

“Incarnation - Jesus, You Are Holy”

Scripture: Luke 2:21-40

Graphics: Temple, object with purpose, holy

Big Truth: Just as we desire physical contact and closeness to others, God desired for us to know Him physically and relationally close. God sent Jesus to earth in the form of a child so that we could know Him. He taught and suffered and died so we would know Him. He rose again, bodily, so that we would know Him. All that, also, so we would know ourselves. Jesus is King. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus is the Word. Jesus is Holy

Focus Phrase: Jesus, your holiness makes me holy, for your purposes.

1. Introduction

A. PRAY!

B. Well, I brought a couple items with me today that each have a very specific purpose.

- i. **Hourglass** - an hourglass like this is only made for one purpose: to mark time until something happens. In this case, when the sand empties from the top into the bottom, you'll know that 30 minutes is up. This is made for a perfect purpose, as ordinary as it is.
- ii. **Knife** - this is a pretty simple kitchen knife. Yet, THIS knife has a very special purpose. This is a boning knife, used to remove meat from bones. You could probably use it for other cutting, but when it's sharp and used for its intended purpose, it's perfect.
- iii. **Chalice and Paten** - this chalice and paten were made for me as a gift for a very specific purpose. Sure, you could put some Wegman's seltzer in here on a hot day and kick back on the back porch. However, these were made to hold communion juice and communion bread. And when they are fulfilling that purpose, even though that are ordinary, they are perfect.

C. At first, it may seem that these three items have nothing in common. An hourglass, a knife, and this communion set. Yet, they all relate directly to our scripture this morning from Luke's gospel.

D. We've been looking at the Incarnation of God in Jesus throughout December and right through Christmas. We've looked at Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and return from 4 different angles - he is King, Savior, Emmanuel, and Light of the World.

E. Today, we continue with our confessions as we celebrate the fact that Jesus is Holy.

F. One definition of holiness that I like is, "...to be set apart for God's purposes." Throughout the bible, we read about holiness:

- i. “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:15-16
 - ii. “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14
 - iii. “He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.” 2 Timothy 1:9
- G. The sense we get from these passages, and others, is that God has a plan of holiness for our lives - a plan to have our lives be set apart for HIS purposes. He made each one of us and gets to decide what he wants from us. His plan has everything to do with our willingness to allow God to take our everyday ordinary lives - our hourglass, knife, and cup and plate lives - and use those for HIS purposes.
- H. And as we’ll see this morning in our text from Luke, that purpose is to proclaim the Good News about God’s grace and truth to the world.
- I. So, grab your everyday ordinary copy of the Word of God, which has a powerful, divine purpose, and let’s open it to Luke chapter 2, verse 21.
- J. Jesus was born 8 days ago...and it was time for Him to begin to make waves in the ocean of the universe. This ordinary baby boy was about to be set apart for God’s holy purposes. Let’s read...

2. Scripture

A. READ Luke 2:21-24

- i. We begin the scene with Mary and Joseph, a young couple with a brand new baby boy. And just like any young couple with a new baby, they weren’t quite sure how to parent or care for this baby. I’m mean, Dr. Spock’s fancy book about how to care for babies wouldn’t be written for almost 2,000 years.
- ii. So, they did what the Jewish Law instructed them to do...they had Jesus circumcised and then Mary went through the purification ritual.
- iii. Jewish Law required that all the boys be circumcised on the eighth day to mark them as God’s chosen people. At that time, the naming of the child was done...and they, of course, named Him Jesus - the One who would save His people from their sins, it said in Matthew 1:21.
- iv. Jewish Law also required that the mother of male children start a purification process that began on day 8 and went until day 40. If the child was a girl, the purification process went until day 80! The birth process made the mother ceremonially unclean, according to Jewish Law, and before the mother could go into the Temple for worship, they had to be purified. Now, just in case you think this is unfair to women, the same

types of purifications were required of men who somehow became unclean - if they touched a dead body or came too close to a leper or even travelled through enemy territory. This was part of the culture and religion of the Jews.

- v. And part of the purification process was also the make a sacrifice to God in the Temple of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Mary and Joseph did all that that was required because they were faithful Jews, and their hearts were right with God.
- vi. But, there's something more going on here for our author Luke. Luke mentioned 3-4 times that all this was being done, "...to satisfy the law of the Lord."
- vii. And, while it may be true that the circumcision and purification and sacrifice were all normal acts being done to satisfy the Law in that moment, there was a bigger picture. Mary and Joseph were not only doing what they were required to do, but Jesus was beginning to **fulfill the entirety of the Jewish Law**.
- viii. Every law, every requirement, every sacrifice, and every ritual that was required - and the REASON GOD REQUIRED THEM - was being fulfilled before their eyes in Jesus - the King, Savior, Emmanuel, and Light of the World.
- ix. In one sentence, Jesus was becoming HOLY before their eyes. He was being set apart for God's purposes THROUGH the Jewish Law in order to complete the Jewish Law.
- x. And Mary and Joseph may not have been able to see it, probably because they weren't looking. But, there were two people who were watching the hour glass...and through the Holy Spirit, they saw exactly what was happening. Let's look at verse 25...

B. READ Luke 2:25-40

- i. If Mary and Joseph didn't have a clear picture about what Jesus would do in his short life before this moment, then they sure did now...or at least they SHOULD HAVE.
- ii. Remember, they were just doing what they were required to do.
- iii. But then Simeon came into the Temple courts and in the power of the Holy Spirit, was immediately aware that the Messiah was present.
- iv. Simeon is a fascinating character. He's not named as a priest or religious leader. He wasn't part of the religious establishment. Yet, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and God had told him that he would not die before he witnessed the Messiah...and see the beginning of the consolation of Israel - the grace and truth on God finally poured out on Israel.

- v. This ordinary man, who was set apart for God's purposes, was used as the herald to Mary and Joseph (and to us!) regarding Jesus' holy purpose.
 - vi. And, don't miss this: Simeon was thrilled that this was all coming to fruition before his eyes, because he KNEW that HIS purpose was being fulfilled through Jesus too!
 - vii. Basically he said, "I can die a fulfilled and happy man because I know it's all happening as God has planned!"
 - viii. We'll get into more of what Simeon said was Jesus' holy purpose in a minute, but while Simeon was excitedly talking to Mary and Joseph, a woman named Anna comes into the Temple.
 - ix. Now, Anna had been in the Temple for many decades - widowed at a young age, now 84 years old, has spent probably over 60 years - all her time (day and night) - praying and fasting.
 - x. She set her entire life before the Lord for His purposes. And at the moment Jesus was in her presence, she KNEW! She KNEW! who he was, and what He would do and why!
 - xi. And she couldn't contain her excitement! So told EVERYONE she could find about Jesus and what he will do.
- C. So what was it that Simeon said Jesus would do:
- i. Well, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and said that Jesus would be a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to Israel. Jesus would save his people from their sins...ALL people, Jews and Gentiles...you and me.
 - ii. Simeon went on to give these four holy purposes:
 - a. First, **this child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel.** Either people would believe in and follow Him or they were fall away. This wasn't about waffling about Jesus...this was about making the decision to follow Him or not.
 - b. Second, **this child is a sign from God that will be opposed.** Simeon wanted Mary to know that the road ahead would NOT be easy for her and especially not for Jesus. He would be opposed, which points to his torture and death. The plan was already set, but that doesn't mean the plan would be easy.
 - c. Third purpose: **this child will reveal the inner thoughts of many.** Jesus is the Incarnation of the omnipotent, omnipresent God. Throughout the gospels we see Jesus knowing people's intentions and thoughts and plans. He knows our inmost thoughts, desires, hurts, and everything in between. And...

- d. Lastly, this child **will bring a sword that will pierce your own soul.** This was mostly directed to Mary, who would see her son die a horrible death on a cross and that would BREAK her heart. Yet, isn't it Jesus that pierces our souls, too? ...convicting us of sin, forgiving us for that sin, comforting us in sorrow and grief, and showing us the truth so we'll grow and learn more about Him?
- iii. Jesus came for a purpose...but also to give US purpose. Simeon and Anna waited - watching the hour glass - until they saw the prophecies come to life right before them. Their ordinary lives became extraordinary and we have their story in the gospels because it was THAT important.
- iv. Mary and Joseph, an ordinary woman and ordinary man, yet chosen for a very specific purpose...made holy.
- v. ALL of them chose to follow God's plan and Law. God was all over this whole scene and the lives of these humble servants.
- vi. They chose to engage in worship and sacrifice. They sought out the mystery and allowed God to change the worship through them. And, they found the holy in the everyday devotion to what they knew!

3. Application

- A. You and I called to do the very same things in response to Jesus' holy birth.
- B. Because Jesus is holy, here's what we learn and what we're called to do:
 - i. First, **Praise God in all of life.**
 - a. 2020, and maybe even longer for some, has been a year when, frankly, it's been hard sometimes to find things to be upbeat about. Yet, we make a huge mistake when we wait until we FEEL like praising God to actually praise Him.
 - b. James 5:13 says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise." In ALL of life, from the most mundane day of boredom and apathy to the intensity of grief or elation.
 - c. Praise the Lord. Simeon and Anna waited years and years for this ONE event. It's like waiting for a Bills Super Bowl victory (sheesh!).
 - d. Sometimes it means doing what you're supposed to do. Lots of people have told me over the years that they aren't coming to worship because they're mad at God or aren't being 'fed.' It's a shame that they didn't realize that worship isn't about them, but about our faithful response to a God who doesn't exist to please us...but for you and I to serve and worship Him!
 - e. If you can come to Him in worship and praise in EVERY season and through EVERY trial and celebration, then you've begun to be holy!

- ii. The second thing we learn is to **Establish Rituals the Focus on Jesus and His presence.**
 - a. Mary, Joseph, Anna, and Simeon were engaging in rituals. Rituals aren't the be-all-end-all of your relationship with God, but I'll tell you, they can carry you into the presence of God...especially when you're having trouble getting there on your own.
 - b. Rituals like singing, communion, prayer, service, and worship are pathways to the presence of God.
 - c. J.D. Walt said that, "Anxiety is the felt experience of the unawareness of God's presence." In times of anxiety and fear, allowing God's presence to be felt turns the destroys anxiety and fear.
 - d. God wants you to focus on Him and His presence so that you will know how much he loves you.
 - e. And rituals are about seeing the mysterious in the ordinary. We so often lose our passion for mystery! We lose our willingness to experience the unexplainable. We have a God of mystery and smoke and fire and thunder and miracles and changed lives.
 - f. I don't ever want to figure God out, honestly, because God is mysterious and bigger than my mind can fathom. I just want Him near!
 - g. Traditions and rituals and a rhythm of praise and worship is how you establish your well-worn pathways to Jesus...and you simply spend time in His mysterious presence so you begin to see His character and hear what he desire for you.
- iii. And then, simply, **Meet God in the Ordinary**
 - a. Holiness is born out of your willingness to offer your most ordinary of days for God's extraordinary purposes.
 - b. Yet, when God intersects with our ordinary days, and activities, and thoughts, is when holiness and God's purposes start to grow in you and around you!
 - c. If you think about how much time you spend in the ordinary tasks of life - eating and laundry and sleeping and working - think about how much more you can grow in holy purpose by simply inviting God into those plain ole' moments!
- iv. This new year gives us all an opportunity to praise God in all of life, to establish rituals that will point to Him and his presence, and then meet God in the ordinary.

4. Conclusion

- A. Ordinary objects. That's what we are. And hour glass. A knife. A cup and plate. Yet, in the hands of an extraordinary, mysterious, approachable God - incarnated in Jesus - we are raised to holiness and purpose.
- B. Simeon and Anna, and Mary and Joseph all waited for God's timing. We are a patient and consistent voice waiting for Jesus' return.
- C. Jesus came to bring grace and truth to the world. We are wielders of God's truth that cuts to the heart of God and changes the world.
- D. Jesus shared a cup and bread with his disciples to remind them of His sacrifice. We are a living sacrifice for worship and service to our God! Those purposes are what God uses to share the Good News about Him to a broken world!
- E. So, this morning, with one voice together, I invite us to lift up the powerful confession, "Jesus, You Are Holy!" As his people, this confession doesn't come from here (head), but from here (heart).
- F. So, let's stand, and three times, confess together: "Jesus, You Are Holy" (3 times). Confess this with me... "Jesus, You Are Holy!"
- G. Let's also pray together (words on screen)... "Jesus, I come just as I am. I come with broken parts and missing pieces. I'm just an ordinary person, with nothing about me that's special. With you, though, I am holy and beloved. I offer myself to you and your purposes today. Use whatever I have to show the world who you are. I want to live in wonder of you. You are holy. Make me holy too. in Jesus' holy name. Amen!"