

# Sermon Text for December 19, 2021

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

## ***Isaiah 60:1-3, Luke 2:25-38*** ***“Jesus the baby presented at the temple”***

So when was the last time that you experienced the real, unmistakable presence of God in your life? I had lunch with a new member this past week and you know, if you’ve joined the church recently you haven’t heard all of my stories that I have shared with the rest of you of God working through churches where I have served in very real, unmistakable ways. Most of you know the story of Manuela who was born healthy as a result of a miracle that the church had prayed for and that God had honored and responded in a way that could have only been the glory of God revealed powerfully.

You’ve heard my many stories about finances and how God has met, to the penny, the needs that we and individuals and churches have had from a car seat that cost a specific amount and that was provided for by a Sunday school class across the globe, to money to go to college that was provided for by a random stranger. You’ve heard of when we first started the Well when it was still the parlor and we were in a meeting talking about how nice it would be to have Keurig and at that moment I got a text from a member of the church who said that they had an extra Keurig, did the church need it for any reason.

In my life, and I pray in yours as well, God’s glory is constantly revealed to us if we would only be aware enough and put ourselves in a position to see God’s glory. It is so easy for the glory of God to pass right in front of us, like a child carried into church and because we have so many children and babies being born these days in this church we hardly notice. Isaiah tells us that the glory of the Lord will be revealed and is being revealed for the whole world to see. It is a charge for us to be aware of the glory of the Lord and to identify it as such.

In our sermon series for today, Jesus the baby, we saw him conceived out of wedlock, born in a manger, visited by the shepherds, and now today, presented in the temple. I want you to think of all the people who experienced the presence of Jesus up to now and did not identify him as the Savior, as the Messiah, as the Son of God, and those who, on the other hand, see him for who he is, the Savior of the World. Let’s make sure we recognize and identify Jesus and the glory of the Lord in our own lives this Advent season. Let’s read.

## READ

What are some things that attract you to the presence of the Lord. I think without a shadow of the doubt when God appears in a miracle or a healing or something significant it catches our attention and draws our eyes away from the mundane of the world and helps us to focus on the presence of the Lord which is all around us. But it often takes something significant in order for us to refocus on Christ, in order for us to identify Jesus in our midst.

When we look at the latter part of our Isaiah Scripture, and specifically verses 2b and 3a we read that “the Lord will rise upon you and his glory will appear over you”, and this is all depicted in the form of a light that is easy to see and identify. If God’s glory were to be revealed to us in such a significant way such as a light that surrounded us then we would not have a problem identifying God clearly in our lives and seeing how God acts on a daily basis.

We aren’t yet going to our second Scripture, but Simeon when he sees Jesus and identifies him for who he is uses an Isaiah Scripture when he says in vs.32 that Jesus is a “light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” These words come directly from Isaiah and specifically in chapter 49:6 where the prophet states: “I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

If God were to reveal himself to you in a way that you could see his light leading you, kind of like the cloud by day and the fire by night for the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, then things simply be easier in understanding what God’s desire is for us in our lives. But we don’t have that, at least we think we don’t have that. What if I were to tell you that God is actually in our midst right now and we simply are not attentive enough to his presence to identify him in our midst.

God is a light revealing to us his desire and his wishes for our lives but we are not aware enough to see that light. Look at vs.1 of our Isaiah Scripture, this is the call for us today: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. What if you read this verse every morning, I guarantee you if you read this verse every morning and you said: Bob, etc., arise, shine, for your light has come, Jesus is here in your midst, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you, I guarantee you would consistently see God’s presence on a daily basis simply because you started your day recognizing that God is going to reveal himself to you today. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

One of the reasons, especially in this time of the year, that we miss the presence of the Lord is that we are not waiting and expecting the light to come. Most of the time we are satisfied with this season and just playing itself out and maybe that is enough to check off our spiritual

box. Christmas Eve with the pageant and the candlelight service? Check. Did that, we do it every year. We know how God is going to be revealed in that, it happens every year. But what if I were to tell you that even in the midst of the everyday and the expected God will reveal himself powerfully in a ways that we do not expect.

It is difficult to experience the power and awe of God in the commonplace and in the routine and in the normal activities in which we take part. But Simeon and Anna were able to identify Jesus when he is a baby presented at the temple among the thousands of babies that they had seen in the temple and it was an event that was not only significant, but one of a kind, even in the midst of what was a routine day.

Let's look at Luke and see baby Jesus being presented to the temple. Let's get to know Simeon and Anna, they are only introduced to us here in this Scripture and then they disappear out of Scripture. There is another Simeon that is presented in Acts but nobody really believes this is the same person, it is a pretty common first name. These two aged saints represent the best of all of us: devout, obedient, constant in prayer, led by the Holy Spirit, at home in the temple or at church, longing and hoping for the fulfillment of God's promises. These are all characteristics and attributes that we want to emulate.

They are the best of us. You know what happens around Christmas and in Advent every year? For some reason we see the worst of people. The church is not immune. I get more people come to see me during this season as they are struggling through crises, or complaints about how the church is running and it is going, than any other time of the year. I brace myself once November rolls around because I know for the next two months it is going to be a little rocky. I've seen it every year for the last 28 years.

It is this time of year that more than any other time of the year people find themselves at wits ends and a lot of it has to do with what is swirling around us during this time of the year? Work tends to get more stressful, your calendar tends to get more full, family life with Christmas coming up tends to get so much more busy, which lends itself to stress as well. It is so much more difficult to experience the presence of God in the midst of stress at home, or at work, or at the church. It simply is. But Jesus is still present and His glory is still awesome and life changing, but we can miss it simply because we are more focused on what is happening around us and in us, than what God is doing to us.

When Jesus is presented at the temple by his father Joseph and his mother Mary, he could have been easily missed by Simeon and Anna. Look at vs.25-27 and in each verse you will see in vs.25 that the Holy Spirit rested on him, the same word used for when the Holy Spirit rested

on Jesus in his baptism and when the tongues of fire rested on the disciples at Pentecost, in vs.26 we read that the Holy Spirit talked to him and told him that he would see the Messiah. And in vs.27 we read that he was guided by the Holy Spirit to go to the temple when Jesus and his parents were entering the temple. The Holy Spirit has worked powerfully in Simeon's life so he is ready to encounter Jesus and he is ready to see Jesus.

He identifies Jesus and acts upon it. There is also the possibility that we are okay with experiencing God in a subdued way because if we were to truly follow through on God's presence in our life then it could actually change us. Simeone tells Mary that she is going to experience a division in her life where she will have to choose between her family and the Word of God. Sometimes we choose not to notice Jesus as he enters our life because it could cause us to make decisions that would pierce our soul, that are just too difficult to follow through on.

But when he tells Mary that Jesus is destined for the falling and the rising of many, that term rising is anastasis which means resurrection. He is telling Mary that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and all that come to him will have life eternal. The glory of the Lord will shine upon those who are able to identify it. Anna was another who was able to identify it. It should come as no surprise that a person who lives in the temple and prays and fasts constantly is on the look out for the Messiah and when he appears she understands who he is.

This Advent season, and actually in your life at all times, don't allow God's presence to pass you by. The children gathered make us feel good, like they belong and we belong, but have a huge responsibility which requires action on our part, and often decisions on our part which are difficult, but which will only reveal God's presence more and more. When God reveals Himself to us, when we experience the glory of the Lord that shines up on us, we have to act upon it. May God bless us and keep us as we look to do just that.  
Amen.