

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

TEXT: (Luke 2:33-35, NLT)

²² Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ²³ The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord." ²⁴ So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵ At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him ²⁶ and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, ²⁸ Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. ³⁰ I have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared for all people. ³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

³³ Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."

INTRODUCTION

1. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38, NIV).
2. "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me" (John 12:24-26, NIV).
3. "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).

I. BY DYING YOU LIVE

A. Following Jesus

1. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24-25, NIV).

B. Becoming a Living Sacrifice

1. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2, NIV).
2. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11, NIV).

II. BY GIVING YOU RECEIVE

1. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV).

A. We Reap In Proportion to What We Sow

1. "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (II Corinthians 9:6, NIV).
2. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38, NIV).

B. Learning to Give Mercy

1. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36, NIV).
2. "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right" (James 2:8, NIV).
3. "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:12-13, NIV)!
4. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:37-38, NIV).

C. Learning to Offer the Gift of Forgiveness

1. "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'" (John 20:21-23, NIV).
2. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15, NIV).

III. THE LEAST BECOME THE GREATEST

A. An Example of Greatness

1. "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:3-5, NIV).
2. "The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves" (Luke 22:26, NIV).
3. "They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory'" (Mark 10:37, NIV).

B. Their New Role

1. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men" (Proverbs 18:16, KJV).

2. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28, NIV).

CONCLUSION

1. "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother" (John 19:25, NIV).
2. "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26, NIV)?

QUESTIONS:

- What did Simeon mean when he said a sword would pierce Mary's soul?
- What did Jesus mean when he said a seed must fall into the ground and die to be of any real value?
- What is a paradox?
- Discuss each of the following:
 - By dying you live
 - By giving you receive
 - The least become the greatest