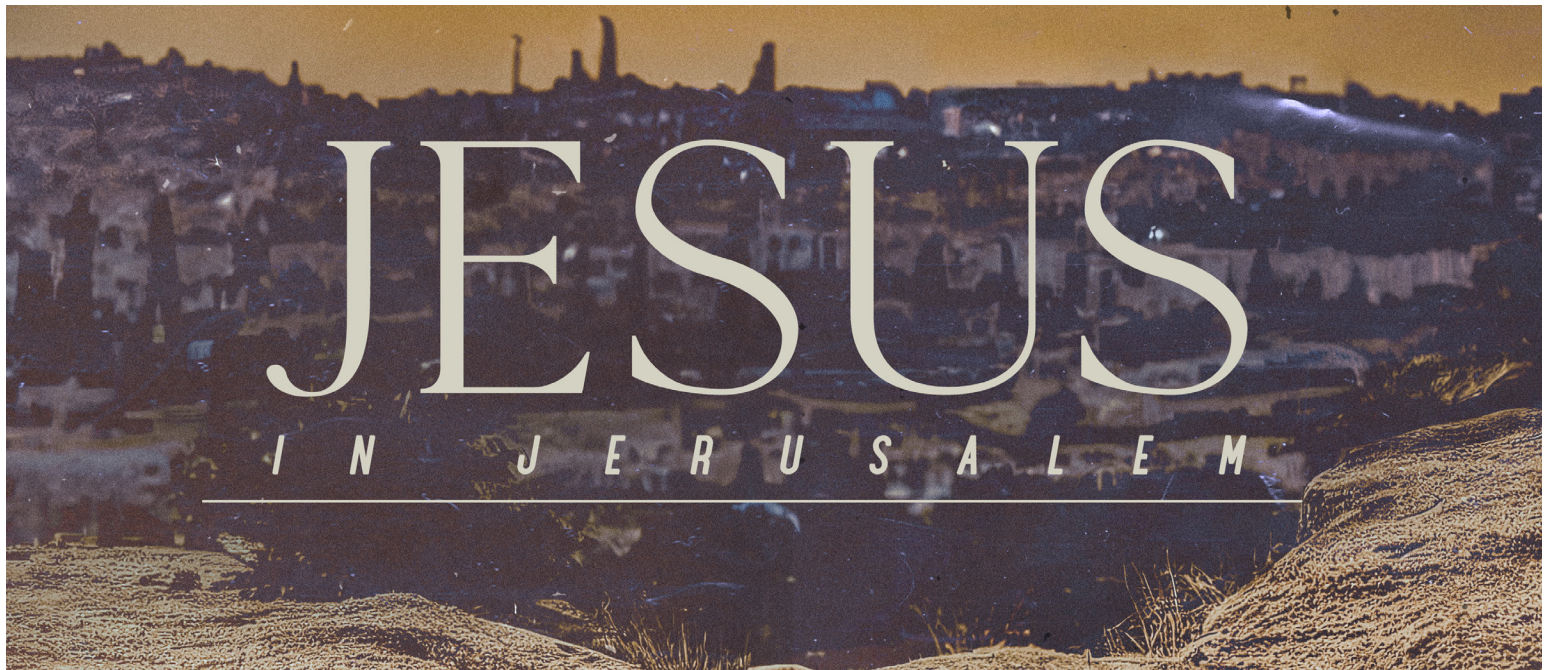




DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For God so Loved

John 3:16

1. Begin this time by reading Luke 2:21-35 - ²¹ And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. ²² And 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 male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said 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, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took Him up in His arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation³¹ that 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 His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Briefly discuss what thoughts or concepts in this passage stands out to you.

2. As I read this passage, I am drawn to the three descriptions of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of Simeon. Verse 26 tells us that the spirit had revealed things to him. Verse 27 tells us the Spirit moved him to go to the temple. Verse 25 tells us that the Spirit was upon him. Saying that the Spirit was upon him means the Spirit was active in his life. For those who have accepted Christ, the Holy Spirit is present in a much more intimate way than it was for those who followed God before Jesus died, rose again, and sent the Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus teaches in **John 14:17** that the Spirit is now always with us and lives within us. This led me in the sermon to say that all those in Christ should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and seek to bless others. What do you think it means to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit?

Tell a story of a time that you were moved by the Spirit.

How does someone become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives and through their lives?

3. Take a moment to read Luke 2:41-50 - **⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. What are some things in this next story that stand out to you?**

Ever since I was a young child, I have enjoyed this story. I am especially drawn to the moment when Mary and Joseph find young Jesus in the temple and ask him why he would give them so much stress. He responds **⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" He asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"** One of the startling things about this response is that nothing in the Old Testament indicates we should call God our father. The Bible never reveals to us the exact moment Jesus became aware of who He was, but many scholars believe that this statement in Luke 2:49 indicates that on this trip to Jerusalem, He realized He was the Son of God. Some even give this as the reason for extending his stay in Jerusalem; He was beginning to understand who he was. Knowing our identity, especially our identity in Christ, is essential. Knowing who you are in Christ means fully understanding that you have been forgiven and redeemed, that you are loved deeply by God, and that you have a purpose in his kingdom, among many other things. What comes to mind when you think of knowing who you are in Christ?

Tell the story of a time when you truly begin to understand your identity in Christ.

How do you think someone comes to understand more deeply who they are in Christ?

4. The next time we see Jesus in Jerusalem is in the Gospel of John chapter 3. In this Bible passage, we see Jesus interacting with a man named Nicodemus. In **John 3:3**, Jesus tells Nicodemus this: **“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”** He further explains by saying (John 3:6) **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”** In this passage, Jesus describes the moment we accept Him as being our spiritual birth. What do you think about the concept of salvation being compared to birth? Why is this comparison significant?

Tell the story of when you fully understood that you had been born again. Some people have an exact moment in mind, but others, especially those who grew up in a Christian home, may not know the exact moment, but they know it did happen.

5. In this conversation with Nicodemus, we find one of the most famous verses in the Bible. **John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** What stands out to you from this very famous verse?

Jesus goes on to say, ¹⁷ **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.** ¹⁸ **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.**

Verse 17 - boldly declares that God sent Jesus into the world to save the world. As a follower of Jesus, what do you believe is your role in joining Jesus in His work to save the world? What might you do or begin to do to join Jesus in His work?