

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Extraordinary

Luke 2:22-35

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

To print the children's bulletin for ages 3 to 6, copy pages 18 and 19 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. To print the children's bulletin for ages 7 to 12, copy pages 20 and 21 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. **[Important Note: When printing children's bulletins, in the "Print" dialog box, please make sure you have the "Page Scaling" option set to NONE. Do not "fit" or "shrink" to fit the printable area. Feel free to contact us if you have problems printing.]**

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Sermon

Once upon a time, there was a father who had two sons. One was a pessimist and the other an optimist. For Christmas that year, the father decided to try to teach his pessimistic son a lesson in looking at the world differently. So, the father had two barns built on the property, and on Christmas morning, he told his sons that they would find their gifts in the barns . . . the pessimist was sent to the red barn and the optimist to the green barn.

The two boys raced in their separate directions to the barns. When the pessimist got to the red barn, he threw the door open, and there was a large pony, already saddled, running around . . . just waiting to be ridden. When the boy saw the pony, he burst into tears. His father asked him if he was crying because he was happy, and the boy shook his head, wailing. When his father asked what was wrong, the young pessimist said, “This is terrible! What an awful gift! Just think of all the manure I’m going to have to clean up!”

Just then, screams of delight from the green barn filled the air. The pessimistic son shot his father a mean look as if to say, *Why did you get HIM a better present than me?!* and raced off to see what his brother had found in the green barn. When they got there, the pessimist saw an enormous pile of horse manure. It looked like the barn was at least half full of the stinky stuff. All of a sudden, the young optimist shot up out of the middle of the manure pile, covered from head to toe, with a huge grin on his face.

The father burst out laughing and asked his optimistic son why he was so happy. “Oh Daddy, thank you! You’re the best!” the young boy cried “With all this manure, I just KNOW there’s got to be a pony in here somewhere!”

Optimism Versus Pessimism

Optimism and pessimism. These are words that are familiar to us all. In fact, you’ve probably heard a few of these famous quotes on the subject:

Winston Churchill once said, “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

And how about this from Oscar Wilde: “Between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll. The optimist sees the doughnut; the pessimist the hole!”

Elbert Hubbard had a bit more of a cynical take on the subject. He said, “A pessimist is a man who has been compelled to live with an optimist.”

Turning the Ordinary Into the Extraordinary

On the motivational speaking circuit, you will hear an awful lot about being an optimistic person—how it can empower you, how it can give you an advantage in your career, and how it can make you happier. But, as Christians, optimism doesn’t come from wishful thinking, but from the realization that our God is an awesome God who can turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. That’s

right. We serve a God who isn't limited by the ordinary. On the contrary, He uses the ordinary to communicate the extraordinary.

That's what we see in the story of Simeon. God communicates something extraordinary—a glimpse of eternal salvation—to this ordinary man on an ordinary day going about his ordinary rituals in the same ordinary way. This kind of communication is a habit for God: He conveys the extraordinary through the ordinary. He takes this Jewish purification ritual and, on this one unassuming day, presumably a day like any other, He gives Simeon a glimpse of salvation. And it is so wonderful that Simeon says, “Ok, Lord, I have seen it all. Let your servant depart in peace. I know You've got everything under control.”

One of the remarkable things about this story is: who is Simeon? He's just an old priest, faithfully doing his duty in the temple. He's nobody special. He's not royalty. He's not a celebrity. He's not politically powerful or important. Seemingly, he's a nobody. But with God, *there is no such thing as a nobody*. To God, *every single one of us* is that one, special somebody. And God is pleased to fulfill Simeon's wish to see the extraordinary.

Communicating the Extraordinary

Indeed, God is always looking for the opportunity to communicate the extraordinary through the ordinary. How about the story of Moses and the burning bush? Talk about ordinary! What could be more ordinary than a bush? And yet, one day, in the wilderness, Moses saw a bush that was on fire,

but not burning. That had to be a curious sight! And God turned that ordinary bush into an extraordinary encounter with His friend.

Or how about a great example from the Christmas story? Birth. Unless it's *your* kid, there is really nothing extraordinary about giving birth. Statistics released by the U.S. government in 2006 estimate that more than 350,000 babies are born every day around the world. That's 243 births per minute. Or think about it this way: every single second that ticks by on the clock, four babies are born. Every second. Giving birth is a pretty ordinary thing. And yet, one day, 2000 years ago, God infused the ordinary with the extraordinary when He entered the human race through the womb of a teenage girl.

Even the opposite of birth—death—is totally ordinary. And in Jesus' day, there was nothing more ordinary than crucifixion. In fact, it was the preferred method of execution by the Romans. That's evidenced by the fact that on the very day Jesus was killed, He was only one of three who were crucified. Crucifixion was a very common sight in the first-century world. And yet, on that black Friday, God took that ordinary method of death and turned it into an extraordinary declaration of His love for us. In so doing, He took even death and turned it on its head!

God is in the habit of communicating the extraordinary through the ordinary.

Today

Well, you might ask, so what? I don't live in first-century Rome. I live in the 21st-century. What

does this have to do with me? Well, let me ask you: have you ever felt ordinary? Have you ever felt like your life was one, long string of the same day over and over and over again? Have you ever gotten swept up in the mundane ritual of life, feeling trapped by the monotony? Do you feel like an ordinary person just living an ordinary life?

If you do . . . watch out! Get ready! God *always* comes in the ordinary! And whenever God meets the ordinary, the ordinary becomes the extraordinary! So if you are feeling ordinary today, you are a prime target for God's extraordinary blessings to flower in your life. He wants to show you extraordinary things. He wants to use you in an extraordinary way. And He always begins with ordinary people living ordinary lives in ordinary places.

God Is Not Limited

Albert Camus once said, "In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."

I'm going to tweak that just a little bit. As Christians, what we see in our darkest, coldest, and most ordinary winters, is that IN GOD there is an invincible summer. He is the one who turns our mourning into dancing. He is the one who gives beauty for ashes. He is the one who turns sorrow into joy. He is never limited by the ordinary, because He can take the ordinary and turn it into the extraordinary!

God is the original Transformer. He can convert setbacks into set-ups. He can transform our messes into messages, our testings into testimonies, and what we have done wrong into something He can use for right.

So, if you're just feeling ordinary today, that's okay. As people who know God, we shouldn't dwell on "the good old days," but rather, we should be nostalgic about . . . the FUTURE. Because with God, there are only good things on the horizon. And we don't have to look very far to see them. As Robert Brault once said, "After 5000 years of recorded human history, you wonder, What part of two million sunrises doesn't a pessimist understand?"

Sometimes we might feel like we're trudging through life, being bogged down by the ordinary. We might feel like we're just in a big barn filled with nothing but horse manure. But like that little child who trusted in the goodness of his father, we can experience the ordinary parts of our lives with wonder, remembering that God surprises those who wait on Him with extraordinary gifts.

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

Extraordinary God, Your children await Your life-giving presence. We have come to be transformed by You. You are the Creator and the great *Re*-Creator. We invite you, once again, to be with us this day. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

To whom will we compare God? Who is His equal? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not grow tired or weary. No one can fathom His wisdom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. He crowns the ordinary with the extraordinary. Come, let us worship this marvelous God!

PARTICIPATORY PRAYER *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Great God of the ages, we are ordinary, but You are extraordinary. We are natural, but You are supernatural. You alone have the power to free us from the bondage of our sin. You alone can provide the healing we need. Give us the eyes of faith we need to see You in all the unexpected places. In Your holy name we pray, amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

God is extraordinary. He is able to do far more than we can ever dream or imagine. He is not angry with us because of our sin. Instead, as we come to Him and confess, we find that He has already forgiven us. And He gently and tenderly takes away our guilt and shame.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

God is surprising! And one of the things He is always surprising us with is His good gifts. In Isaiah 40, God says that He will speak tenderly to us, and He promises that we will receive *double* for all of our sins. That's marvelous! Even in the things we have done wrong, God promises to make it up to us *twice*. What an example of generous giving. So today, as we give back to God, may our generosity flow out from our grateful hearts in appreciation for everything our extraordinary God has done for us. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God, You are the giver of every extravagant and extraordinary gift. When we bring You our pain, You give healing. When we bring You our joy, You double it. When we bring You our desires, You satisfy them beyond our wildest imaginations. Thank You for this opportunity to be generous givers. We leave these gifts in Your hands, trusting You to use them to bless others the way You have blessed us. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Extraordinary God, Great Father of Mankind, You are worthy of all praise, glory and honor. You stretch out Your hand and bless Your creation. You fill the earth with the warmth of your glory. You are ever-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful. You are bigger than any of the problems we face in this life.

Exceptional God, Son of Righteousness, Your humility is awe-inspiring. Your self-sacrificing love is more powerful than sin and death. Your name is above all names, and in Your great mercy, You have shown us the true picture of the Father's heart.

Remarkable God, Spirit of Truth, You are greater than the darkness in this world. You are greater than any darkness we see outside of us, and You are greater than all the darkness we see inside of us. You are gentle and strong, using Your tender love to draw us back to You.

We are humbled to be in Your presence—Father, Son, and Spirit. You lift our hearts from misery and despair, assuring us that You hear our every word. **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

Lord, open our eyes to see everything extraordinary You're doing in this world and in our lives. Help us not to miss out on one little part of Your great plan for our lives. Thank You for making ordinary things extraordinary. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may this awesome God—who created you, redeemed you, and loves you—turn your ordinary into the extraordinary, your natural into the supernatural, and your common into the uncommon, and surprise you with His goodness all the days of your life. Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Story

Purpose: To help children understand how God makes ordinary things extraordinary.

Good morning, boys and girls. Today, I'm going to tell you a story about a little boy named Billy. Billy had been taking piano lessons for a few months, and Billy's mom was hoping that someday he would become a professional piano player. So, one night, she took Billy to hear a concert by a world famous pianist.

After they were seated, Billy's mother spotted a friend in the audience and went to talk to her. After a few minutes, Billy got bored and wandered away from his seat to explore the auditorium. When the concert was about to begin, Billy's mother came back to her seat and realized that Billy was gone. Suddenly, the lights dimmed and the stage curtains opened.

Billy's mother gasped when she saw that Billy was sitting at the piano! And, oblivious to the audience, Billy began to plunk out *Chopsticks* on the keyboard. Billy's mother was horrified. But just then, Paderewski, the great piano master, came on stage and walked quickly to the piano. He leaned over Billy and whispered, "Don't stop! Keep playing!"

Then, the great piano master reached around Billy and began to play an intricate duet with him. The audience was completely mesmerized. Paderewski transformed Billy's ordinary song into a musical masterpiece.

This is just what God is like. He takes ordinary things and makes them extraordinary. And the amazing thing is that He doesn't have to get rid of us to do extraordinary things. He doesn't have to get us out of the way so He can work. God uses the ordinary things we bring to Him, and He makes them extraordinary.

This means that God can use each and every one of you. He has given you special gifts, and even if you feel ordinary sometimes, I want you to remember that God makes ordinary things extraordinary. As we let God reach around us, He will make something extraordinary with our lives.

Responsive Reading

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our mourning becomes dancing.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our ashes become beauty.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our sorrow becomes joy.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our messes become messages.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our testings become testimonies.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our setbacks become set-ups.

God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

With Him, our scars become stars.

God is not limited by anything.

He turns the ordinary into the extraordinary!

Hymn

Rejoice In Everything

sung to the tune of *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart* (Marion)

Rejoice in everything. Rejoice, give thanks and sing!
No matter what may come your way,
Our God is still the King.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!

Lift up your weary voice. Put strength behind your praise!
Expression deepens in your life
Impressions of His grace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!

God's working out His plan in all things, good and bad.
They come together for our good,
So why should we be sad?
Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!

God is the Fount of Life, the ever-living Head.
E'en when we go to sleep on earth,
In Christ, we're never dead!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!

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Song Suggestions

Hymns

How great Thou art

Words and music by Stuart K. Hine

© 1981 Manna Music, Inc.

This is my Father's world (Terra Beata)

Words and music by Maltbie D. Babcock and Franklin L. Sheppard

To God be the glory

Words and music by Fanny J. Crosby and William H. Doane

Praise Songs

Beauty for ashes

Words and music by Alton Stone, Jr.

© 1996 His Spirit Music

God of the poor

Words and music by Graham Kendrick

© 1993 Make Way Music

How great You are

Words and music by Dan Dean and Dave Clark

© 2001 Dawn Treader Music

Indescribable

Words and music by Laura Story

© 2004 *worshiptogether.com* songs

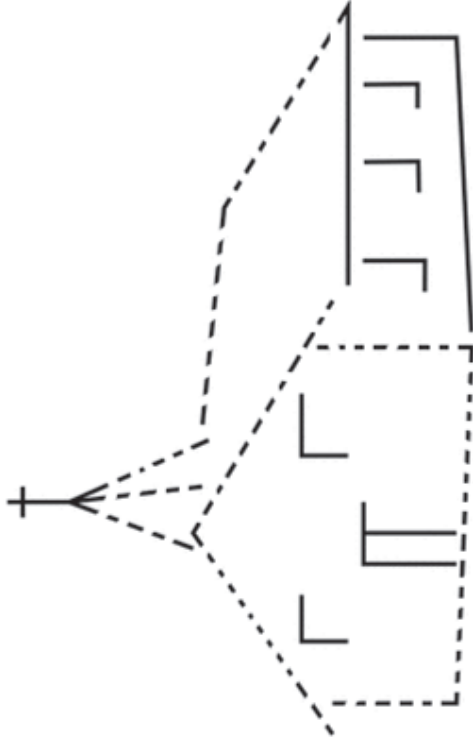
Transform me now

Words and music by Dan Zigler and Elton Smith

© 2000 Dan Zigler and Elton Smith

Simeon saw God's glory in the temple.

Trace the picture below to find out
where we can see God's glory today.



Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

Luke 2:22-35

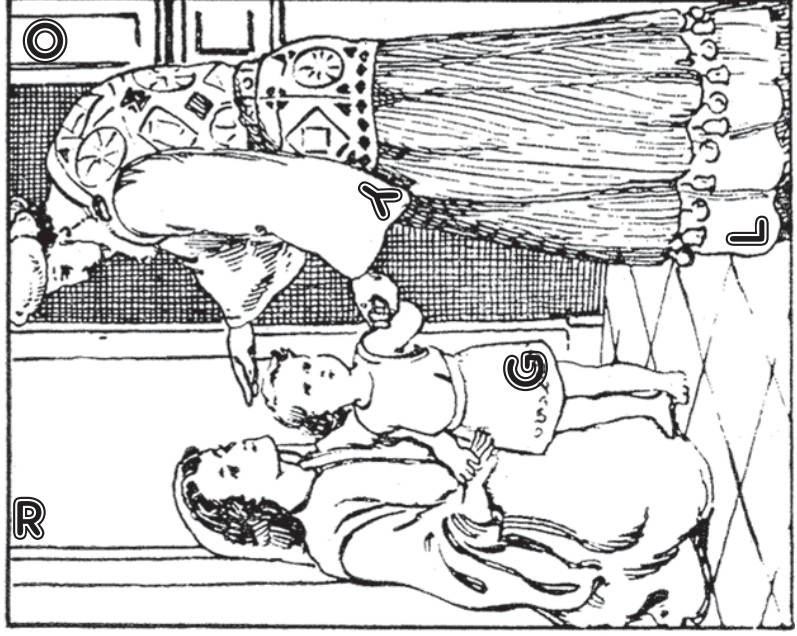


God Shows Us His Glory

Simeon saw the glory of the Lord.

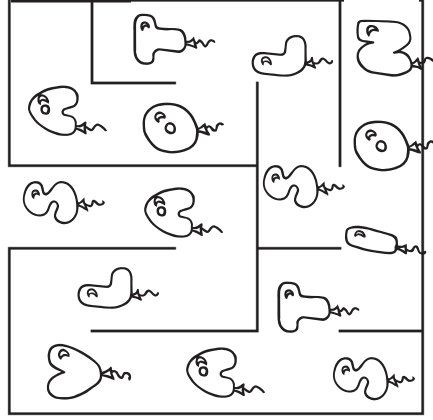
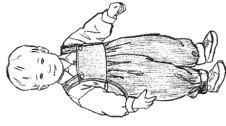
Find the hidden letters in the picture below.

G L O R Y



God opens our eyes to see Him.

Find the correct path through the maze to Jesus.
Write the letters in the blanks to see what
Simeon called God.

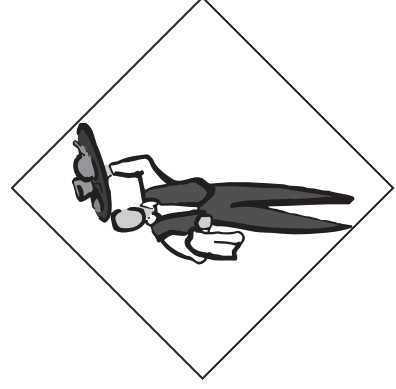
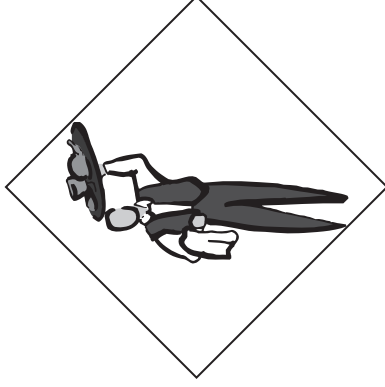


“For my eyes have seen Your

_____”

God shows Himself to ordinary people.

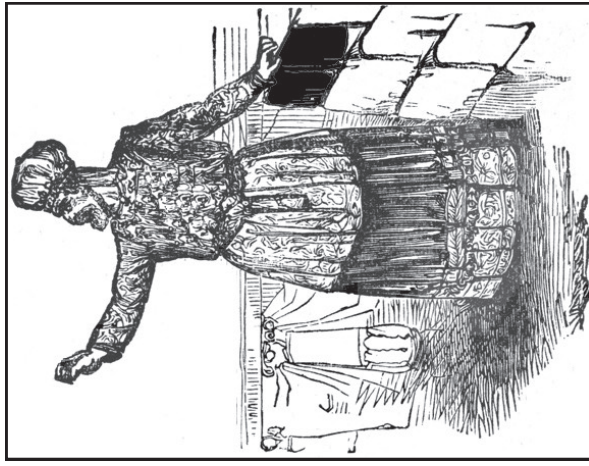
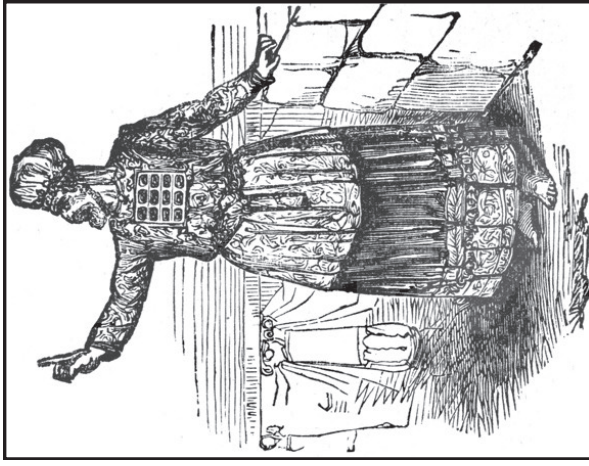
Match the shapes below that contain “ordinary” jobs.





Simeon prayed to see God.

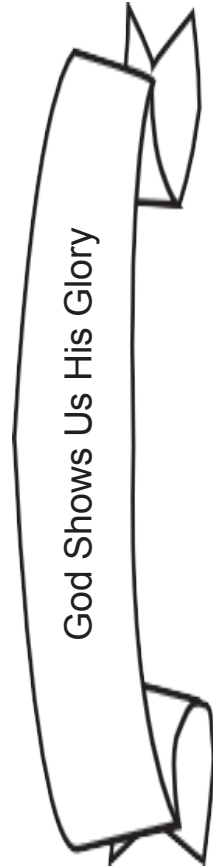
Simeon was a priest in the temple. Find and circle the six changes in the second picture below.



iWorship

ages 7 to 12

Luke 2:22-35



God Shows Us His Glory

Simeon saw the glory of the Lord.

Use the musical note key to find out what Simeon called Jesus.

