

Title: What the Savior Brings – Part 1

Text: Luke 2:21-35

Date: December 1, 2024

Proverbs 1:5 tells us that listening to the word of God causes us to *“increase in wisdom and learning, causes us to obtain understanding and guidance.”* And so, if you have your copy of God's word with you this morning, and I hope you do, please turn to Luke 2. Luke 2, we're going to begin looking at verses 21-40 this morning, which is a passage that explores the impact and significance that Jesus Christ's birth brings.

If you recall, this is the central focus of the chapter that we've been studying over the last several weeks. It is all about the birth of Jesus Christ. Verses 1-7 describe for us the event of Jesus's birth. As Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, a village rich with anticipation. It's to this city of David that Mary and Joseph arrive and not to loud adulation, but in quiet humiliation with no grand reception at all. It is into this unassuming place that a child is born.

A birth that would seem modest and unassuming at first, but in reality, takes a pivotal moment in world history, marks a pivotal moment in world history. And then in verses 8-20, we see described after the event of Jesus's birth, the announcement of Jesus's birth. As something unprecedented takes place, angels outside Bethlehem declare with boundless joy that the shepherd should go and look upon a newborn child who has been born and laid in a manger. And then finally in verses 21-40, which we will begin to look at today, we see the significance of Jesus's birth, which was set up for us.

If you recall at the very end of last week's passage where we remember Mary was considering and pondering all these things in her heart. Luke develops that idea here in verse 22 and following as we consider the significance of this child's birth. And we're going to find out it flows right out of the splendor of this child's person. In other words, Jesus's birth is significant because Jesus is significant.

We just sang and heard those two songs together that are crafted as a question, what child is this and Mary, did you know? And both of those questions revolve around the identity of Jesus. Who is this child that was born? Well, Luke has addressed this in every single account in this gospel so far. And the passage that is set before us today is no exception at all. As he introduces it all for us in verse 21 by writing, *“And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised,”* and thereby joined to the covenant people of God, *“he was called”* in that moment, *“Jesus, the name that was given to him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”* So, the emphasis that Luke gives here as an introduction for the rest of the passage is on the name given to this child that has been born.

Now, we've talked about this before just as an introduction, but the naming of a child often gave the sense of destiny and calling from God. And here we find out that this child born of Mary is called Jesus. That is a rich name. It is a beautiful name. There's a reason why millions of people around the world worship that name this morning. It means Yahweh saves.

And it takes on an even deeper meaning when you realize that the name Jesus is actually a transliteration of the name Joshua from the Hebrew into the Greek. And so, the name Jesus should draw our minds back to that great general of old Joshua who delivered God's people. And that makes the name Jesus a beautifully prophetic name. It is one that reflects the spirit, I believe, of Isaiah 9:6 where it is said that a child would be born, and a son would be given whose name would be called Mighty God.

In other words, the divine champion who brings deliverance by his might to his people, that is Jesus. And you see that sense of destiny in his very name. It is a name that speaks of heroics, of a Joshua-like savior who will bring deliverance and salvation to his people. It shouts of the cross. It shouts of the resurrection. It shouts of victory and of deliverance and of salvation. What child is this? His name is Jesus the savior. And when this mighty champion comes to you, when you embrace Jesus Christ by faith, what does he bring with him in terms of his salvation?

Now that Jesus the savior has come, what does Jesus the savior bring? What we're going to see in the passage that is set before us today and in future weeks is that Jesus the savior brings perfect righteousness, he brings a universal salvation, and he brings divine favor from God. This is what the savior brings, it is a perfect righteousness, a universal salvation, and a divine favor from God, and we'll just look at that first gift this morning.

And so, with that in mind, if you would please stand with me out of respect and attention for the word of God as I read our passage before us today from Luke 2:22-24. Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes these words for us today. *"And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.' Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.' And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.' And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him."*

This is the word of God who we rise before dawn for and cry out to for help so that we can find hope in his word.

Let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much for the passage that is set before us, and I thank you for how it reveals to us the glory of your son, Jesus Christ, and his mighty work on behalf of his people. And Father, I just thank you for the great treasure that is found and revealed in Jesus here through your word. Father, we look at it as a great gift. I know Father that what I'm about to proclaim this morning is the greatest treasure of all. I know in the hearts of some this pearl of great price will be seen as the greatest treasure upon which they abandon everything for to obtain eternal life. And I know among others it'll be a pearl that will be trampled in the mud. But nevertheless, Father, we know in your eyes that this gift that is given is pure, and it is spotless, and it is beautiful. And so, Father, I pray that the glory of Jesus and how his perfect life would be seen clearly for all of us today to see. And Father, I pray that by your spirit to accept.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

Now after Luke reminds us back in verse 21 that this child that has been born is Jesus the Savior, he then tells us what Jesus this Savior brings. And the first thing that Jesus the Savior brings is perfect righteousness, that is in verses 22-24. *"And when the time came,"* Luke writes in verse 22, *"for their purification according to the Law of Moses,"* which we know according to Leviticus 12:14, this time for purification after the birth of a child occurred 40 days after birth. So, 30 days after Jesus' name, or 32 days after Jesus' name, 32 days after he is circumcised and added into the covenant people of God, it says they brought him up to Jerusalem. And why did Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Jerusalem in that moment? Well, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to accomplish two important things. First, to do something for Jesus. And second, to do something for themselves.

And so first, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem to do something first for him. Luke says at the end of verse 22, to present him, *"they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.')*" And that is a direct quote from Exodus 13:2, by the way. So, the first reason why Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem was to do something for him and that was to present him before the Lord.

Now, Numbers 18:15-16 tells us that there was a ceremony behind all of this. I don't want to dive into it this morning, but it was involved going to the Tabernacle or the temple before a priest and paying five shekels of silver as an offering to the Lord. But what makes that action significance that Mary and Joseph engage in here is that there was an intentional symbolism behind this act. By presenting their firstborn son to the Lord, Mary and Joseph were declaring that Jesus belonged to the Lord and was set apart to do the Lord's work. This is very similar to what Hannah did with Samuel in 1 Samuel 1:28, where after Samuel was born, Hannah goes to the Tabernacle and she declared to Eli, the priest, *"I have dedicated him to the Lord."*

As long as he lives, he is dedicated to the Lord." Mary and Joseph would have been saying a very similar statement in that moment as well.

Now how much Jesus belonged to the Lord and to what degree he was set apart to do the Lord's work, Mary and Joseph didn't fully know yet and would have found out later, especially at the end of this chapter where Jesus has to confront them and say I must be about my father's business. They had not yet learned as Jesus will be declared at his baptism that he is God's son, God's chosen one. But nevertheless, Luke is telling us that this symbolism is carrying forward from the Old Testament, underscoring absolutely everything that we've been learning from chapter one. Jesus is especially set apart by God to do a special work. And so, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Jerusalem, first to do something for him, to make a statement that he belongs to the Lord to do his work.

But second, they bring Jesus to Jerusalem at this moment to do something for themselves. And this is something that can often be overlooked and yet it is very important, especially for the message of this passage. It says in verse 24, *"and to offer up a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.'"* Now that has nothing to do with the 12 days of Christmas and a partridge and a pear tree. Nor does it have anything to do with Kevin McAllister giving two doves to someone in Home Alone 2 and it's the power of friendship. No, this is, we watched that movie yesterday by the way.

But this has to do with Leviticus 12:6-8, where every woman, this is very important, listen to this, where every woman after she gave birth and then rested for a few months after that birthing process, was commanded to bring a sin offering to a priest to make atonement for whatever sins she may have committed over those few months when she was recovering from birth. And so, this sacrifice was for the woman, not for the child. And according to Leviticus 12:8, we read *"if she,"* that is the mother, *"cannot afford a lamb, then she has to take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be made clean."* Now that passage in Leviticus tells us two things that we wouldn't have known.

First, Mary was poor, she couldn't afford a lamb. We wouldn't have known that. But it also teaches us something that we should have known from before. And that Mary was a sinner. First, she was poor. Second, she was a sinner. She was unclean. She was in need of a sacrifice. She was in need of a sin offering. She was in need of atonement, as Leviticus says. She was in need of salvation. And Mary knew this, that's why she goes to the temple to offer up the sacrifice.

That's why in her own song of praise, back in 1:47, after she found out Jesus was going to be born, she's saying out, *"my spirit rejoices in God"*, my what, *"Savior,"* she knew her heart. Mary knew that she was not free from sin. She was in need of a savior. And this sacrifice shows us that Mary knew she was a sinner. And so just like every other believing Israelite who had ever had a child, Mary offered up a sin offering on her behalf in anticipation and faith of her coming sacrifice, who would do more than just atone for her sins, but a sacrifice would take her sins away forever.

And actually, when you think about it, Mary walked into the temple that day, carrying two sacrifices with her. Not just the current sacrifices, but the coming sacrifice. Her only child, her mighty saving champion, Jesus, who had come to the earth to save her from her sins. And what a savior Jesus is. He brings what no other savior can bring. And what we see here first and foremost is that he brings a perfect righteousness. I hope in the midst of everything that we're looking at in this passage, you don't miss the main point that these three verses are hammering home over and over and over again about Jesus our savior, especially in light of this need of a sin sacrifice.

It's mentioned three times in these three verses once in every single verse. Did you catch it? Let me read it again. *"And when the time came for their purification according to,"* what, *"the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written)"* in what, *"(the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said,"* in what, *"the law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."* And just in case you've missed it, then in verse 39 at the very end of this account, Luke says, *"And when they had performed everything according to the,"* what, *"Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee."* It's like Luke doesn't want us to overlook something here. So, we're being told rather persistently by the author that everything Jesus did in this moment, even as an infant was according to what? The Law of the Lord.

In other words, Jesus never broke or neglected a single commandment given by God even when he was an infant in his mother's arms. From the very beginning of his life to the very end of it, everything Jesus ever did was in complete accordance to the Law of the Lord. As Galatians 4:4 puts it, *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman,"* what comes next, *"born under the law."* In order to redeem those who were under the law and under a curse thereby.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus bothered himself to be born and to live an entire earthly life under the law? I mean, think about it. Jesus could have just come down from heaven, died, risen, and sprang right back up into heaven all in one weekend, been done, washed his hands of it and been clean, right? Just like that. So why then did Jesus come to earth and live under the law for nearly three and a half decades before he died? I'll tell you why.

Jesus came to this earth, and he lived perfectly. He lived perfectly as a baby. He lived perfectly as a child. He lived perfect as a young person. He lived perfectly as an adult under the righteous standards of God's laws for over 33 years for this sole reason so that he could demonstrate a perfect life which could be credited to your account if you believe in him. And why am I making this point? Here at the beginning of Luke's account. It is because this is not peripheral to the gospel message. This is central to it.

As Martin Luther said, this is the article upon which the entire church rises or falls. It is where do you think you're going to find righteousness in order to stand before a righteous God? It is the most critical doctrine to understand in scripture. You see, in the beginning, God created man in his own image after his own likeness. We were made to reflect God in his perfect moral character and virtue and to enjoy him forever in that state. But as we know from the storyline of scripture, if you studied it all, we as humans didn't even make it past the first generation.

Adam, the first man and therefore the representative of everybody who had come after him, Adam sinned. He broke the one and the only command that God gave him to not eat of the fruit of the tree and he turned his back on God to walk in his own wisdom. He became a law breaker from the heart and thus throwing all of us who had ever come after him into that same curse of sin and condemnation. And we see this curse of sin absolutely everywhere in the world today.

Why, just this past week, across our own state of Ohio, a person was convicted for stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from elderly individuals who were in nursing homes. A city council member was charged with bribery and fraud by trying to steal property from the poor and the impoverished in his community. A man was convicted for abusing and trafficking 13-year-old girls and a man shot another man in the face for not sharing his potato chips. True story, this is the world in which we live.

If the holidays remind us of anything, it is that every person and every family is broken somewhere, somehow. And as John Calvin wrote, we will never, ever be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ until we first know assuredly that we have no righteousness of our own. As Romans 3:23 says, *"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* Our lives reflect this. If we were to take an honest look at them, our families reflect this. Our relationships reflect this. And so ever since Adam, humanity has been looking for someone new who can come along and fix this whole mess that we're living in, who can represent us before God, who can put us back on a right path, someone who hasn't sinned like the rest of us keep on doing each and every week. And if you study scripture, it is one long, sad, depressing story.

It started with Eve, Adam's wife. When she gave birth to her firstborn son, she was thinking to herself, maybe this is the one who will be perfect, who can represent us before God and straighten things out. Well, that was Cain, and he murdered his brother. And you can go from there. Noah got drunk and he sinned. Abraham looked good; he committed adultery. David looked good for a while; he murdered a man. Solomon looked good for a while; he committed idolatry. Every single person humanity has ever looked up to in hope for redemption and representation has always led to utter disappointment up until this day. People are still looking for a Savior. They're still looking for a redeemer for the problems of mankind. And every single person you will ever look to will utterly disappoint you until you come to the man named Jesus. And as we see here from the very moment of his birth on, he always lived a perfect life according to the Law of the Lord.

In fact, there was one moment in John chapter 8, later on in Jesus's ministry when the Jewish leaders confronted Jesus and Jesus replied to them in John 8:29, *"I always do the things that are pleasing to God."* Then verse 46, so *"which one of you convicts me of sin?"* And they answered him not a word. Why? Because they couldn't. They couldn't even, Jesus's enemies couldn't accuse him of a single sin he ever committed. And they watched his every move for over three and a half years. And they had an informant on the inside, eventually named Judas. And they found nothing. I mean, if you were watching me, I don't even think I'd last three minutes. They watched him for three and a half years. They watched Jesus for over three and a half years and found absolutely nothing. To the conclusion, as 1 Peter 2:22 says, *"He committed no sin."* He was as Hebrews 7:26 says, *"holy, innocent, undefiled."* *"He is light and in him there is no darkness at*

all."..... *"Without blemish and without spot."* This is the type of life that Jesus offered up on the cross for sinners. It was a life of perfect righteousness, and he offers it up as a gift to all those who will trust in him.

In other words, he is the only representative before God that you need. In him, you have a perfect representative. He is as 1 Corinthians 15:22 says the last Adam, the last person you need to stand between you and God. He is the only one. So that just as *"one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,"* Romans 5:19 says, *"so by one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."* This is the glory of the gospel, is that we can be made righteous, not by joining our righteousness with Christ's righteousness, we can stand righteous before God by the basis of his work alone. One man's work of righteousness. One man.

This is a gift of salvation that on the cross, God treated Jesus as if he lived your life beneath God's wrath so that he could then treat you as if you lived Christ's. Blessed forever, destined for eternity. This is why Jesus was born. And this explains so many things that you see in Jesus's life. This is why Jesus was circumcised. This is why Jesus was presented at the temple. This is why Jesus was baptized later. This is why Jesus observed the law. It was to fulfill all righteousness so none of us who could never do it would have to. We have *"to fulfill all righteousness"* according to Matthew 3:15. Not for himself, he fulfilled it all so that we who trust in him could be clothed in his righteousness. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness so that through faith in him, all the fullness of his perfect righteousness could be given as a gift to us who could never earn it. As Romans 3:21-22 declares, *"But now the righteousness of God has been revealed.....the righteousness of God,"* which is found where, *"in Christ Jesus for all who,"* what, *"believe."* Believe.

You see, this is why Jesus came to earth and lived a perfectly righteous life so that his perfect righteousness would be credited to our account. He is, as Romans 10:4 says, *"the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes."* And this is the good news that Mary and all those of like faith after her praise God for. So that when we were sinners with a proven track record of failure, when we trust in Jesus Christ, God sees us clothed in the perfect righteousness of his only son who could testify I always do the will of my father. Hallelujah. What a savior.

In Jesus, our track record of failure, which we add to every day is replaced with Christ's record of absolute perfection. And that's how you can come across such marvelous promises like Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are,"* what, *"in Christ Jesus."* For who is to condemn, we are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Familiar words, 2 Corinthians 5:21, but a fantastic truth, *"God made him Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* If you want to stand righteous before God in heaven today, all you must do is trust in the one who was righteous on your behalf. This is Jesus the savior. He has come and he brings a perfect righteousness to all who believe in him.

So, I encourage all of us, let's remember that Grace Chapel as we come to this Christmas season this year, and as we especially come to the idea of giving and receiving gifts let's not forget the most important gift we have ever received, and that is Jesus and the perfect righteousness that he brings. Just as he was presented in the temple as holy a firstborn set apart for the Lord, so does he stand as the firstborn over all

creation the holy representative before God of all those who will trust in him. Jesus offers as a gift his perfection for our imperfection, his righteousness for our sins. He lived a life under the law, not for himself, but for us, fulfilling every requirement, every law so that we could be clothed in his righteousness before God. In him, we are no longer condemned, but we are seen as holy and blameless in God's sight.

If you recognize you are a sinner this morning, this is your way of escape. Run to Christ and be clothed in his righteousness. This is an incredible gift, an incredible gift that we must not overlook, and that's why Luke starts off this whole account in this way to remind us of Christ's perfect righteousness. And I just want to leave you with two simple ways that Christ's perfect righteousness should transform your life this coming week if you would but trust in him.

First, if you trust in Christ and his gift of perfect righteousness, it'll give you rest. It'll give you rest. When you trust in Jesus, you are not a sinner under sin's guilt and condemnation anymore. Having trusted in Jesus, you are a saint covered in Christ's perfect righteousness. In terms of our standing before God, we will never, listen to this, we will never be more righteous even in heaven than we were the very day we trusted in Christ, nor are we now.

Obviously in our daily experience, we fall far short of the perfect righteousness that God requires, but because he has imputed to us the perfect righteousness of his son, he now sees us as being just as righteous as Christ himself. Wow. You don't have to despair over or strive after acceptance before God this week because full love and acceptance is found in Christ alone. Christ's perfect righteousness should give you rest. Blessed rest this week.

Second, Christ's perfect righteousness should give you total reliance, total reliance on him. See, when we face temptation, we should remember that Jesus himself was tempted in every way, like as we were, yet without sin. Jesus understands our battles and he intercedes for us, having faced every human weakness and triumph. He knows the path forward in the life that you're living, how to equip us for us and how to comfort us in it. Therefore, we should run to Christ in the midst of our daily battles against sin and are striving for holiness. We should run to Christ for the grace and guidance only he can give because he's the one who knows perfect righteousness. And we should come to him.

So, trusting in Christ and his perfect righteousness should give us rest for our souls and reliance for strength. This is the first gift that we should treasure this Christmas season. In light of Christ's perfect righteousness, I want to urge each and every one of you let's rest in his finished work and rely on his strength and rejoice in gratitude and in worship, giving thanks for the one who has become our righteousness so that we could stand accepted and loved before the Father. This is a pearl of great price. What will you do with it? Hallelujah, what a savior and what a righteousness he brings.

We'll have to look at the next section of this passage next week, but for now, this is the word of God from Luke 2:21-24, which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience over this next week until the Lord our righteousness returns.

To that end, as the men come forward for communion this morning, let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for this passage. We haven't even gotten to the heart of it yet, but Father, we thank you that even as we begin to start looking at the great gift of Jesus Christ, we see at the very beginning of it all this shining pearl of his perfect righteousness. We can look at it, Father, and we will over the next several months as a church. We will look at it from every possible angle. And we will see that in Jesus there is no deficiency, there is no fault, there is just righteousness and purity and holiness forever and ever. No matter how close we get, he shines brighter and brighter. And to think, Father, that that perfect righteousness is available to sinners and failures like us. Oh, Father, you are a good and a gracious and a merciful God to send a Savior to earth like this. And Father, I thank you that Jesus didn't just accomplish most of our salvation, he accomplished all of it and we can rest in him this week. And as we approach communion this morning, as a church body, we can celebrate it with joy that this table that is spread for us, it's spread for those not to those who deserve it, but to those who do not. And we can rejoice that this morning, though we be sinners, Jesus Christ is a greater Savior. And so, Father, I just pray that Jesus Christ would be honored and praised even during these next few moments as we remember what he accomplished on the cross on our behalf. Father, may you be pleased and may the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ be praised this season from your people.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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