Simeon's warning speaks even to our own age. We often measure a message's worth by its popularity. How many likes did we get this week? Mistaking approval for truth and criticism for failure. Yet the one bringing salvation will be spoken against. Opposition does not mean God's word has failed. **It can never fail**. It may lift up hearts or it may harden them, but it never fails. Often it reveals what the Word has come to expose and that is the hardness of one's heart. We must resist softening scripture merely to gain approval or avoid disagreement. We are not called to seek controversy, but neither may we silence what God has spoken.

Our responsibility is faithfulness even when obedience becomes difficult.

Luke establishes the notion of conflict which will unfold throughout his Gospel. God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus. Salvation is proclaimed to the nations and everyone must hear and must respond. Now, as we begin our journey and survey through the Gospel according to St. Luke, remember these three things. **First**, God's prophetic word stands above every claim to religious authority. Zechariah is silenced because of unbelief. A priest and Mary, a young woman, receives God's word and accepts it as his slave. **Second**, God's salvation extends to all nations. He shows no partiality. Simeon proclaims Jesus as a light for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel, fulfilling what God spoke through Moses and all of the prophets. And later on he will add to the book of Psalms. **Third**, Jesus coming exposes the hearts of those who hear him. What kind of heart do you have? It will be made known if not in this age, in the age to come. Some receive His Word in the Gospel, others reject it, even while claiming to defend scripture and to be believers. God's promises demand more than recognition. The sign of the cross will not save you if your heart does not receive him. **The teaching of God demands obedience**.

Now, next Sunday, what we will do is we will follow Jesus into the wilderness and then to Nazareth where he encounters the resistance Simeon foretold. May we open our hearts and hear the word of God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit >> Amen
Christ is among us >> He is and ever shall be.

Help us, save us, have mercy upon us, and keep us, oh God, by thy grace

Link to Sermon - https://youtu.be/C61kjsrmNDM?t=5006