

Dec 30, 2017

Luke 2:22-3:22

The Certain Gospel: An Ending & Beginning

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Chances are this is the **last sermon** we're going to hear in 2017. Next Saturday will be a whole new year, 2018. How do you **feel** about 2017? Did you **love** it? Did you like all the **crazy news**? Will you remember 2017 as a good year for you and your family, or a hard year? How do you feel about 2018? What kind of **expectations** are you setting? Are you finally going to get in **shape**, read your **Bible**, take that **cooking** class? Maybe you hope to have **kids** or get **married**.

This time of year always involves **two** things: 1) a **letting go** of the previous year with its successes and failures; and 2) a **welcoming-in** of the new year with its potential and possibilities. *Out with the old; in with the new*. Right? Today, we find a **similar theme** in Luke chapters 2-3. We're looking at three stories that share an **ending** and a **beginning**.

As we look at these texts, and grow in our understanding of God's word, I hope that today's sermon will help you **let go** of 2017 and **look forward** to what God might have for you in 2018. It's not that we want to forget what God taught us in 2017, but we want to open our hearts to what he might **teach us anew** in 2018. *Out with the old; in with the new*. We start with a man and a woman who knew what it means to be old.

Simeon & Anna (Luke 2:22-40)

Joseph and Mary take Jesus to Jerusalem so that Mary can be **purified 40 days** after giving birth to Jesus (Lev 12:1-4). At the temple, they meet the **elderly** man Simeon. Luke describes Simeon as "righteous and devout" and **waiting** for the "consolation of Israel." The **consolation** of Israel means the **comfort** of Israel. **Isaiah 40** explains that God comforts his people by **forgiving** their sins (Isa 40:1-2).

When you were a kid, did you ever break a **window**? That caused you a lot of terror and fear, right? You didn't receive comfort in that moment by running away or blaming your older brothers, but by telling your parents or your neighbors what you did. And when you told them, although there were consequences, they also **forgave** you, and that forgiveness is what gave you comfort. It's the same with God. We've broken his window, his creation, but he forgives us. That is **comforting**. That gives us **hope**.

But what if you were **still waiting** to be forgiven for breaking the window? What if our parents, and grandparents, and our great-grandparents, and so on and so on had been waiting **thousands** of years to be forgiven? You'd feel impatient. You'd lose hope. But what if the **Holy Spirit** told you that before you die you would meet the one who will forgive your sins?

As Simeon stands there with Mary and Joseph, his **hope is realized**, "Now I can depart in my peace because I have seen your salvation." But this hope and comfort won't just be for him. Verse 32, he will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." God's message of comfort is not just for Israel, but **all nations**, including the **Greek-speaking audience** Luke is writing to. So forgiveness is not just for me who breaks windows, but for other neighbor kids who break windows too. We can all be forgiven.

Simeon even explains **how** when he says **to Mary**, "a sword will pierce through your own soul..." (Lk 2:35) This child will **experience discomfort** to give **God's comfort** to all peoples. Simeon speaks of the **cross**.

Then **the story turns** to the prophet Anna who was very elderly, but also **never gave up** hope in God for **84 years** (Lk 2:37).¹ When she sees Jesus, she identifies him as the one who will redeem Israel. *To redeem something means to buy it back.* Jesus will **buy back** his people at the **cross**. When you break a window, someone has to pay for it. Either you have to pay for it, your parents, or your neighbor. Jesus **pays** for our broken **window**. He takes tge **cost** upon himself. Simeon and Anna leave us with a lesson in hope.

Out with impatience; in with hope.

They both had to **wait** their **whole lives** to see the **Messiah**—*the one God chose to comfort and redeem his people from their sins*. But when we meet them in the narrative, they're clearly not disheartened. They're happy. They're joyful. They're fully of the Spirit and they're **excited** for the arrival of the Messiah. *May we also wait patiently and hopefully for Jesus too.*

May we wait patiently and hopefully when we don't get **our way**. May we wait patiently and hopefully when he leads us **down a road** we don't expect. May we wait patiently and hopefully when we **pray** and he is **silent**. Are you **waiting** on Jesus? Or are you going ahead with your own **plans**, trying to solve your problems your way? *Out with impatience; in with hope.*

My family adopted a rescue dog from the animal shelter when I was a kid. She was a blonde **Cocker Spaniel** and we named her **Taffy**. When we first got her, she was very **shy**. Whoever owned before us abused her. When you felt her side, you could feel a broken rib. When she walked forward to greet you, she would walk sideways towards you, so that she could run away if she thought you were going to hit her. It was really sad. But over time she really warmed up to my **dad**.

The rest of us were **kind** to her but she just put up with us. I think my dad provided a sense of **calm** and **comfort** teenage boys cannot. He would take her on **long walks** where she could bound through big fields. In our house she found a **window perch** where she could lay in the sun and **wait patiently** for my dad to come home from work each day. When he got home, she would greet him with excitement and he would greet her. She would lay down near him, and then the next day my dad would leave and she would return to her perch, **waiting patiently**. Taffy once **told me**, "I know my **comforter** is coming, the one who **purchased** me from the **pound**, and so I can **wait patiently** and **hopefully** through anything, even teenage boys..."

Jesus is **worth** waiting for. He is our comforter, our redeemer. He may not do what **we want** in our timing, but he will never let us down. *Out with impatience; in with hope. Out with the old; in with the new.* We see this **theme continue** in the next story of Jesus' parents.

Joseph & Mary (Lk 2:41-52)

Joseph and Mary live a **life of obedience** to God's laws. Remember how Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem that first time to be ceremonially purified in obedience to the law. Luke emphasizes the "Law of Moses" or "the Law of the Lord" three different times in verses 22-24. This law is all God's commanded for his people from Genesis to Deuteronomy. *Jesus had to **obey** the whole law in order to be perfect.*

One of those laws, found in Exodus 23:14 and Deuteronomy 16:16, said everyone was supposed to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the **Passover**. The year Jesus turned **12 years old**, which was **one year shy** of being considered a man according to Jewish custom, something interesting happened. When Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem to return home, they traveled a **day's walk** from Jerusalem before realizing that Jesus wasn't with their extended family. So they turned around, walked back to Jerusalem, searched for a third day, and finally

¹ Garland, David E.; Clinton E. Arnold. *Luke* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 3) (Kindle Locations 3613-3614). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

found him in the **temple** talking with the teachers of the law. People were amazed at his understanding and answers (Lk 2:47). But his parents were **less impressed**. Mary said...

Luke 2:48b “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” (NIV®)

Clearly Jesus was in big trouble because Mary said, “Your father and I...” You say “Your mom and I...” or “my wife and I...” when you want to use your full authority as a married couple or as parents. But Jesus says he answers to a higher authority than his **earthly parents**, his **Heavenly Father**.

Luke 2:49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (NIV®)

As Jesus grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:40, 52), he came to understand who he was and God’s plans. He felt called to obey his **Father’s will**, but that seemed to come into conflict with his parent’s will. So what should he do? He’s the **perfect** one, right? They’re the sinful ones. What does he do?

Luke 2:51a Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. (NIV®)

This Greek word for obedience (hypotassō) means **submission** or **subordination**. In order to live a **perfect** and sinless life, Jesus had to submit himself to those God the Father placed over him, including his **fallible** human parents. He had to honor his father and his mother (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1). *So what’s the out with the old and in with the new theme here?*

Out with disobedience; in with submission.

We’re all called by God to submit to **God-given authorities**. In Romans 13, Paul calls us to submit to our government. In Ephesians 5-6, Paul calls husbands to **love** their wives and wives to **submit** to their husbands and children to **obey** their parents. In Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Peter 5 God calls the church to submit to their elders. But this isn’t easy is it. Mike McKinley (who showed me this point on submission) writes:

“We are happy to obey our leaders in the church (Hebrews 13:17), so long as they don’t instruct us to do anything we don’t want to do. We respect those who rule over us in government (Romans 13:1), so long as they enact and enforce the policies we advocate. Wives submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24), so long as they are getting their emotional needs met.”²

I’ve learned a lot of things by serving on our Board of Elders, one of which is that all of us are **fallible**. We’re fallen and sinful just like Mary and Joseph, and yet God has placed each of us in a **position** of authority. And if you’re a Christian and a regular attendee at Cornerstone, I believe God is calling you to submit to this authority. I want to give you two ways you can submit to your Board of Elders this year.

1. If you’re **not a member**, please **prioritize** investigating the membership process and becoming a member of the church. Maybe you’re asking this **question**, “Is modern church membership necessary?” I think a better question is, “Is membership a way I can **demonstrate** my submission to the authority God has placed in my life?” I believe the answer is yes.
2. But what if you’re **already a member**? Great! You’re in perfect submission... A way you can show submission is by **attending** regularly and consistently. Aim to be here at least 3/4 weeks a month and try to put what you’re learning in the sermon and in your small group into **practice** in your own life.

² McKinley, Mike. *Luke 1-12 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading* (God's Word for You) (Kindle Locations 441-443). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

Submission isn't easy. Did you know your **life** depends on submission? Your life depends on **Jesus' perfect submission** to both his **earthly parents**, Mary and Joseph, and his **Heavenly Father**. He walked that difficult line perfectly, all the way to the **cross**.

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (NIV®)

Its Jesus act of **perfect obedience** and **submission** that becomes **our own** through repentance and faith. Through **Jesus**, God **counts** us as perfectly submissive. That **doesn't mean** that we're free **not** to submit, but that when we don't submit perfectly, as none of us will, we are **forgiven**. As we head into 2018, may we seek to obey our Heavenly Father by obeying and submitting to the **earthly authorities** he has given us. *Out with disobedience; in with submission. Out with the old; in with the new.* We have one more...

John the Baptist (Lk 3:1-22)

Remember how the angel promised Zechariah and Elizabeth a son and they gave birth to a son and named him **John**? After John was born, Zechariah **prophesied** this:

Luke 1:76

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, (NIV®)

John is a prophet like **Elijah** who will go before the Lord. In fact, he is the **last prophet** signaling the end of the Old Testament and the **arrival** of the **Messiah**. We see him going before the Lord in Luke chapter 3. He goes into the wilderness, the word of God comes to him (Lk 3:2), and he preaches.

Luke 3:3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (NIV®)

Baptism is a **symbol** of **repentance**. It's repentance that God asks for in order to forgive us our sins. Then in verse 4-6, Luke quotes the book of Isaiah chapter 40. **Simeon** spoke of the comforter **hinted** at in **Isaiah 40:1-2**, a **coming comforter** who will **save** people from their **sins**. Now **Luke** (in Luke 3:4-6) speaks of the prophet **prophesied** in **Isaiah 40:3-6**, who will go ahead of the Lord to prepare the way.

Isaiah 40:3

A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God. (NIV®)

John calls us to repent of our sins because that get's us **ready for Jesus**.

Out with sin; in with repentance.

To prepare our hearts for Jesus in the new year, we need to **recognize** where we sin and repent to prepare our hearts more fully for Jesus in 2018. *Repentance mean **turning** from sin and to God.* When the people hear John's preaching, they ask, "What should we do?" (Lk 3:10). He calls tem to **turn** their **current lives** towards God, by obeying God **where they're at**. He calls for those **who have** to **give** to the **have nots**. He calls tax collectors to **gather** taxes **fairly**. He calls people in **power** to not mistreat the **powerless**.

In 2018, let's **let go** of our **sin** and **turn** to Jesus. That's **easier** said than done, right? That's why we have to ask the **Holy Spirit** to change us **one day** at a time in 2018. Jesus paid for our sin, but we need the Holy Spirit to help us let them go. Let's **pray** to let go of those things we hold so **tightly** they're **blinding** us to what God has in store for us. Let's let go of what we have so that we can **give** to those who don't have. Let's let go of trying to **get ahead** of others so that we can do our **jobs ethically**. Let's let go of our need for **power** so that we will identify with the **powerless**. *Out with sin; in with repentance.*

Out with the old; in with the new.

I remember trying to stay awake on New Year's Eve December 31st **1999**. I was **eleven** years old, just about to turn twelve, and it was the **turn of the century**. Mom and dad must have let me stay up late but I eventually got in bed at about **11:45pm**. My plan was to lay in bed, watch the clock turn to **12:00am**, and then go to sleep. I woke up at **about 12:02am**.

I missed the turn of the century. It was **huge**. I was **crushed**. I was sure I would go through the rest of my life **regretting** missing that moment. So I came up with a **solution**. I picked up my clock, set it to **11:59pm**, and watched it turn to **12:00am**. I tried to convince myself that it counted, but I knew it didn't. I tried to **go back** to capture something I could never have again.

Let's **not** go back. Let's not try to recapture the success and victory of last year. As the **ball drops** on **2017** and **2018 begins**, may we go forward and embrace what God has in store for us this year. *Out with impatience; in with hope. Out with disobedience; in with submission. Out with sin; in with repentance. Out with the old; in with the new.*

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).