

Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Mary and Joseph follow the dictates of the law and offer the appropriate sacrifice for those who lack wealth. As this takes place on the Temple Mount, there is this sense that Simeon, devout and faithful, becomes the bridge between tradition and this new revelation. God will no longer be hidden behind the walls of the Temple, for salvation (the name of Jesus means savior) is to be offered to all. Those who wish to hold onto the old ways will struggle, while those who accept God's expansiveness will find reason to rejoice.

Theology Connection:

We need to remember that Luke is the only one who tells this story. It causes us to ask the question, 'why?' In Acts 1.8 Jesus tells his disciples to take his good news to the ends of the earth. As we read on in Acts, we see that many who call upon Jesus as Lord are bound to suffer at the hands of Jews and Romans. Yet, we see those who were once outcasts experience the mystical and miraculous power of God through Jesus and his disciples. This is the story of a God who refuses to be domesticated and is prepared to do something new to reconcile us (the Gentiles) to him and to one another.

Application:

It's the weekend following Christmas. We have celebrated the birth, but now the hard work of discipleship awaits us. We are warned that following Jesus is not easy. We too want a predictable God rather than a God who turns our lives as well as our world upside down. Surely Simeon did not expect God to appear in the form of this child of a peasant family, and yet he was able to see. Are we able to see God's presence today? Are we looking?

The Text: Luke 2: 21-38

2 ²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord", ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons.")

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ 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, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

ADULT

In the church calendar there are 12 days to Christmas (the song) that begin on Christmas Day and end on January 6 (Epiphany). In Orthodox traditions, the ritual is to give a gift each day. Maybe we too can give gifts of a different sort.

How can we give something of ourselves or of our time to the people around us?

Perhaps we can make a goal for each day of this season to engage in premeditated acts of kindness? While the world is wrapping up the celebration of Christmas, we are in the business of unwrapping the joy of the living Christ.

YOUTH

Please read Luke 2:21-38

Jesus is being “dedicated” to God. What a blessing. However, did you read the end where it says Anna never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day? Seems a little like quarantine don’t you think.... Can you relate? Ok, so maybe we aren’t fasting and praying all day but maybe we should?

We now know what it feels like to be stuck in our home day in and day out. It can be lonely and boring. However, it can also be a time to reflect and connect with God....

Take some time this week and sit in silence, reflect on your week and connect with God.

Let us pray,

Dear God: We thank you for this passage and please help us find peace and comfort in the times we are quarantined to our homes. Help us find silence and to connect with you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHILDREN’S

According to the law that God had given His People, after the birth of a child, a sacrifice was to be made. So, about 6 weeks after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to the Temple to do two things. To dedicate Jesus to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice that was required by the Law. Mary and Joseph wanted to make sure that they did everything that was required by the Law of God.

While they were there in the Temple, a godly man named Simeon came and talked to them. He recognized Baby Jesus as the Messiah who was to come! Simeon had received a special promise from God that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah that God has promised to send to Israel. Simeon took Baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God saying, “Now, Lord, You can let me, your servant, die in peace as You said. I have seen Your salvation with my own eyes. You prepared him before all people. He is a light for the non-Jewish people to see. He will bring honor to Your people, the Israelites.”

Think:

1. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they heard this? (The Bible says that they were amazed when they heard him saying all these things about Baby Jesus.)

Remember:

God is in control of all things. Let’s give thanks and praise to Him for His wonderful works!

Pray:

Dear God,

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, here to be our Savior. Please help us to see all of Your wonderful blessings that You surround us with.

Please keep us safe, happy, and healthy.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen!