

## The Youngest Oldest Man at Christmas

Luke 2: 22-35

#11 in our series from Ecclesiastes

December 24, 2016

Peter Hiett

*Newsflash* from Peter Hiett

A video recording was shown containing the following message:



[Spoken tongue in cheek with confidence and in a bit of a condescending tone.] Good afternoon, my name is Peter Hiett, and I'm the *lead* pastor at The Sanctuary Denver. I've been called away to an emergency meeting of the Make Colorado Great Again Campaign. I'm sorry to inform you that I will be unable to participate in the remainder of the evening's festivities and frivolities. But be of good cheer because we're going to win. I *know* we're going to win. There's going to be so much winning that you are going to be tired of winning . . . so much winning that you will be sick of winning . . . so much winning that you're not going to know what to do with all the winning. I have arranged for a special guest speaker for tonight. He is very old and very slow, so be patient with him. Have courage! We'll make Colorado great again. Good evening and Merry Christmas!

following portion of Handel's Messiah plays in the background:

The

...and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

In the course of the song, an old man with a walker (Peter Hiett in disguise) very slowly makes his way up to the platform. He greets people and engages with them on his way.



## Message

*The old man (aka Peter in disguise begins to speak). He speaks with an accent.*

Thank you for your patience!

I'm rather slow and old . . . [How old are you?]

I'm so old that, when I was a boy, the Dead Sea was only sick. [rimshot]

I'm so old... my social security number is zero. [rimshot]

I'm so old... my birth certificate reads, "EXPIRED." [rimshot]

I'm so old... because the Holy Spirit said to me, "Simeon."

I said, "What?"

He said, "You will not die until you see the consolation of Israel."

The "consolation of Israel" is the "comfort of Israel."

- Isaiah called him the "Strong Arm of the Lord."

- He is the Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

We wanted Him to console us, by *not* consoling the Romans.

We felt like losers, and we wanted to be winners.

We knew that he would "Make Israel great again."

In my day, a donkey was called an "ass."

(Look it up – the King James Version.)

And a tough guy, who didn't take nothin' from his donkey was called, "Kick Ass."

We were waiting for the "Kick Ass" Messiah –

Sorry to use the vernacular, but I want you to understand.

Most of you are waiting for that kind of Messiah.

You think your God is better than the next guy's god because your God can kick his god's... donkey.

We knew that the lion was the King of Beasts... and could eat Romans for breakfast.

Isaiah 52: 9 *"The Lord has consoled his people*

*He has bared his holy (strong) arm...*

*And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."*

I thought that meant that everyone would see that Israel had won because the nations would see that they had lost. So, I stood in the temple for years, staring at the sky, waiting for our Messiah because we knew "The Lord whom we sought would suddenly come to His temple,"... and kick some donkey.

I know that you have been studying the temple because your pastor has been preaching from Solomon's book, that you call Ecclesiastes. [And by the way, if you were hoping to hear from your very important pastor—trust me, I know just what he's thinking—and I know what he's already told you.]

You know that King Solomon built that stone temple.

You know that he built it on the very spot where Abraham almost sacrificed his only begotten son,

Except that the Messenger of the Covenant provided a lamb.

You know that the Messenger of the Covenant, who is the Word of God and Glory of God,

Would appear between the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which was a *throne* in the inner Sanctuary of that temple... built on the very spot we thought that God first breathed life into Adam.

You know that when Solomon, dedicated that temple, Fire came down from Heaven,

Consumed the sacrifices, and filled the temple with Glory.

But did you know that the Glory was so great that the priests could not stand?

See? The Glory of God could knock you right onto your... donkey.

In my day, we were hurting for glory. It had left the temple . . .

The Priests didn't have any trouble standing whatsoever.

Now, you may wonder, "What did the priests do? My Pastor only works on Sunday... what did they do?" Mostly they barbecued . . . and sprinkled.

["Simeon" imitates a sprinkler.] They were like a rain bird sprinkler.

People brought animals and the priest would slaughter them, drain the blood, and then sprinkle blood on the altar, the veil, even on top of the Ark . . . on the very throne of God.

*Nazah*, in Hebrew, means "sprinkle" or "spurt." When the priest would slaughter the sacrifice, it's blood would spurt. See? The temple was like a thousand year old mandatory anatomy laboratory . . . and so, we understood the circulation of blood—the spurting and sprinkling of blood.

God wanted blood flow—so the priests sprinkled . . . and barbecued. They barbecued—some meat got burnt up, and some we ate up. Whatever the case, it was clear that the sacrifice itself was a picture of us. The sacrifice was supposed to be us and, supposedly, it made things right . . . I figured it made things right, by disposing of me, who was wrong...

In Genesis 9, God says to Noah, "*For your lifeblood I will require a reckoning. From every beast and from the Adam I will require it.*" Your blood . . . the life is in the blood.

That gave me the willies—God requires our blood.

God seemed to be a donkey kickin,' angry, and bloodthirsty God.

At Passover, so many lambs were slaughtered in the temple that it became like a fountain, and the blood formed a river that flowed all the way to *gehenna*.

- On the first Passover, God had the Israelites offer lambs in place of their first-born sons.
- And that's why, even in my day, parents were to present their first-born sons to the priest in the temple.

And anytime a mother had a baby, she was to offer a lamb for a burnt offering, and a pigeon for a sin offering. If she was poor, she could just do the two pigeons.

- One pigeon was a sin offering—taking away what God didn't want.
- And the other was a burnt offering - giving to God what He did want.

Creepy huh?

The sacrifices were offered to the fire, for our God is a consuming fire. Fire, smoke, blood, and me, in the temple everyday . . . And I should tell you: Usually, I was pretty afraid. I was afraid of Romans, but even more afraid of God. I was afraid to die. I was afraid to lose my life, and meet Him.

No one really knew how all the sacrifices worked...

But it seemed pretty clear that they didn't really work...

For God still wanted lifeblood... more blood—a river of blood.

This is me—an earthen vessel made of dust ["Simeon" holds up a cup]  
This is my life: the life is in the blood ["Simeon" pours wine into the cup]  
This is what God wants ["Simeon" drinks the cup.]

There was Fire in the temple, and a Fire that burned inside of me.  
I was a prophet, so the Word of God burned in my blood like fire.

- I scared people, and I scared me.
- I should say the Word of God, in me, scared me.
- I didn't understand it, but I knew I had to speak it.

Actually, I didn't usually speak it; I sang it . . . It helped everybody remember the lines:

(Singing) *"...and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."*

I was fairly impressive!

I was important, powerful, and kind of . . . full of myself . . .

Bein' full of myself, was how I protected my self . . .

Against God's self—the consuming fire.

He will come to his temple . . .

(Singing) *"...but who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?*

*...For he is like a refiner's fire."*

No doubt He was a kick-butt Messiah.

But I wondered exactly whose butts He would be kicking?

Roman? Jewish? The Levites? The Priests?

(Singing) *"...And he shall purify the sons of Levi (the priests)...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."*

That means, "right offering" . . . and God wants your lifeblood . . . I usually tried to forget that, as I capped it all off with a snappy little number of my own construction: "Hallelujah, hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Hallelujah..." Well, I called my little musical, and prophetic, ensemble "The Messiah."

I was an important and powerful prophet in the Temple—

A big shot, like your pastor in the capitol.

And I figured the Messiah would be the biggest of all big shots.

For years and years, I sang and prophesied, sang and prophesied . . . and He did not come.  
I was running out of steam. I was tired, almost nothing.  
It was like I was counting down to zero: 4 BC, 3 BC, 2 BC, 1BC . . .  
I would have quit, but I kept wondering, "What happens at Y-zero-K?"

Along about zero, I was so old and so weak.  
I was so poor in spirit, and so mournful, and so meek.  
I was like "the last and the least of these."  
I was at the end of "me."  
Not a big shot . . . almost a no shot.

And it was then, the Spirit said to me,  
"Blessed are you Simeon. Now get up off your... donkey, and go to the temple. Today is the day."

So I went, I watched, I waited, and I worried...  
I was checking the sky for the Messiah coming in glory on the clouds of Heaven,  
When the Spirit of God said to me, "There He is!"  
I gasped, and looked up and said, "Where, oh Lord?"  
And He says, "Over there, oh Simeon."  
And I says, "What? Behind that poor pitiful little peasant family, oh Lord?"  
And He says, "No, /N the poor pitiful little peasant family, oh Simeon."  
I says, "You mean the baby? Oh Lord?"  
And He says, "Yeah... Oh Simeon."

Now, it's very hard for me to explain what happened next. It was an apocalypse. My therapist calls it a "paradigm shift." Everything stays exactly the same, and yet, everything changes.

Like this picture:

[Image that, depending on how you look at it can look like a duck or a rabbit]

Is that a duck or a rabbit?  
—Are those ears of a rabbit . . . on the left?  
—Or is that the bill of a duck?  
Duck to rabbit... or... rabbit to duck is a paradigm shift.

I thought, "Is this the Lion of Judah... or maybe a lamb... or maybe both?"

Paradigm shift!

Like this picture of the Tel Aviv Marathon:

[Image of the Tel Aviv Marathon]

Everybody's running in one direction . . .  
But what if the King of these Jews said, "Hey, the finish line isn't in front of you. It's behind you."

Paradigm shift!

All at once, the first would be last and the last would be first.  
Winners would be losers and losers would be winners.

All this time, I thought God was saying, “Try harder and run faster.” But He was really saying, “You’re running in the wrong direction. You’re running to be first and best, but I’m calling you to be last and least. You’re running to save your life, but I’m calling you to lose your life.”

Now Listen: It wasn’t just that the King of Glory chose to be born as a weak little baby, to a poor peasant family, who placed him in a food trough, in a barn with stinky shepherds. It was what they did that day, in the temple that changed everything...

Ready? Brace yourself. I watched it:  
They went to the priest.... and they handed him (wait for it!) two pigeons...

Two pigeons!!!!  
And my brain exploded with a million questions and a billion ideas  
... that all came down to one idea—one picture:

I thought, “Why sacrifice for Him?”  
“He’s not wrong.” “He’s right!”  
“Why would God be mad at Him?”  
“Why sacrifice for him—the Lion of Judah, the messenger of the Covenant?”  
“Why sacrifice for him—he didn’t violate God’s will? He is God’s will.”  
“Why sacrifice for him—God is him.”  
And for that matter—Why sacrifice for a baby?  
A baby has no “knowledge of good and evil,” and therefore, does not sin!  
God isn’t mad at babies... OR THE MESSIAH... He’s not wrong, but right.

Simultaneously, I thought, “These poor people can’t afford a lamb...” And then I thought, “Hey... He is the lamb.”

I remembered Isaiah 52 and 53:  
*The arm of the Lord will console his people...  
He will be high and lifted up...  
He will be marred beyond human semblance...  
He will sprinkle many nations... [“Simeon” imitates a sprinkler]  
He will sprinkle many nations...  
The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...  
Like a lamb lead to slaughter...  
When his soul is made an offering for sin—a sin offering.*

He was the sin offering—he made up for the thing we all refuse to do.  
And he was the burnt offering—he is the thing God wants all of us to do.  
Actually, He is God... doing it.

- He is God, choosing to lose, that we might win.
- He is God, choosing to be last, that all might be first.

Every person in this whole world, is trying to save their own life.  
And God had arranged all things, so every person could watch Him lose His life.

Just then, I heard the Spirit say, “Behold this child is appointed for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel, AND for a sign that is opposed.”

[Image of the Tel Aviv Marathon repeated]

You see?

If someone were running the opposite direction of all of these people . . .

He would be a “sign that is opposed.”

And if he were yelling, “The finish line is behind you,” well, that would be good news to “the last and the least of these.” But for those that thought they were “the first and best of these,” the winners—it might not sound so good . . .

But it would still be good; for if you are running the wrong direction, you will never reach the finish line, no matter how hard you try.

- In fact, the gooder you run, the badder you are.
- And the harder you try, the behinder you get.  
In which case, the best gift for you would be to run yourself out & fall down.
- You can’t reach the end.
- But the End can reach you—He can suddenly come to your temple.

“He is set for the fall and *anastasis*—it means resurrection—of many.”

“The many,” that fall, are “the many” that rise.

And in my language “many” often means “all.”

I looked at the Lion of Judah and saw that He chose to be the lamb.

I saw that He is love, and constantly chooses to love.

Love... IS... choosing to lose, that another might win.

Love... IS... SACRIFICE.

And Love had suddenly come to His temple and was kicking my donkey!

Love was kickin’ my tush... and setting me free.

I saw that the sin offering *is* the burnt offering.

I saw that sacrifice *is* punishment for what we do wrong,  
Because sacrifice *is* what it means to do right. It is love.

I saw that *losing* your life is the *punishment* for sin...  
because *losing* your life is the *remedy* for sin.

Unless you lose your life, you can’t find it,  
Because life is a river that flows from a fountain,  
And if you damn the river, you die.

You see?

In the beginning God, who is Love, gives you your life.

[“Simeon” pours wine into a cup.]

And he says, “The life is in the blood... I require your lifeblood.”

If you refuse to lose your life . . . you will die.

Just like a finger that refuses to lose its blood . . . will die . . .  
A sinner is a blood clot. He damns the river of life, and therefore he is damned.

But if you lose your life, for the sake of Love,  
[“Simeon” pours the wine from the cup back into the pitcher.]  
You will be undammed, that is, saved; you will lose your life and find it.

Why will you find it?  
[“Simeon pours wine from the pitcher back into the cup.”]  
Because God loves to give you Life—*anastasis*—resurrection.

And you don’t have to wait until the day your body dies; you can lose your life, and find it, right now!

You can say, “Thank you God for my life. I love you!”  
[The wine is poured back into the pitcher]  
And He will say, “Thank you for saying thank you for your life! I love *you* more than imaginable!”  
[The wine is poured back into cup]  
And you will say, “Because you love me so much, I want to love my grumpy neighbor.”  
[The wine is poured into the neighbor’s cup]  
And your neighbor will say, “God thank for my neighbor who loves me even when I’m grumpy.”  
[The wine is poured into the pitcher]

[Quick and joyfully pouring takes place between cups and pitchers and the following is said.]  
“I love you,” and “I forgive you,” and “I forgive you,” and “I love you.”

You see? If this happens fast enough all this blood flow becomes a river.  
And all these earthen vessels become like... blood vessels.  
And all this earth (this dust) becomes a Body.

When one person bleeds for all, it looks like a man on a cross... ouch!  
When two people bleed for each other, it looks like a marriage.  
When all people bleed—for all people—it looks like a body dancing in Delight . . .  
EDEN—The garden of delight.

### *Paradigm Shift!!*

The Holy Spirit revealed these things to me . . .  
And then spaketh unto me saying,  
“Simeon don’t stand there like an idiot; Go say ‘Hi!’”

And so trembling and shaking, I walked over and tapped this young mamma on the shoulder.  
She turned, smiled, handed me the baby . . . and I had a vision.

I saw fire – all around me. The temple was on fire.  
I saw Romans burning it, and plowing it into the ground.  
I saw A Man lifted high and pierced on a tree in a garden  
...And a Roman soldier kneeling before him, unable to stand.  
Fire poured out of The Man’s wounds like a fountain.



Instinctively, I held the baby tightly to my chest crying, “Yeshua, Yeshua...”  
That means “God save! God save!”  
I heard the Spirit say, “I am.”

I looked at the baby, and He opened His big, beautiful eyes.  
He stared at me, full in the face . . . then smiled.  
He adored me . . . when I was good for nothing’, He adored me.

By now my I was engulfed in flames, but the baby was unharmed.  
In fact, the flames came from the Baby. His Glory had set me on fire.  
It emptied me . . . of my “self”—all my anxiety about me.  
He burned it away . . . or washed it away.  
His Love was like a mighty river, and the doors of my soul could not stand against Him.  
*“Lift up your heads oh ye gates, and be ye lift, ye everlasting doors;  
(Psalm 24) And the king of Glory shall come in.”*

The Lord, whom I sought, had suddenly come to his temple.  
And I was that temple.

He adored me . . . and then I adored Him.  
And then I heard it: Boom boom . . . Boom boom—  
(Your pastor told me, that six years ago, on Xmas Eve, some of you heard it.)

Boom boom... Boom boom—the whole temple was beating like a giant heart.

You know, Jesus is the Strong Arm of the Lord.

- He is the Lion of Judah.
- He is the Lamb that was slain.
- He is the Messenger of the Covenant.
- And He is the Life—the *Life*—the life is in the blood.

God is blood thirsty, like your heart is bloodthirsty . . .

Suddenly, I saw the Lifeblood of the Adam (mankind) returning to the temple.  
But the temple was not stone; it was a living beating heart.  
And from the altar in the Temple, lifeblood flowed out of the Temple like a river.  
The River flowed out to all creation, and returned to the Temple as a song.

I saw every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth... praising the Lamb standing on the throne—The Baby in my arms,  
Jesus from the bosom of the Father,  
The Life of God freely given that all might live—that all might LOVE.

That’s the name of the Game—LOVE!

I have four children: Jonathan, Elizabeth, Rebekah and Coleman.  
(All good Jewish names, except that last one—I know, I know . . . but work with me here!)

When they were little, we used to play foursquare: You bounce the ball back and forth between the squares . . . But Coleman didn’t understand the name of the game . . . Coleman would grab

the ball, run away with the ball, and then hide in a dark corner. He thought he won . . . but he lost, the whole game.

I would say, “Coleman, you have to lose the ball, to enjoy the game. If you lose the ball, for the game, you’ll get it back AND all of us along with it, and a really fun time. You’re not happy Coleman—sitting alone in the dark holding the ball.”

Life is like that ball; we take it for our “selves” and everything dies—the sky grows black, the earth trembles. Jesus is the Life—but Life is not your private possession. You don’t own Him. He owns you. And He can sweep you away—if He wants to. He can sweep you away like a raging river in which you cannot stand.

Well, the vision stopped. I looked at the baby and I looked at the mamma. I no longer worried about saving “my” life, for there would never be a shortage of Life—the endless river of Life, Eternal Life. I handed the Baby back to the mamma, and I was so happy because the River was still flowing . . . And I was still standing because I was no longer damning the river. The river of life was flowing through me—I offered no more resistance.

So, “*Who can stand when He appeareth?*”

. . . Old Simeon—forever young, old Simeon—the youngest oldest man that ever lived.

I cried out, “*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 [nations], and for glory to your people Israel.*”

The Glory of Israel is the living beating heart of Love, which pumps a river of endless life to, and through, all creation. God is Love, and Jesus is the Life.

I was so afraid to lose “my” life; but unless I lost “my” life, I was dead.  
And if, I lost “my” life—I would gain all life, an endless river of life - flowing through me.

When we try to win, we make others lose . . . and we lose everybody.  
But when we lose ourselves for love, everybody wins...  
And WE win...everybody!

So much winning! You won’t know what to do with all the winning!

When you save yourself, you lose everything.  
But when you *lose* yourself, for that baby—and His Kingdom,  
You gain, you win yourself, that Baby, and all things with Him.

I saw that the Baby is The Decision to Love (sometimes we call that Judgment).  
And God was giving His Decision to *me*, and to *you*, and to *ALL creation*.

[“Simeon” begins to sing.]

“Hallelujah, Hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

“Hallelujah, Hallelujah”

You can begin to live in that kingdom right now.  
For on the Passover the Lamb of God took bread and broke it saying,

"This is my body given to you. Take and eat."  
And in the same manor He took the cup saying,  
"This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

### **Prayer**

Would you pray with me right now? You can pray silently in your heart or out loud.

God I confess my lack of Love. I confess that you are love. Thank you that you are Love.  
Thank you for your constant decision to love. Thank you for giving me your decision to love.  
Thank you for giving me Jesus. King Jesus, I invite you to come live and reign, from the throne,  
in the sanctuary of my heart, in the temple that is me.

### **Communion**

Now bring you tired old temple or your beautiful you temple (whatever the case may be) to the Lord's Table. Tear off a piece of bread, dip it in the cup . . . and eat. And the King of Glory shall come in.

[Christmas carols are sung]

### **Benediction**

Believe the gospel. God has arranged all things to reveal and give to you His Decision. His Decision is Love. Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*