

Simeon's Bucket List

Luke 2:25-32

A few years ago a movie was released called *The Bucket List*. Do you know the film I'm talking about? It's got one of my favorite actors in it—Jack Nicolson—and also everyone else's favourite actor: Morgan Freeman. They play two old guys who nearing the end of their lives and they go on an adventure together with the aim of ticking of their *bucket list*, a list of things they want to do, sights they want to see, experiences they want to enjoy before they 'kick the bucket', before they pass away.

Since the movie I've noticed that this idea of having a 'bucket list' has gained traction, at least, I'm starting to hear people use this phrase. I'm not sure what kind of things you might want to have on your list, I'm not sure what things you might want to achieve in this lifetime, but I do want to suggest one thing to add to your list if you haven't already. It's the same item that Simeon has on his list. Did you notice in our Bible reading that Simeon has a bucket list? It's not a very long, but it's a bucket list nonetheless. Have a look with me, printed there on your outline. Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. The one item on his bucket list was to meet God's Saviour King, and I wonder whether it's something that you might add to your list—to meet and know the King that God has sent to save us.

If we *were* to meet this King, what might we see? Simeon meets this infant King in verse 27, and he's pretty clear about what he sees in this baby Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations. When Simeon meets Jesus, he says he sees God's *salvation*. What does he mean by that? Let me tell you a story to illustrate.

Christmas time means it's summer time and summer time means it's holiday time and often holiday time often means its beach time. When I was young my family would spend a couple of weeks each year at the beach. I used to have a body board that I would take out into the surf, and I order to get the best waves I would walk out as far as I could stand in the surf. One time, I must have been about 10 or 11, I was standing right on the edge of a drop off where the sandy edge suddenly fell away into the depths. And as I was waiting for the next wave, the current lifted me up and carried me over the drop off so that I was completely out of my depth with no footing.

What did I do? I panicked. I started to cry out "Help! Help!" and started looking desperately at my fellow swimmers, then my eyes locked on to one man who recognized I was in trouble. My eyes saw my salvation, and he swam out to me and

threw me on my board and launched me onto a wave. That was actually one of the best waves I ever caught; all the way into the shallows!

You need a saviour when you are in trouble and helpless. Israel was always in trouble and in need of help because for centuries they had done things their own way—God's word was something that they never took seriously—and this displeased God and so he would act against them. And friends that's the same trouble that we find ourselves in today. We do things our own way, we ignore God and we ignore his word, we fail to honour him as our creator and so we find ourselves in danger of his judgment.

However—and here's the wonderful message of Christianity—even though we have failed him, God doesn't want to judge us, he doesn't want to shame us because of our inability to honour him and so he sent us a saviour in Jesus. A saviour who would grow up to bear God's judgment in place of us, a saviour who would suffer the shame of the cross as our substitute. This is what Simeon saw when he held that baby in Jerusalem. My eyes have seen your salvation.

And Simeon also says that in Jesus he sees a *revelation* from God: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. Holiday time is not only a time for swimming but also a time for reading. Do you have a few books set aside to read over the coming break? One of my preferred genres is biography, I love reading stories about real people and a good biography will reveal what people are really like. Sometimes what we read is really surprising. On holiday a few years ago I read a biography of Winston Churchill. We all know Churchill as the great-war time leader but for the decade before WWII he was basically in the political wilderness, no-one wanted much to do with him, he'd broken too many relationships. I would have never guessed this had it not been revealed to me. Maybe you've read the autobiography of Andre Agassi, the tennis player. He hates tennis. You wouldn't think so, but he does. "I play tennis for a living even though I hate tennis, hate it with a dark and secret passion and always have." This is what a good biography does, it reveals aspects of a person that you might not have been able to discern on your own.

When we meet Jesus we see not only God's saviour but also God's revelation. In Jesus, God is revealed in way that we might be able to discern on our own. As Jesus grew up and served the people around him, he revealed God's compassion, he demonstrated God's love, he illustrated God's kindness. Sometimes I hear atheists saying things like. "How can you believe in a God you cannot physically see?" My response is to say "Well, you could have seen him, it's just that you are 2000 years too late, because when Jesus walked this earth that's when God showed himself." And he showed himself to be a God of love and of mercy, a God who wants to save more than he wants to condemn.

It's a revelation that is easily translated into all the different languages of the world. Do you notice that Simeon's song of praise has an international flavor to it? This

salvation is prepared *in front of the nations*. He says that in Jesus we have a revelation *for the gentiles* (which means it's not only for the Jewish people but for every nation), and we've seen how true this is as we've celebrated *Carols around the world*. Jesus is a very inclusive savior; he's not interested in just one colour of skin. In a world where walls are being built that's a welcome message to hear, but it's also a challenge, because it means that we can't be excused from dealing with him. He's not just a saviour for the west or for white people or for rich people or for poor people. He's everyone savior, the revelation of God that's been put on show for everyone, and so everyone needs to formulate a response.

In a way, you could say that Jesus asks to be on everyone's bucket list. You may have your own ideas of what you want to achieve, but Jesus is asking you to write his name down on that piece of paper. *What do you think of me?* He asks. *Will you make it one of your life's goals to seek me out?* He's able to be found if you open up the Scriptures; start with one of the Gospels, because its there that like Simeon you can meet God's Saviour King.

I'll briefly lead us in prayer.

Father in heaven we praise you that In Jesus you have acted to show yourself to us, a God who is gracious and merciful, and we thank you that as we see Jesus we also see a savior, one who has come to rescue us from the folly of our own sin. We celebrate that Jesus is a savior for all people, and so we know that this means he is a savior for us. We pray that many more people in our suburb and in our families might have the same experience of Simeon, that they might see in Jesus a savior and a revelation from God, and that what they see might lead them to praise you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.