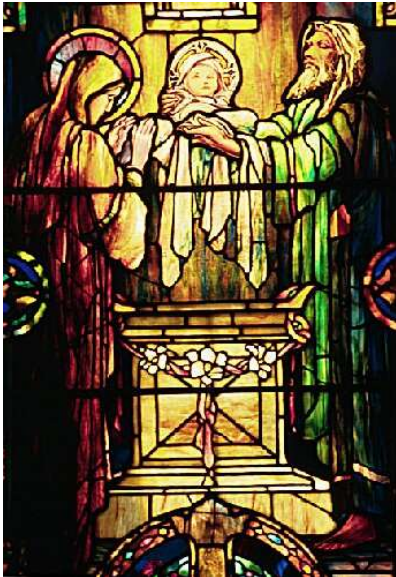


Anna and Simeon



The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born. They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord." The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving at least a pair of doves or two young pigeons. So that is what Mary and Joseph did. At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God's Spirit came to him and told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

*"Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace,
because you have kept your promise to me.
With my own eyes I have seen
what you have done to save your people,
and foreign nations will also see this.
Your mighty power is a light for all nations,
and it will bring honor to your people Israel."*

Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said. Then he blessed them and told Mary, "This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him, and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking."

The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died. And now she was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without

eating. At that time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

Luke 2: 22-38

Background

The worship center is where God is most often revealed to us. In this story of the dedication of Jesus, we hear how two special people beheld the promised savior. Male children were traditionally circumcised after eight days. This marked the child's acceptance into the community of faith (Genesis 17: 9-14). This was also the special moment a child was given its name. Giving a child a biblical name was considered an act of special blessing. Such a dedication was a commitment to the care of God's love.

Mary and Joseph named their child "Jesus" (the name is the same as "Joshua" in Hebrew) which means "God is our salvation." The angel of the Lord had instructed Mary to use this title. It declared this child was an instrument of God's salvation. This name was an act of divine fulfillment.

Mary and Joseph were too poor to afford the recommended sacrifice of a lamb. They gave the humble offering of two turtledoves (Leviticus 12: 6-8). Jesus, the Lamb of God, would later offer the ultimate sacrifice for all of us.

Simeon was present in the temple. God promised that he would see the savior of the world before he died. His words were "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; 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: 29-32). These words proclaim the spiritual gift that God was giving to the whole world.

Simeon's song of praise has been sung in Christian churches for nearly 2,000 years. It is called the "Nunc Dimittis" (Latin for "now depart"). They contain the assurance that this faithful servant of God has seen the fulfillment of God's promise (made long ago to Abraham--Genesis 15:15 and to Jacob--Genesis 46:30).

The prophet Anna was also present. She served in the proud tradition of female prophets throughout Israel's history -- Miriam (Exodus 15:20); Deborah (Judges 4:4); Huldah (2 Kings 22:14); and Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3). Anna reestablished the continuing role of women as prophets in the Christian church (Acts 2:17; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5).

The text indicates she was eighty-four years old or had lived as a widow for that amount of years. Either way, she had remained faithful in the temple by worshiping, fasting, and praying. We do not know the exact prophetic words of Anna but we are told that she saw the Christ child as a liberating figure for all the people of God -- Jesus is the world's savior.

Reflections

Simeon sought salvation in the temple. A common mistake Christians make about worship is that they are "*seeking an experience*" of God rather than "*seeking*" God. Worship is more than entertainment or just looking for a special experience. Worship is exercising patience as we wait to hear the Word of God. The best place to worship is in the house of God. Worship is the most important thing we do. The commandments tell us to keep the Sabbath Day holy for good reason. Worship is the time we gather to sing praises and open ourselves to hearing God's Word. Worship keeps our relationship with God in focus.

God's message of salvation is universal. This is contrary to churches that practice exclusivity and blatantly claim that they are the only ones who have the truth. Such claims are arrogant and inconsistent with the foundations of Christ's kingdom. We may prefer one style of worship to another but that does not make us right and others wrong.

We worship as a community of believers. Jesus said, "Wherever two or more are gathered (*in the context of worship*), I am with you" (Matthew 18: 20). Jesus stressed the importance of worship throughout his ministry. Jesus began his ministry proclaiming the word of God in a worship center (Luke 4:16-27).

Some Christians maintain they can worship God outside of the church. They sit alone in their homes or "worship" outside amidst the beauty of creation. They miss the opportunity to share worship with the fellowship of all believers. Jesus

regularly demonstrated the need to gather with others in worship. I have yet to meet a person with a stronger faith than his.

A sad detail of American history that very few of Patrick Henry's revolutionary speeches were ever written down. He is famous for his rousing statement made in St James Church in 1775, "Give me liberty or give me death!" This speech was reconstructed forty years later (over fifteen years after his death!). Henry kept few notes and the spellbound audience failed to take notes. Despite our lack of details we know his messages encouraged liberty for all.

Anna's speech must have been just as inspiring. Scripture indicates that Anna spoke of Jesus' great gift of spiritual freedom. Jesus brought us independence from those things that separate us from God. Worship is the place where we share these messages of salvation. Church is where it's happening!

Anna was a prophet (means to "speak or proclaim" God's word). The name Anna means "God's grace." The name Simeon means, "to listen." Together in worship they heard the world's greatest messenger: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). This is the Greatest Story Ever Told!

Strength Finders talent: Positivity

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252305/positivity-theme.aspx>

Those with this gift live the God given gift of "hope". They see possibilities when others may have given up. They keep their eyes on the prize in spite of obstacles or opposition. This does not mean they are "pollyannish" and ignore truth or reality. They seek a better way. They are open to new possibilities.

I believe Anna and Simeon found inspiration from God's promises. The people of Israel had known tough times. Many thought the promise of a "messiah" was just a pipe dream. They demonstrated their trust and faith in God by dedication to the temple. They waited patiently for the "christ" (savior) to appear.

The name "Jesus" is a Greek translation of the name "Joshua". Joshua was the historical figure that crossed the Jordan River and led the people of God into the

promised land. The Joshua they met would lead us all into a better relationship with God and one another. I'd say that was worth waiting for.

Enneagram connections: Body Types

It would be unlikely that Anna and Simeon were the same number types. There is evidence that they were both "body" or "gut" types. This is one of the three centers of intelligence (see below). This center of intelligence is also called the "instinctual" center. Their body sense helps alert them to possibilities that others might miss. This center of intelligence often senses the big picture.

Simeon may have been a nine. He looked forward to greeting this Prince of Peace. In his own words he celebrated *"and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me"*.

Anna may have been a one. The scripture reference states *"She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free"*. Anna was focused on the way things ought to be. As a high level one she wanted what was right and good for all the people of Israel, freedom.

Freedom is central to the Judaic-Christian history. Humankind were created free. Moses helped God's children held in Egyptian captivity. The temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt in celebration of release from Babylonian captivity. Jesus said ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8).

Anna knew right from wrong. We should all be willing to dedicate our lives to the God given gift of freedom for ourselves and others. It's what Jesus did for all of us.

<https://cpenneagram.com/centers>

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-nine>

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-one>

*Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and
The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;
The stubborn season has made stand.
My life is light, waiting for the death wind,
Like a feather on the back of my hand.
Dust in sunlight and memory in corners
Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.*

*Grant us thy peace.
I have walked many years in this city,
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,
Have taken and given honor and ease.
There went never any rejected from my door.
Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's children
When the time of sorrow is come?
They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home,
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.*

*Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation
Grant us thy peace.
Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,
Now at this birth season of decease,
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
Grant Israel's consolation
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.*

*According to thy word,
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation
With glory and derision,
Light upon light, mounting the saints' stair.
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,
Not for me the ultimate vision.
Grant me thy peace.
(And a sword shall pierce thy heart, Thine also).
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,
I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.*

*Let thy servant depart,
Having seen thy salvation.*

T.S. Eliot, 1936

Questions

1. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) sang praises to God throughout his life (wrote 600 hymns including “O God our Help in Ages Past”). What does it mean to depart in peace?

Now have our hearts embraced our God, we would forget all earthly charms,
And wish to die, as Simeon would, with his young Savior in his arms.
Our lips should learn that joyful song, were but our hearts prepared like his
Our souls still willing to be gone, and at thy word depart in peace.

1. What kinds of peace does Jesus bring? In what ways does Jesus bring us freedom? How can we share this gift with others?
2. How does God speak to you in worship? What can we learn from Simeon and Anna about persistent patience? How does worship impact your work and everyday life?