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Jesscia: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart.
We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday
as you plan your sermon or teaching
lesson.
I'm your host and producer, Jessica
Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and
Dr. Peter Nafzger.
They're both professors of homiletics
here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
You can hear all about us in our
introductory episode, but trust me, they
are pretty good
preachers usually.
All right, let's get started.
David, where are we in the church here?

David: It is the first Sunday after Christmas.

Jesscia: And Peter, what are the texts this week?

Peter: The texts are taken from Exodus 13,
Colossians 3, Luke 2, and Psalm 111.

Jesscia: As always, I ask each of you to tell me
which text you would preach on to
determine who
goes first this week.
So in the Colossians verse, it talks
about love binding everything together in harmony
and talking about singing spiritual songs.
So I want to know, do you like to sing?
Now David, you've sang on the show before.

David: I know.

Jesscia: There's a lovely episode where you sing a
verse in the hand.

David: Whether I like singing.
I guess the question is, do other people
like me singing?
And the answer to that is no.

Peter: I like singing when it's not in front of a bunch of people.
I don't like that.

Jesscia: I love singing so much.
So I guess Peter wins because you said you kind of like singing.
So congratulations, you get to go first.

Peter: Okay, well I am going to suggest a sermon on Colossians 3.
But I just got to say to start, this Sunday after Christmas is a hard Sunday, right?

David: It's rough.
You're exhausted.

Peter: You're exhausted.
It's been a long season.
Not only have you had your own personal Christmas celebration, holiday stuff, but church has been busy and all sorts of things.
So I want to think about this sermon.
I actually want to have that in mind as I think about a sermon on this text.
And I also am thinking about the fact that Christmas is really not the center of the Christian life.
If we're going to talk about the center of Christianity, we're talking about Easter, Jesus' death and His resurrection.
And Christmas, you guys probably know, they didn't even celebrate Christmas the first couple hundred years of the church.
It kind of got lumped in with Epiphany.
But Christmas is a big deal for the culture.
And so in terms of the, you really want to be mindful, I think, of how culture celebrates Christmas for the sermon rather than how you wish Christians and the church could celebrate Christmas.
So it's also, just looking at the date, it's the 29th of December.
And so unless you have a New Year's Eve service, now you're kind of looking toward the New Year, this kind of stuff too.

And so I actually was going to kind of lean a little bit toward that direction. And instead of having New Year's resolutions this year, I'm going to encourage people on the other phases of this text to have a Christmas reset. And kind of look at this, it's not the center of the Christian life, Christmas is not, but it's a chance to reset things. And I think about it in those terms for a couple reasons. One is resolutions tend to be all about us and what we're doing. And of course, or we're not doing. But a reset is kind of a set to something that's already been done. And so I think I'd invite you to think about what has God done for us in Christ? And let's reset as we look into this New Year, let's take a reset and see what Paul and his letter to the Colossians can help us along these lines. So that's kind of my idea. The problem is this text has a lot in it. It's just six verses, but man, it's packed full of stuff.

David: It's a lot of beautiful stuff.

Peter: It's a lot of beautiful stuff and good stuff, but it can take you in a variety of directions. And so you got to be a little careful here, but I'm going to ask you, Jessica, just to read the first couple of verses, verse 12 to 14.

Jesscia: Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Peter: All right.
So there's a number of things in these verses that I'd pick up on.
I'd leave a lot of it behind a lot of these concepts and phrases, but I'm going to suggest we have a reset, kind of a threefold reset in the sermon.
And the first one is to reset your wardrobe.

David: Okay.

Peter: So this language of put on in verse 12 and then again in verse 14, put on love, I think, and this is where, you know, this is just an introductory thought.
I think the language there in the Greek is the same kind of language you'd use for putting on clothing.
But I want to check that out.
So but this idea to put on compassionate hearts, that would be the kind of the compassionate hearts are maybe from verse 14 love.
And I would think about, you know, you are just right on the heels of Christmas.
And I remember as a kid, when I would get like a new set of clothes for Christmas, it was just so fun to wear those new clothes to church or wherever you're on.

David: And so I always used to wear them to the midnight service, right?

Peter: Oh, yeah.

David: Yeah.
You'd put on whatever it was that you wanted.
And it was, you know, that was fun.

Peter: But this idea of putting on new clothes for Christmas, it's, you know, that's nothing new.
But to help people think about what do you put on each day and the compassionate hearts, the love of God, and to think about a

reset of what are you dressing yourself with in terms of your attitude, your lifestyle. And so that would be kind of the reset of your wardrobe with some new clothes. The second part of this reset would be to speak new words. And I would look at this maybe in terms of resetting a relationship. The words that I would pick up on would be from verse 13, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And so we speak words that we've heard. And here's where the gospel would be crystal clear that God has spoken these words of forgiveness. That's the whole point of Jesus, not just in His birth, of course, but in His life, His death, His resurrection, all for our forgiveness, for our life, for our salvation. And then I would invite people to have a reset with a relationship in their lives. And instead of being really general with relationships, be more forgiving. I mean, everyone can say, oh, sure. I would give the hearers a moment or two to think about someone in their lives, very specifically, I want you to have somebody in mind who has sinned against you, who has hurt you, and help them dwell on that individual relationship, and then think about a reset. As far as it depends on you, I'll live at peace with everyone kind of idea. And so I would encourage them, as they're wearing their new, compassionate, loving clothes, they're resetting their words with a relationship that needs forgiveness. That I think would be particularly, if you're here, is there anything like me, then family gatherings are a good time to think about forgiveness.

Jesscia: I was just thinking that.

David: Oh, man.
There will be people fresh in mind.

Peter: Oh, yeah.
So that would be an emphasis on the forgiveness that we've received and the forgiveness that we speak to one another.
And then the third kind of aspect of this reset would be to reset the song that we sing.
And here I'd reach back even further.
I wouldn't necessarily dwell on Christmas tunes, although you could find these.
I actually looked through the hymn a little bit to see if there are any Christmas tunes that emphasize Thanksgiving, and they're really not.
There's a lot of Christmas songs that emphasize joy and gladness and celebration, but there's not a lot of Christmas songs that emphasize Thanksgiving.
And I get this, of course, from verse 15, be thankful at the end, verse 16 at the end, with thankfulness in your hearts to God, verse 17, the last phrase, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
So the new song would be a song of thankfulness and gratitude.
And so I'm thinking about a sermon like this not being anything flashy or new or innovative as much as let's reset here after Christmas.
We're looking toward the new year, and let's let Paul's encouragement in Colossians 3 help us with this reset.

David: And for some people, Christmas may not have been what they hoped it would be.

Peter: Yeah.
Right.

David: And so you have such great expectations for Christmas sometimes, and they just don't transpire.
And so having a sermon about a reset would be really appreciated.

Peter: And I kind of have in my mind the reset would be what carries the sermon thematically.

And there'll be some people who will maybe think more about resetting the compassion in their hearts, they'll love that for others. Some people would maybe recognize their need to reset the relationship with words of forgiveness.

And some people would maybe it would catch them more to think about resetting the song that they sing to themselves, the thankfulness, the gratitude.

And I kind of think I'd be okay with that as a preacher and let it be a kind of reset for everybody according to their own need.

Jesscia: Great.
Thanks, Peter.
David, what about you?
What would you preach on?

David: Well, I'm going to go with the text from Luke because it has that figure of Simeon. And I just want to kind of lean into his figure and what he's doing on the scene.

Jesscia: Hooray, I love these stories.

David: You do?

Jesscia: Yes.

David: Why do you love them?

Jesscia: It reminds me of when my children were babies and I'd go to church and everybody would hold them.

David: Oh, I love it.

Jesscia: And at first I was not okay with that. I'm like, did you use hand sanitizer and could you look away when the baby is right by you?
No, everybody wants to hold the baby and especially people who have memories of when their kids were young and it's cool to watch because they're excited about it.

David: What I was thinking I'm going to do is really focus on the character of Simeon.

And the one thing I want to point out,
and I don't know, Jessica, if this happens to
you at Christmas, but for me at
Christmas, there's a lot of activity and
there's activity
that has been planned.

There's activity that's tradition.

We gather around, we open gifts, we
gather for a meal.

So we've got all of these things we do.

And sometimes it's not that you're going
through the motions, it's that you're
doing this activity,

but it doesn't have the deep resonance
you wished it had because you've put so
much effort

into it and it just doesn't seem to pop.

It doesn't seem to sparkle or capture
your attention.

But then every once in a while, there's
one moment that sticks out.

So it's December 29th, Christmas is over
in terms of the culture and our traditions on
Christmas Day, although it's still the
season of Christmas, but it's kind of over.

And as we look back, I'm wondering, is
there a moment that happened that sticks
out for you?

So you're all giving gifts, but there's
the one gift that when that gift was
opened, it

just kind of changed things.

Or we're all gathered at the meal, but
there was the one thing that was said.

Or we're all at church at the candlelight
service, but there's that one moment in
Silent Night when this memory struck.

So there's like, you've got all of the
activity of Christmas, and then you've
got these small

moments that stick out for you as you
walk away from the event.

That's what I see happening in this text,
that Luke opens with a description of all
the activity that's going on.

So you've got Mary and Joseph bringing
the baby Jesus to the temple.

They're fulfilling the law of Moses.

We've got all of that stuff about what they need to fulfill.
And then kind of out of the blue comes this one small moment that's going to stick out for us in the midst of all of the activity in the temple.
So, Jessica, if you could read verse 25 through 28.

Jesscia: 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.
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, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.

David: Okay.
So the contrast is between Mary and Joseph and all of the other people in the temple.
I imagine this to be a really busy place.
The people in the temple fulfilling the law of the Lord.
So you've got all of the people.
They're not doing anything wrong.
They're fulfilling the law of the Lord.
They're doing what they should be doing.

Peter: And all the animals.

David: And all the animals.
So, so.

Jesscia: Sounds noisy.

David: I know.
So they're fulfilling the law of the Lord.
And into the midst of that, suddenly Simeon comes.
And instead of seeing people fulfilling the law of the Lord, we see God fulfilling his promises.
Right.
So when you have a landscape filled with people fulfilling the law of the Lord, there are moments when we kind of pull back and we see that it's God fulfilling his promises.
And that's what sticks with us.

Peter: And so I really like this idea because when you think back at Christmas, you know, you've got people who show up the Sunday after Christmas. They're usually the ones who've been involved with a lot of stuff previously. They've been all the choirs and all the pageants and all the different events and the dinners and that kind of stuff. And almost in this sermon, I'm here and you say something like, let's all recall what happened and let's strip away all the busyness. And let's just see what God was doing there. Kind of a second look at this whole season.

David: That's the point.
That's the point.
And so let's not focus on us fulfilling, you know, the law of the Lord. But let's see God fulfilling His promises. And that's what Simeon does for us in this event. And so, you know, Paul Scott Wilson. So I'm thinking of doing kind of a narrative sermon here. And Paul Scott Wilson, the homiletician in his four pages of a preacher, four pages of the sermon, he has this small paragraph where he talks about filming the text. And his idea is that if you're going to tell a story, sometimes it's helpful to visualize it on a screen and then kind of for yourself narrate how you would present this on the screen. And it'll help you as you retell the story because you're beginning to think about perspective. You're thinking about very concrete visual things that are shown to people. You're thinking about the order in which they're shown, about the sounds that are going on. So the question I have for you guys is if you were to imagine this story. So the big thing that I want to do is I want to retell the story of the text in such a way that we

move from all of the activity that's fulfilling the law of the Lord to this one moment when Simeon comes and we begin to see that it's all about God fulfilling his promises. So if you're going to put that on the big screen, how would you do it? What would you show?

Peter: I was just thinking about how the sounds would change.

David: OK.

Peter: The sound of commotion and I'm hearing sheep bells, I don't know if they have bells on them.

David: Turtle doves, all this good stuff.

Peter: And as Simeon starts to talk, all of that kind of just slowly fades to where the only thing you can hear then is Simeon's voice.

David: OK, great.
So in kind of the soundscape of the scene is going to move from all of the noise and the commotion that's happening as everybody's doing their thing to the moment when Simeon's voice is heard and then it all silences. And so that voice points attention to God fulfilling His promises.

Jesscia: No, your description of a temple totally changed how I saw the story, because when I read it in the past, you kind of you fit it into the experiences that you've had. And when I'm in a church and there's a church leader doing a ceremony with a baby, everybody is sitting quietly in the pew and watching.

David: Right.

Jesscia: And I didn't think about the temple being a place where they're buying and selling

and people all over.
It's not one thing that everyone's
focused on.
There's a ton of things going on.
There was probably also sacrifices going
on at the same time and Anna at the same
time and, you
know, all at once.
And so it's like this little thing is
happening and maybe nobody even knows about it.

David: Right.
Right.
So how would you picture that on the screen?

Jesscia: I would start with a wide shot of the
whole temple and the people buying and
selling animals and the
kids complaining and the people going to
the court of the women and people reading
from the scroll and all this noise.
And then slowly zoom in closer and closer
and closer to Simeon holding this baby
and the look on his face.

Peter: What if you did it from you did that same
zoom in, but you didn't zoom in on Simeon
just kind of in
the abstract or kind of just focused on
him, but you'd zoom in on him from the
perspective of
someone like prophetess Anna, who's kind
of also there clearly just in that very hour.
She was saying something and then let
it's let her let let the visual be from her perspective.
She's seen this.

Jesscia: Oh, yes, because Simeon is doing
something that no one's paying attention
to, but somebody is.
And it's Anna.
And yes, that's great.

David: Oh, that would be good.
And then you could kind of at the close,
you could kind of suggest that we have
been like prophetess Anna.
We have seen and like Anna, we have a
voice that we can share this news of what

God has done.

Peter: Yeah, yeah.

David: Yeah, so for me, it was kind of like I would want to picture it, I would have the camera kind of at ground level and just be looking at all of the activity going on, not really seeing faces, but seeing the activity, seeing the hands that are carrying the turtle doves or the the person who's leading the lamb or, you know, the mother carrying a baby. And so you've got all of this activity going on. And I want you to see Mary and and Joseph and Jesus, but not see them separately, just they they're their faces in the crowd. They're just they're just people who are there doing this business.

Jesscia: OK, and so one more couple bringing a baby in.

David: Right, right. One more couple being jostled in the midst of all of these people doing this activity. And then then I would kind of move to Simeon and, you know, look at Simeon's eyes as he's scanning the crowd and then show kind of Simeon's hand pushing through people until finally he comes to Mary and Joseph and then he grabs the baby and he lifts the baby up. And then when the baby is lifted up, I then kind of do a shot from above and you'd see the baby Jesus and you'd see Simeon's face and Mary and Joseph's face all looking up. And that would be the moment when you'd begin to hear the words of the song and everything would be silent. Right. So you'd have this this recognition of who the people are and the moment where God is actually working, bringing salvation. So somehow the sermon is going to open.

Peter: Yeah, this the visual piece here is really helpful.

David: It is.

Peter: People are tired this time of year after Christmas, the whole thing. And those who come to church, if you can engage another sense, help them visualize something that will that will maintain their engagement much better than just words.

David: Yeah. And so I really I mean, so that's how I would have done it. But I really like this idea of Anna. And so I'd probably change it now with your your idea of seeing it through Anna's eyes, having her see Simeon and everything that's going on. But that's going to be kind of the narration of the story that I'll that I'll tell. I'd probably open with kind of the introduction would be get that idea of is there a single moment that stands out from your Christmas and why does it stand out in that type of a thing and then take us into this temple activity, people fulfilling the law? What's a single moment that sticks out and when it sticks out, what do we see God fulfilling His promises, then move into the proclamation of the gospel? What is the promise that God is fulfilling and then move to application among us today and how this God fulfilling his promises brings into the routines of our life those moments that we can treasure. And now here's where I probably want another story I could tell from my own life or from lives of my parishioners that show how that looks in life today.

Peter: I'm thinking about the words of Simeon's song. Are there any words particularly that

stand out to you when you think about
proclaiming the promise
that you'd say this is you know you've
got the departing in peace, you've got
seen salvation,
you've got the presence of all people?

David: Yeah, I like the phrase my eyes have seen your salvation.
Right.
Because it's you know what he's actually
seen is the baby Jesus.
That I think could become a phrase that
would you know when have you seen
salvation in your life?

Peter: And what's interesting is when have I
seen my eyes have seen your salvation.
Simeon says he doesn't say my eyes have
seen my salvation.
And so that puts the emphasis on God as
the one who is saving.

David: And who's fulfilling His promises.
And bringing about your salvation.
I mean bringing about salvation for all
people, Gentiles and Jews.
And so there's that.
So that's going to be that would be kind
of the phrase that would help me move
from the story of the text
to the story of our lives today through
Christ and moments when we still see
God's salvation in our life in Christ.
Obviously you can work with you know the Lord's Supper.
You might even have a closing scene.
Since we sing the Nunc dimittis, right?
You have a closing scene of kind of
everybody going through the practice of
coming forward for the Lord's Supper.
But there's the moment there that that
someone sees and realizes that this isn't
us about us fulfilling our duty.
It's about God fulfilling His promises for us.
Something like that.

Peter: Yeah that's great.

Jesscia: Thanks guys.
That's all for today.

We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at ConcordiaTheology.org. Check it out.

You can find more episodes of Lectionary Kickstart and Tangible on any of the major podcast apps.

I'm your host and producer Jessica Bordeleau.

Join us next week here at Lectionary Kickstart when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Peter: Reset your wardrobe.

Jesscia: Maybe you're tired of David wearing that shirt over and over.