

Advent – As John was sent, so are we December 15, 2019

Overarching theme: Living a year in God’s presence through the practice of following Jesus.

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: In this Advent season, we see how Jesus was sent from the Father to bring onto earth the start of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was sent, and in that example, Jesus sends his disciples out into the world to deliver the Kingdom of God by what is presented, said, and done.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 2:22-39 (NRSV)

²² 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 ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,

²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” ⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but

worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

Questions to Ponder:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

What do you understand is happening in this passage?

Who do you think Simeon was?

In vs 29, what made Simeon feel at peace?

What do you think his peace felt and looked like?

What does peace mean in your life?

Who was Jesus? What is the purpose of Jesus?

What does it mean for Jesus to be light to the two different people groups?

Commentary:

Do you remember the story of Jesus' birth? Do you recall what was happening in the world as Jesus' life was getting started? There was a virgin who got pregnant by the spirit of God. Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, moved to a new home. King Herod, upon hearing that the king of the Jews had been born, sought to find the child and have him killed. Basically, the beginning of Jesus' life was filled with chaos. Our culture and individual lives are filled with chaos and drama, just as in the time of Jesus. It is interesting to read the words of Simeon in verses 29-32 which refer to how he was in peace after seeing Jesus. We don't know the job of Simeon, but we know he was a righteous and devout man who happened to be at the temple at the same time as Jesus' dedication.

The Jewish dedication of a male Child was performed within eight to 40 days after birth. A male child would have to be circumcised in a service of "Brit Milah", and then given a name by the father. Also, after seven days, the family was to go to the temple to give a sacrifice for uncleanness, given the mother's uncleanness from child birth and the spilling of blood. Two pigeons, or doves, would be the offering for a poor family. William Barclay, in his commentary of Luke 2, highlights another practice of the "Redemption of the Firstborn." In this practice the parents would give an offering to buy back the firstborn, who was sacred to God, from God. Interesting practice, but do not know if it was a practice when Luke wrote.

In the midst of the process, Simeon is given a blessing by seeing and holding Jesus. Simeon got what God was doing. He knew the words of the prophets that foretold the coming of the savior. So, in the midst of all the activity of the rites and the chaos in the world, Simeon was overcome by the peace of God. The Greek word, in verse 29, "Eirene" means "peace, tranquility, or opposite of war." It

basically means the same as the Old Testament word, "Shalom." Both words mean peace, tranquility, completeness, or opposite of war.

Think of this, when God created the universe, God transformed chaos into order that brought peace, or Shalom, into the world. Sadly, the choices of humankind, would bring chaos into the world. In response, God's redemptive work throughout history would always seek to help us bring order out of the chaos again. It is through the Christ child that God worked redemption into our lives so that we may not only have order, but also peace, tranquility, and harmony with God and one another. God's work ultimately leads to "Shalom." The peace that brings tranquility into the lives of the Jesus followers. Philippians 4:6-7 says it well, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Shalom!

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

How would you describe peace?

What is the chaos in your life?

What can you do in this advent season to prepare yourself for Jesus and the peace that can be experienced?

What can you do to deliver peace to another?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Focus on this scripture this week:
Philippians 4:4-7 (NRSV)
"⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."