

THE SONG OF SIMEON:
"The Early Years of Jesus, Vol.1"
Luke 2:21-40

Do you ever just break out in song? Just sing out in joy?

When something wonderful happens, I might say, "Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles-God just made a wall fall down!" Words from the Tailor's song in Fiddler on the Roof. However, if I question what God is doing, I might groan and even be in anguish. I have learned that is when I need to just trust and obey. I am old enough now to know that in time I very well may be singing along with Garth Brooks "I thank God for unanswered prayer." Faith and Song seem to go together for everyone. All of us, even for us who do not sing well, song still messages us and speaks to our soul. Broadly speaking, a song is words that are intended to be said in rhythm or sung by the human voice.

Scripture has many songs. The songs of Christmas in Scripture are Mary's Song, Elizabeth's song, Zechariah's song, the Angel's song and The Song of Simeon. All just seemed to burst forth from the singer after a monumental event. Through the centuries songs have become part of the Christmas story told over and over. Christmas songs old and new, not always, but often beautifully tell us the story of Christ.... Unless of course, our familiarity with the music causes us to overlook the truths expressed in them. We don't want to do that. No! We want to listen and hear fresh and new, the holy truths in song. I find by saying the words rather than singing often helps freshen the meaning. A devotional book "Amazing Grace" is where I found words written by Josiah Holland in the mid 1800's. He wrote, "There's a Song in the Air! There's a star in the sky! There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry! And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing. For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!" We want the miraculous words of song to renew our awe and wonder of the Christ story. The birth of a baby.

It used to be we would say we have little information about Jesus as a baby. However, John Medina's research on baby's brain development gives us a little more to work with in the 21st century. Dr. Medina's research determined a Baby's preferences are affected before birth by things they hear in the womb. If we go back to things that we are told of in Scripture that Jesus would have heard while he was in Mary's womb and if we add in Jesus' first weeks after his birth, it gives us a bit more to consider. We can assume, because of modern research, that the singing that happened and perhaps the actions of some adults around Jesus, before he was born and directly after, very well could have helped prepare Jesus for his human life on earth.

When grown Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?"

It is a Christmas song that so eloquently asks us and answers for us that question: ***"What Child is this?" This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing.*** Jesus both human and God while in the womb heard praises sung to God. As a new born human baby, Jesus heard praises sung to him and his Heavenly Father. Jesus also spent time around Godly people who trusted and obeyed God. ***"Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."***

Our Scriptures today are about All Mighty God fulfilling His plans for the world through people like Simeon and Anna, who trust and obey God. Simeon and Anna (filled with the Holy Spirit) recognized baby Jesus as the promised Messiah when Jesus was just six weeks old. Many others, did not recognize who Jesus was, even when Jesus, as a man, he made claim to be the Messiah.

Many today do not recognize Jesus at God's Messiah, our Savior. Yet..... two **OLD** folks, Simeon and Anna took one look at 6 week old baby Jesus, and they **knew** who he was.

The message of our scripture today is important to the Christmas story. We teach our children the story of Christmas with a Crèche, a Nativity scene. I have wondered why Simeon and Anna are seldom a part of a crèche. Simeon and Anna met Jesus long before the Magi ever did. Could it be because they knew God, they trusted God and obeyed God that God came to them? Could it be that those in the Nativity, except Mary and Joseph (who trusted and obeyed God) were seeking Jesus? Even though most people thought a MIGHTY KING would come to save Israel, Simeon and Anna knew baby Jesus was that exact MIGHTY KING, who came to save Israel and the whole world. Simeon and Anna knew the Scripture said a Messiah would come and they were waiting for the Messiah to arrive.

There has been speculation by scholars that the shepherds after the angels visit to them not only went to see the new family but did indeed tell everyone they could about the baby and the angels. Perhaps, the shepherds sold lambs to be used as a sacrifice at the temple thus sharing their story of Jesus. That is just speculation, but it sounds reasonable that people at the temple had heard already of the angels singing praises to the new baby King. It seems probable Simeon and Anna heard the stories and were on alert and waiting for the baby the shepherds had told about, Jesus!!! Let's go back and read again, just in part, the story of the shepherds that is the paragraph immediately before the story of Simeon and Anna.

"An Event for Everyone"
There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood.
Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and
God's glory blazed around them.
They were terrified!
An angel said, "Don't be afraid.
I'm here to announce a great and joyful event
that is meant for everybody, worldwide:
A Savior has just been born in David's town.
"At once the angel was joined by a HUGE angelic choir
singing God's praises:
Glory to God!
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.
The shepherders told everyone they met
what the angels had said about this child.
All who heard the shepherders were impressed. (MSG)

So..... It is possible Simeon and Anna had heard the shepherd's story.

God works through normal everyday people all the time. An inquiry, an offer, a warning can inspire us to do or not to do something that we later realize was God's guiding us. Yet circumstances can also be confusing. Even if we are very confident we are doing God's will we may find we later question if we did indeed do the right thing. Most of us usually don't have a full grasp on what God is doing or has done until we can look backwards. Mary and Joseph trusted and obeyed God with little view of the future. Matthew 1:24 tells us that *"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.* Joseph trusted and obeyed God when he had serious reasons to doubt what was happening

Then...

They were far from home and alone when Mary went into labor. Was Mary shocked to deliver her baby in a stable? I think any woman would be. Life was not happening as they knew and expected life to be. I can imagine Mary and Joseph feeling very confused but making a choice to trust God. I recently heard a new song on the radio that made me think of Joseph and Mary and how they might have felt. Here are just a few of the lyrics:

“TRUST IN YOU”
Letting go of every single dream
I lay each one down at Your feet
When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!
Truth is, You know what tomorrow brings
There's not a day ahead You have not seen
I want what You want Lord and nothing less
Your ways are always higher
Your plans are always good
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!

~ By Lauren Daigle

Mary and Joseph trusted God and also obeyed the civil law of Caesar Augustus. And in their obedience to the civil law we see a major prophecy fulfilled by their obedience. *“Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, ⁵ He went there to register with Mary.”*

And of course Mary's baby was born in Bethlehem fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. (Isaiah 53:12).

The Angels shared about Jesus with the shepherds. The shepherds went looking for Jesus and found him. They shared Jesus with everyone they could.

It is good to share the Gospel, with others.

Just a month ago Patti Smith shared the Gospel at the Women's Christmas Dessert. She shared her story of Jesus with everyone there and sent them home with the written Gospel. I suspect some who attended the dessert have gone looking to find Jesus because Patti shared, just like the shepherd's shared.

Three times we are told the Holy Spirit was on Simeon (Luke 2:25-27).

1. God gave to Simeon prophetic insight into God's plans for the world.
2. And I would venture to say God sent Simeon, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to Joseph and Mary to help prepare them for the tumultuous future ahead of them.
3. Simeon arrived at the temple by divine appointment, just as the young family arrived.

Simeon's response to the promptings by the Spirit when he saw Jesus was immediate.

Simeon broke out into a song. He sang a prayer! He began singing a blessing over Jesus:

***For my eyes have seen your salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”***

Simeon's song echoed what the shepherds heard the Angels sing, “Peace on earth and Good Will to ALL men. (Isaiah 53:12) (John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

Simeon took baby Jesus into his own arms and Simeon continued the blessing and said ominously to Mary,

***“This child is destined to cause
the falling and rising of many in Israel,
and he is to be a sign that will be spoken against,
so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.
And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”***

Before Mary or Joseph could absorb exactly what Simeon said to them, **Anna** swooped down like any of us good grandmas would, to save the day. At the very moment Simeon told Mary a sword would pierce her soul, Anna stepped in. She cheerfully took the baby from Simeon and Anna, a very spiritual and very old widow successfully deflected Simeon's words. She spoke to everyone she could about Jesus because that is what believers in Jesus do.

I know another just like Anna. Ann Box. The mother of my husband. She reminds me of this Anna.

(Picture)

Mom is 89 and a widow. She lives alone in an independent apartment in a Christian Retirement community. She no longer drives her car. She has an electric scooter that allows her to get around the campus of her retirement community. She reads her Bible every day, Daily Bread also. She will share Jesus with anyone, who will listen. She is a prayer warrior. She attends worship services in her community. She longs for the day when Jesus will come again or come and take her to Heaven. She has said she is anxious to go to Heaven.

Whenever anything awful happens or there is a problem that seems overwhelming to her. Even the recent presidential race. We can be sure mom would say, “Surely, Jesus will come again, soon.”

Mom, Ann a modern day Anna has trusted and obeyed God. She is ready and waiting for the Lord.

Simeon and Anna were everyday normal people who loved God and were involved serving at the temple. They had been around awhile and people respected them because they cared for and encouraged others. I believe many of you remember Billie Franklin as a woman like Anna who was highly respected at RHC. I know you miss her. There are many people just like Simeon and Anna in this church. Don Gillie **(Picture)** has been ushering and handing out bulletins every Sunday for at least the last year that I have been at RHC. Don and a group of men meet every Thursday here at the church. The women in the quilting group are here Monday after Monday for several hours working on quilts. There are many others in our congregation and in our life who are like Simeon and Anna.

Simeon and Anna encouraged the new parents, Mary and Joseph. Sheryl Mittleider the RHC administer, is still a mom herself and she mentors younger moms of preschool children. Those of us who have been there and done it and survived the child raising years can be of encouragement to those just starting that adventure.

If Mary in her pondering was wondering, after all that had happened, if her family could ever live a normal life I think Simon and Anna helped her because....We see in Simeon and Anna the often typical male/female, Granddad/Grandma response to a young couple just starting out in life with a baby. A dose of major reality with gushing joy over the baby.

Simeon's and Anna's words were a contrast of bitter foreboding and sweet joy. But that is life. All of life has its bitter and it's sweet. Life is bittersweet.

That is the Christian story The Christmas story of Jesus Christ is full of song and story that give us hope and hope is sweet. But then the Christian story continues with the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

The anguish of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is so very bitter. I wonder if Jesus maybe found comfort and even strength from the early influences of his family singing and the Song of Simeon. Did such help him understand?

Song and music are universal while at the same time a song can be extremely personal. Song can form a bond with all those who have heard it or ever sung it.

Ann Box sang Irving Berlin's "*I'll be Loving you Always*" to her babies in the 50's and 60's and to my children in the 70's and 80's and her great grands now know it too. There was not one dry eye when, as requested by Dad before he died, the Patsy Cline version of "*I'll Be Loving you Always*" was sung at his memorial service last year. We all were strengthened remembering we were loved. A simple song, like Jesus Love Me, sung in one's mind while waiting on a hospital gurney can strengthen and give comfort, while reminding us we're not alone.

Jesus, when in great anguish, did as Joseph and Mary had done when he was a baby. Jesus trusted and obeyed. Jesus did as his mother Mary had done and was able to say to God "Not my will but thine."

Until at the crucifixion Jesus suffered and died. So bitter a day the earth turned dark.

But then, just as Anna swept in to deflect Simeon's ominous predictions with joy and encouragement....so does the arrival of Easter Sunday! To which again hymn lyrics say it so well:

**Up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!**

It doesn't get any sweeter than that!!

The words of Simeon and Anna's blessings to the family of Jesus tell us that God's purposes extended then and now far beyond any one particular moment in time to ALL people.

As a baby, in Mary's womb and after his birth Jesus heard from others that he was and would be the Messiah to save the people from their sin. We have been told and we have heard "Jesus is the Messiah." We tell others Jesus is the Messiah...The Gospels testify to who Jesus is. The Gospels look back remembering Jesus as human in history. **AND** all four of the gospels and our hymns, carols and chorus tell about **the life, teaching and miracles of Jesus who is ALIVE! Jesus the Messiah is alive today!**

The Gospels are written to convince the reader that Jesus saves people. Jesus saved people then—and Jesus saves people now.

The singing of Christian song tell us again and again who Jesus is.

However there is more to knowing Jesus than just reading the Gospels as history or singing the songs, from memory. It is called faith. It is choosing to believe the mystery of our faith. The mystery of faith is that: **Jesus died! Jesus is risen! Jesus will come again!** Jesus, the son of God, who created everything imaginable was born to earthly parents who had nothing, yet he, Jesus, gave them everything. He does the same for us. We have nothing of real value until we have Jesus, then we have everything.

Do you know Jesus?

How well do you know Jesus?

Verse 39 says, “*When Joseph and Mary had done everything required they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.*”

(Look up and say)THEY TOOK THEIR BABY AND THEY WENT HOME!

Where Jesus grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.”

(Long Pause).....

Thus we close Jesus’ baby album, as brief as it is.

In Matthew 16 Jesus asks his disciples:

“Who do you say I am? Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus asks each of us, “Who do you say I am?” OR “**What child is this? This, this is Christ the King!**”

Amen