

Manger to Messiah

It's a boy, His name is Jesus

By Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

In our sermon series, we're talking about Jesus from the Manger and then all the way to Messiah. And that's a lot, right? We go from just a baby to Messiah, but it happens way happens pretty quick that we realize that Jesus is the Messiah. But sometimes, we might wonder if Jesus is the promised King, the promised Messiah that the Israelites have been waiting for thousands of years. And if Jesus is this long-awaited King, how do we know? That's been a question since the lepers of Jesus Day. To the scholars in great minds today, Is Jesus the Messiah now?

Messiah and King Christ? We use those words interchangeably; they mean the Anointed One or the Chosen One. So, the promised deliverer of the Jewish nation was prophesized in the Hebrew scriptures. That's what we're talking about when we say Jesus the Christ or, Jesus the Messiah or Jesus the chosen one. So today, we're coming right out of the season where just weeks ago, we celebrated the birth of Jesus.

Today, we get a glimpse of when Jesus was about six weeks old. And this is where our story lies. It's found in Luke chapter two. But before we get into that scripture, it's important to remember that Jesus came from a very Jewish family. And for Jewish families of that day, following the laws found in the Book of Laws was really important.

And there are a lot of things in those books of laws that we don't follow anymore. But they did so in one of those books, in the Book of Leviticus, we find laws about what happens after a woman gives birth. So on the eighth day, if it's a boy, if she gives birth to a boy, that boy is to be circumcised.

There are laws about purification time, the time that they need to be purified. There are laws about bringing a burn and sin offering to the altar. So, Jesus is about six weeks old in this passage. We don't know for sure, but we can kind of guess that because they, Mary, would have waited seven days because she would have been Sarah only unclean after the birth of Jesus, and then about 30 days from purification, from bleeding.

So then, sometime after that, they would have brought this sin, this offering, to the temple. So this is Luke chapter two, starting at verse, verse 21, when eight days had passed Jesus parent Jesus, his parents circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived. When the time came for their ritual cleansing in accordance with Moses' law, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

It's written in the law of the Lord. Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord. They offered a sacrifice in keeping with what's stated in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ or the Lord's Messiah. Now here we have this man, Simeon, and this says that the Holy Spirit had rested on him and that he would not die until he saw Christ the Messiah, the chosen one. We continue on. Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the temple area.

Meanwhile, Jesus's parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the law. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said, Now, Master, let your servant go in peace according to your word because my eyes have seen your salvation. You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles and a glory for your people.

Israel, his father, and his mother were amazed by what Simeon had said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to marry his mother. This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed and a sword will pierce your innermost being to Now, Simeon says, like a lot here.

I mean, he's talking to Mary and saying that Jesus is going to cause the rise and fall. He says that it's going to pierce her right to watch her child go through what he's going to go through. But what I want you to focus on is what Jesus says. I mean, Simeon says, I have seen the Messiah, and I have seen the Messiah.

And now, master, I can die continuing on. There was also a Prophet, Anna, the daughter of Faneuil, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old after she married. She lived with her husband for seven years. She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshiped God by fasting and praying every day.

She approached at the very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. From baby and manger to Messiah, it happens really quickly here. Jesus is six weeks old, and Joseph and Mary have ended up at the temple, where they encounter Simeon and Anna. Now, we don't know a lot about Simeon and Anna.

When I read this story about Simeon and Anna, I think, okay, these are two people who just simply get it. Maybe you've encountered people in your life who just seem like they have things figured out. Maybe they understand their mission on Earth by fulfilling God's purpose for their lives. Now, for me, this person in my life, you're probably picturing somebody else who just who just gets it.

For me, it's a woman named Pastor Charlotte Melott, who has since passed away. But when I first met her, she had been retired for many years. So she was an older woman, a beautiful woman, and she was amazing. She was the first woman who was ordained in the Iowa conference, which was pretty amazing.

Even though she started her ministry to become a pastor about 50 years before I began my journey as a pastor, she knew, and she gave me wisdom about what I might encounter as a woman pastor. 50 years later. But she knew what I might encounter as a woman pastor. But everything that she said, I. I just leaned in.

She was one of those people who was just. You could just say she was just wisdom like she was wisdom. And I was amazed at Pastor Charlotte. I loved having chats and talking with her. I wanted to know about her experiences as a pastor, but even more so, I wanted to know her experiences as a follower of Jesus.

I would ask her, like, tell me more, Tell me more about how you know Jesus, like, I know Jesus, but I wanted to know how she knew Jesus. And that's Anna and Simeon. I am 84 years old. We don't know exactly how old Simeon was, but he was an elderly man advanced in years, and she never left the temple.

She fasted day and night, waiting in that temple, and Simeon came to it. Expect to see and experience something. But neither of them, regardless of their age, they didn't lose hope throughout all of their years on Earth. Now, in the commentary called Luke for Everyone, he writes about how Luke is this amazing young gift to us and how Luke, very early on, like in this story, is another dimension of the human experience.

By the time we read the first two chapters of Luke, we'd encountered an older couple who were surprised that they were about to have a child. We encountered a very young woman who was even more surprised that she was about ready to have a child. We see later that she and her husband come to the temple to offer this gift to God.

In the next section, we talked about this story a couple of weeks ago. We encounter a 12-year-old Jesus, and then now we have this old man and this old woman waiting for their turn to die. And Luke is saying, like, you know, you can relate to almost anyone in this story because from the feeding trough, from the manger all the way to the empty tomb and beyond, like this story is our story, and it's passed down from one generation to the next.

This is part of our mission statement that we care about sharing the good news of Jesus from one generation to the next. And we do a lot of things in this church to support that, to try to build up the next generation. But the truth is that everybody has something to offer, like there is wisdom sitting here and watching online.

There is wisdom that we have to share with one another, where we can learn and grow from one another.

But when you come to the temple, when you come to encounter God, either through worship or through serving, or when you open up your scripture, what do you expect?

Is it maybe just part of your routine? Or do you come here to worship with a mission, a mission to encounter Jesus, to sit with the Holy Spirit, maybe even to see the face of Jesus in one of our siblings sitting around us? Luke tells this story about these two unusual characters who were able to recognize something extraordinary out of the ordinary like they recognized that an ordinary-looking baby brought to the temple by his ordinary parents as part of their ordinary religious ritual was the son of God was the promised Messiah.

How in the world did Anna and Simeon know that Jesus was the Messiah? Now, Simeon's name means to listen or hear and to be obedient. And so maybe that's a hint. Maybe Simeon had this special ability to hear God and was whatever God was revealing to him through the Holy Spirit. Simeon was certainly inspired by the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that had earlier in his life.

He heard this promise that he would see the Messiah before he died, the same Holy Spirit that helped him spend time and energy looking for the Messiah, the Temple, the same Holy Spirit that allowed Him to have the strength to keep looking his whole life until that promise was revealed. The Holy Spirit transformed Simeon's life, and it transformed our lives.

And when it does, it changes how we view the world. If God had promised you that you would see the Messiah face to face before you died, what kind of person would you be looking for? Would you expect

that person to be a respected, well-known, fully influential person, someone who had proven themselves to be a leader?

Or could you, like Simeon, be able to look at the face of the Messiah in an unexpected place, in the face of a child that you're sitting across from on game night? Could you see Jesus in the face of a homeless person, a person with a disability, or a woman? Would you have been able to recognize Jesus the Messiah in the face of Baby Jesus?

Now, every person who the Holy Spirit falls on is changed, is transformed, And when the hope, when, when we invite the Holy Spirit to come into our lives and to work in our lives, we view the world in a different way. We start seeing Jesus the Messiah in unexpected places. So for Simeon, like the is over, like He saw the Messiah, and now he is able to die peacefully.

But for Anna, Anna approached this Holy family in a different way, recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Anna had a different reaction than Simeon did at that moment when she recognized she began to tell other people about Jesus the Messiah. She said, Hey, if you've been waiting for thousands of years for the redemption of Jerusalem, like it's here like I've found it, and I want to tell you about it.

She wanted to witness what she had experienced at that temple. So this is great. Like, we've read the story as we've read in the scripture. It tells us that that that Jesus is the Messiah. Anna and Simeon tell us that Jesus is the Messiah. So what more do we need besides taking Anna and Simeon's word for it?

How do we really know that Jesus is the Messiah? Now? To be honest, it's like you can find almost any passage in the Bible to back up what you believe. You can flip over scripture, open the Bible, and find scripture to rationalize almost anything that you want to do or believe. So, how do we know that this story is true?

How do we know that Jesus is or is the Savior? And how does that change the way we live once we do know that? And how does that change the way others see Jesus? Well, if we fast forward several years, John the Baptist, who was a relative of Jesus, born around the same time as Jesus, was born to parents Elizabeth and Zachariah and John the Baptist's purpose and mission in life was to prepare the way for Jesus.

And he did that mission all throughout his life. Remember, like he was baptizing people with the water, but he's like, Hey, wait, somebody is coming even greater, and that is going to be baptizing the baby by the spirit. And then and then Jesus came to John the Baptist, and John baptized Jesus like Jesus as John sees with his own eyes.

He's been working at this his whole life to say, this is the one. But then we get to John the Baptist and the end of his life, and he's arrested, and he's about to be beheaded. And what does John do? He spent his whole life preparing for this Messiah for Jesus. He starts doubting John the Baptist, starts doubting after all that he has done in his life, all that he's seen and witnessed, he starts doubting, and he sends word to Jesus.

He sends his followers to Jesus, and he's like, Go ask Jesus. Like, are you the one, or is there another one that we should be waiting for? And then Jesus replies, He says to John's disciples, His John's followers. He says, like, This is found in Luke chapter seven, verses 22 and 23, and Jesus says, Okay, we'll go report to John what you have seen and what you have heard.

Then, Jesus starts listing some things that they may have seen or heard about. He says those who are blind are able to see those who were crippled, now walk people with skin diseases, or cleanse those who are deaf. Now, hear those who were dead are raised up, and the good news is preached to the poor.

And Jesus wasn't making any promises here. He wasn't saying, like, you know, everyone is healed. He's saying, have you seen people? Have you seen these miracles happen? And he to be saying there's like there are these signs and wonders, there's evidence that he is the predicted Messiah. And then at the end, he says, like people are being raised from the dead.

And the good news is being shared with the poor. These things are things that have been predicted in the Scriptures about what the Messiah would be doing. And Jesus says this. He says, Hey, you've seen this. You've heard about these miracles that have happened. And then later on, Luke says the same thing. We find this in the Book of Acts chapter two; Luke says, Fellow Israelites listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene was a man whose credentials God proved to you through miracles, wonders, and signs which God performed through Him among you.

You yourselves know this. And we flipped forward even more like we are. We are far away from the signs and wonders, and miracles God performed. It's really hard to see. We can read about it. We can read about the miracles of Jesus. We can read about Jesus breaking boundaries. We can read about Jesus things, doing things that others seemed radical and crazy.

But what about the signs and wonders in our own lives? God gives those who, when we show up, expect to see Jesus, and God gives these signs and wonders all sorts of different ways in our lives through love and grace and miracles and forgiveness. For me, I hold on to the idea of forgiveness like that's where I have seen Jesus working in my life.

In my own life, I have been offered forgiveness for something that I doubted that I would be forgiven for. And I have offered forgiveness to someone. I have forgiven someone for something that some people said that's unforgivable. But if Jesus wasn't at the core of who I am and what I believe, this sign of forgiveness wouldn't have happened.

And if it would have happened, it certainly would have gone unnoticed. I think about Jesus on the cross when he said those words. He's dying on the cross in pain, and he's like, Father, forgive them if Jesus can forgive like that. And I can offer that kind of forgiveness and also be forgiven myself. I know in my life that Jesus is the chosen one.

These are things that are counter-cultural. They are counterintuitive. They are things that we don't see every day in the world. And when you get to know Jesus, when you come to the temple expecting to see Jesus, like you'll have your own story too. Now, Simeon not only experienced the Messiah, he held that baby in his arms.

And for me, as I said, what I'm holding on to is the power of forgiveness, because I know that kind of forgiveness for kind of forgiveness can only come through my Savior. It's not of this world. Now, Anna had a story to tell, like she wanted to tell others about it. They both had a purpose in their lives.

For thousands of years, the Israelites waited for the Messiah, the anointed One, the chosen one, to come and save them, to give them the power of a new kind of kingdom. And it wasn't the kind of kingdom that

they were expecting at all. Eventually, they started to see it. They recognized Jesus as God, the anointed One, the Messiah.

They recognized Jesus as love. And once we've experienced that kind of love that Jesus offers, once we've experienced that kind of forgiveness and grace that God offers, others will see it in us. Others will see that this baby boy that we celebrate around Christmas time is the Messiah. And he's proved that through signs and wonders, not only things that we can read about in the scripture but things that we've experienced ourselves.

Now, maybe you are unsure. Maybe you're you're not sure that Jesus is the chosen one. Maybe you're like John the Baptist, and you've grown up in the church, and all of a sudden, you doubt you've ever recognized God's love in your life. There is this need for us to sometimes see the signs and wonders.

But the truth is that even if we don't see the signs and wonders in our own lives, the good news of Jesus is still the good news of Jesus. And it's a gift offered to us. So. And Simeon, they saw, and they knew. But they also took time to seek out Jesus. They let the Holy Spirit lead them and guide them to fulfill their purposes.

So, how will you seek out Jesus? How will you be certain that Jesus is the chosen one? The one we should be following it all? You will be amazed if you just show up wherever you are expecting to see Jesus. And maybe, like the Jews of Jesus, stay. Maybe you'll see Jesus in ways that you don't expect in radical life, changing ways.

I want to end with a quote from an MLK Jr. Tomorrow. We recognize the importance that MLK had in our society and the world. And MLK Jr says this: Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step. Would you pray with me? Gracious God helps us to expect the unexpected.

Help us to expect to encounter Jesus every single day, in all the ways and all the places and all the times. God, you are with us. And we admit that sometimes we're so distracted that we don't see Jesus in our lives. But God, you have promised to be with us. You have promised to walk with us, whether we're in the deepest, darkest valley of our life right now or whether we're celebrating something really great that is happening. God help us to see the face of Jesus, whether it be in the face of a newborn baby, the face of a child, the face of a stranger, or the face of our enemy. God, With you, we can see the unexpected, and others can see it to, God. We say all of this in Jesus. His name Amen.