

## Simeon and Anna

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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People of Faith – God's Word

<sup>21</sup>After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. <sup>22</sup>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 <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty- four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

*Simeon and Anna model for us obedience, worship and praise. The Holy Spirit was active in their lives in recognizing baby Jesus as the Messiah. May we too submit our minds and spirits to the Holy Spirit to recognize its presence in our lives.*

God is with us this day through the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ the Son. Amen.

The story of Simeon and Anna which we've just heard is an incredible story of faith, obedience, worship and praise. In Luke's Gospel it completes the telling of Jesus' birth. To get to Simeon and Anna, we need to step back momentarily to Mary and Joseph.

We remember how, on the night of Jesus' birth, the angel of the Lord first appears to the shepherds in the fields. The angel gives the Good News that the Messiah, the Lord has been born. Then the heavenly host arrives, and those angels praise God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven!" After the shepherds have seen

baby Jesus for themselves, they return to the fields, rejoicing and praising God with full hearts.

That's where we always stop in the story on Christmas Eve. The very next verse is where we begin today. After the customary eight-day period, Jesus is circumcised and brought to the temple to present him to the Lord as holy. Mary and Joseph are faithful Jews, faithful parents, doing exactly what the Law requires. Since they could not afford a lamb, they purchase two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Upon entering the temple, an elderly man approaches them, Simeon. We believe that Simeon was probably a priest, because of the way he speaks about Jesus. But he wasn't on duty at that time. So guided by the Holy Spirit, he had come to the temple that day.

We remember the Holy Spirit is very active in the first few chapters of Luke's Gospel. John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit in Elizabeth's womb. She recognizes the power of the unborn baby in Mary's womb. Then Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, is also filled with the Spirit and he prophesies.

Therefore, on this day, the Spirit moves Simeon to come to the temple. God's Spirit had revealed to Simeon, he wouldn't die until he had seen Israel's savior. Upon seeing Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, God shows Simeon, this is the child. He is moved to prophecy about Jesus. His words are the Nunc Dimittis, Latin, meaning, 'now you dismiss'.

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Now we've heard Simeon's words, so let's sing it! ELW 313 O Lord, Now Let Your Servant.

This glorious song reveals that Jesus is the salvation of the world...not only for Israel, but also for the Gentiles. Those who aren't Jewish, those who do not believe. This child will rescue God's people from their enemies. He will make known to all God's great love and enact salvation through his death and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit has disclosed this to Simeon. He is described as righteous and devout. He is faithful. Simeon understands what it means to worship God with his heart, his mind and his soul. Therefore, God has whispered in Simeon's spirit and heart, this incredible revelation about Jesus.

Anna, age 84, lived in the temple; her heart dedicated as well to worshipping God with fasting and prayer. She was a temple prophetess. At that moment, the Holy Spirit also reveals to her, who this child is. We do not get to hear her words, like we do with Simeon. But what she speaks to all who hear her, is that Jesus will be the redemption of Israel. The metaphor of redemption is taken from a slave who is marked and then gets his freedom through a purchase. From the very beginning, Jesus is known as the one who will purchase redemption and freedom for the enslaved people of God.

Anna too, knows how to listen for the Holy Spirit in her heart. From all we know, God only reveals to her in the moment who Jesus is. She doesn't get any advance warning. Which means, her heart is connected to God's heart. She is a prophet and she speaks all that God moves her to speak in the moment.

I met a modern-day Anna at my last congregation. She has now gone to be with the Lord. But I've never seen such a marked-up Bible. The pages had been turned so many times, the corners were darkened with her fingerprints. Each visit, she would tell me with wonder and excitement in her eyes, that she was looking for Jesus' return. She could imagine him coming on the clouds, enveloping His people with love. Her desire for Jesus was palpable. So it was with Simeon and Anna.

They play an important role in Jesus' birth story. For they represent the religious establishment's stamp of approval. First, we had the shepherd's approval...they were commoners, even considered less than the common man or woman. But with Simeon and Anna, priest and prophet, the religious up and up's, are also included in God's revealing of Jesus as Savior.

What do Simeon and Anna say to us? What connection do their Spirit led lives have with ours?

First, obedience. Obedience is an important part of our relationship with God. When we obey what God wants us to do, we live in accordance with God's will. Simeon was devout. He lived a sincere, earnest life of faith that included obedience. As we set aside our own desires, we obey God's commands and God's will for our lives. Simeon knew God would reveal the Messiah to him.

Consequently, he waited expectantly for God's prompting. That insistent prodding came to him and he listened. He went to the temple.

What if we were to practice our skills at listening for God's voice through the Holy Spirit? We hear God when we read our Bibles. When we sing hymns. Even when we talk with our friends! Yet keeping that one ear tuned to the Holy Spirit, it is amazing what God will communicate. Our obedience to listening, can increase our peace in our lives.

Secondly, Anna fasted and prayed night and day. Those spiritual practices don't simply belong to spiritual giants. We don't only have to fast from food. We can fast from technology for a day. What if we counted up all the time we spent checking the news or our emails and texts, or even watching tv for one day? Just keep a log, not changing our habits. Then the next day, we spent the same amount of time reading the Psalms, or a Gospel or praying? It could be incredible what we learned or heard God say to us.

My point is this. Worship and praise are essential to our lives of faith. Obedience, fasting, prayer are all parts of worship and praise. God is worthy of our worship! Ever spent just time praising God? It is distinctly different than prayers of repentance or request.

Jesus' life and ministry produced praise in many of the people He encountered. They were so amazed by His healings, or feedings, or teaching, their spirits couldn't help but cry out in glory to God. Anna and Simeon show us what happens when we are in constant worship of God. We hear and act as God calls us to! It takes practice to listen for God. But we can do it...

Let's sing a song of praise to Almighty God who revealed God's son to Anna, Simeon and ourselves! Amen.