

HOPE!
“Hope Endures”

Setting the stage for Jesus’ birth

- “now or never” responses...

“Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered” (Acts 5:36-37).

The response of enduring hope...

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah” (Luke 2:25-26).

- involves trust

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

- involves understanding

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too’” (Luke 2:34-35).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The Christmas season comes with competing expectations. While we want to slow down and spend time with others, we also intentionally add more events and tasks to our calendar. Not surprisingly, we can become frustrated. What things cause you frustration at Christmas?
- In a real sense, Jesus was born into a setting filled with frustration. While Jews had been waiting for God to act for centuries, nothing seemed to be happening. For some, this produced a “now or never” response—either God must act now, or I can never expect him to act at all. How would you describe “now or never” responses?
- In situations of stress or frustration, what does your “now or never” response look like?
- In contrast to those around him, Simeon responds to his circumstances with an enduring hope. It’s a hope defined by trust and understanding. How could Simeon trust God, even though he would not live to see the finished work of Christ? What encourages you to trust God when you are not sure of what he is doing?
- Simeon’s hope also included an understanding of what Christ’s work would do—it would create conflict. It would create conflict both externally and internally. If Christ’s work can pierce us like a sword (Luke 2:35), how are we to respond?
- How can we encourage each other to live with enduring hope?