

# Grace & Peace

January 3, 2012

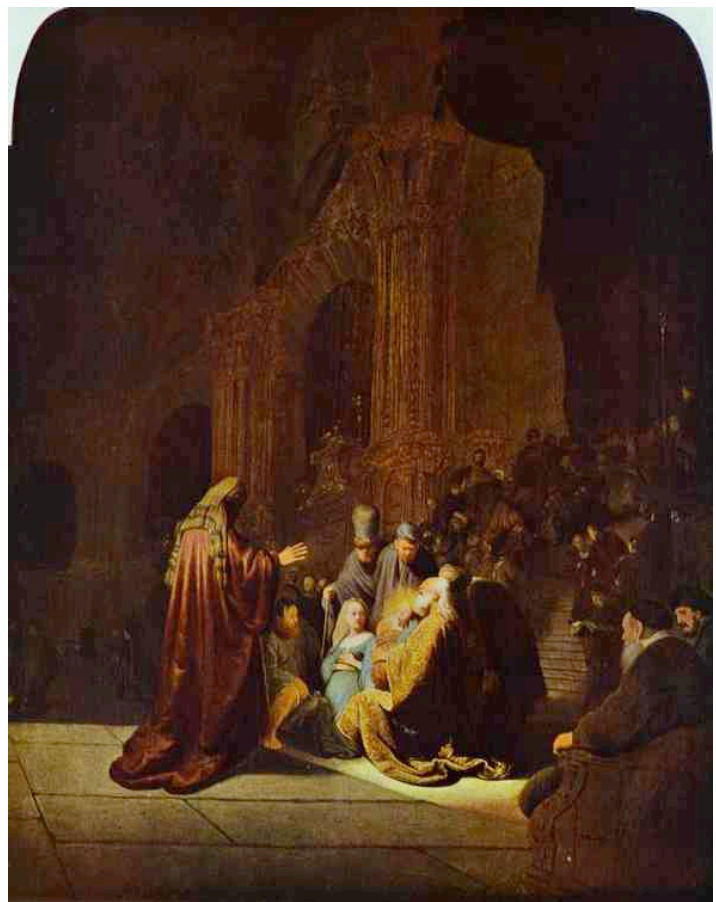
## REMBRANDT, THE PREACHER

Last week our new year's message was about your life list (or as some of us think of it, a Bucket List). Then Sunday we preached about Simeon, the old man at the temple in Jerusalem. His life list had one item on it: to see the LORD's Messiah, the consolation of Israel. When Simeon had seen Jesus, he knew:

for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:30-32

Rembrandt can be considered the one of the greatest interpreters of the Gospel through painting, etching and drawing of biblical scenes. He did memorable paintings of Simeon's story. And the contrast of two of these paintings is instructive for our own faith journey. Early in his career Rembrandt was the toast of the town, Amsterdam. And Amsterdam was by all accounts the wealthiest city in the world in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rembrandt got many prized commissions. Rembrandt lived the good life, married a beautiful woman, Saskia, bought the big house and went about his life living large, as they say.

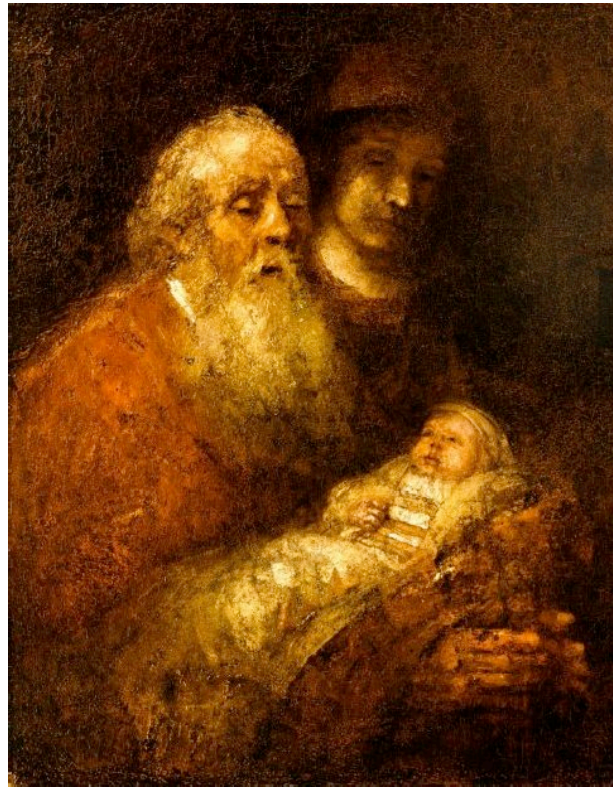
Rembrandt's painting, when he was only 25, of Simeon and Jesus, is a masterful rendering of the architecture and light of Israel's sacred temple. We see a masterful rendering, and little emotion.



THE PRESENTATION AT THE TEMPLE, 1631

But Rembrandt's life took a turn. His beloved Saskia died when she was just 29. He became bankrupt, and had to sell the big house and most of his fabled possessions. His son Titus also died at an early age.

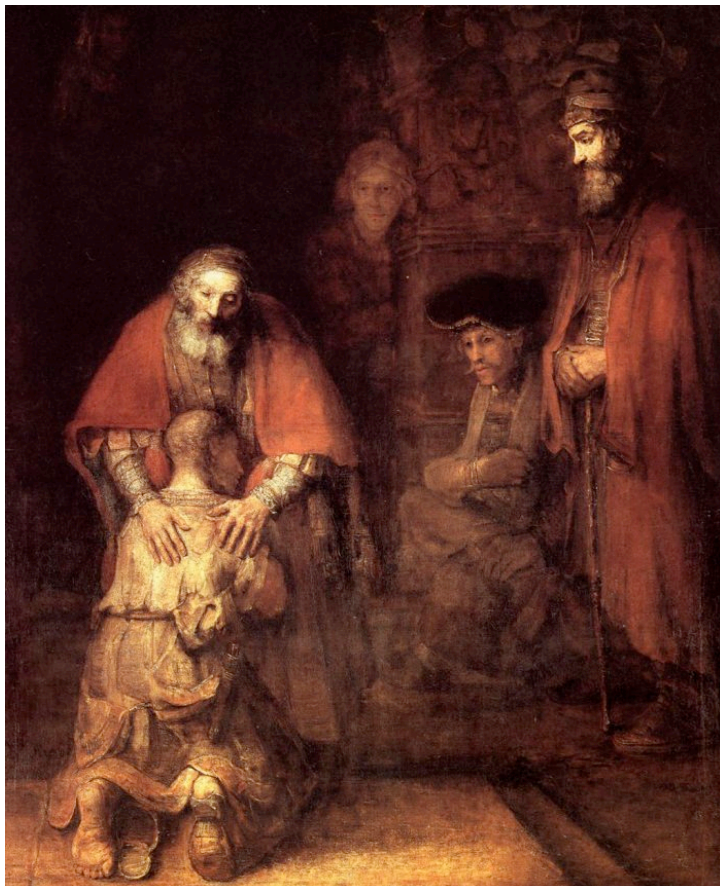
What we see in Rembrandt's later paintings is a compassion and a deeper understanding of the meaning of the Gospel. His painting of Simeon, done at the end of his life, is a close-up of a man overcome with emotion in holding the infant Jesus. Maybe it's not too much of a stretch to say that Rembrandt saw himself in Simeon's story. Through rich blessings, and most of all, through wrenching losses, Rembrandt discovered that his one comfort was the never-changing love of God. The God we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



**SIMEON, 1669**

The God who loves us so much that He came to save us. You can see that faith in his last paintings, particularly *Simeon* and also *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

Sometimes the best preachers don't need to use words.



**THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON, 1667**