

The Dedication of Jesus

[Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3](#), [Luke 2:22-40](#)

Well, we learned earlier that the 12 days of Christmas have deep seated meaning in Biblical terms. As today's scripture describes, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to be dedicated. Jesus was the couple's firstborn male child, hence Jewish custom dictated he be appropriately presented at the temple along with the correct sacrifice. Earlier we heard that in the 12 days of Christmas song, 2 turtle doves represented the Old and New Testaments. However, in ancient times, if one could not afford a lamb for a sacrifice, than 2 turtle doves were used as an appropriate sacrifice for the poor. Clearly, Mary and Joseph were not wealthy. They had to settle for a stable as a birthplace for their first child, and they had to use turtle doves instead of a lamb for their sacrifice, most likely because they could not afford a lamb.

And so once again, without any fuss of fanfare, Jesus was presented in the temple. But God has a way of seeing the diamond in the rough. Obviously, God knew Jesus was to be the Savior of the world. The scripture says that Simeon, a devout man of God, was guided by the Spirit. God revealed to Simeon the Messiah. Simeon referred to Jesus as ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’ Jesus came as the ultimate unifier.

Those of you who have children and grandchildren know how difficult it is for them to wait for Christmas. Here are some actual letters written by Santa as presented by Pastor Brian Bill:

- Dear Santa Claus, When you come to my house there will be cookies for you. But if you are real hungry you can use our phone and order a pizza to go.

- Dear Santa, I want a puppy. I want a playhouse. Thank you. I've been good most of the time. Sometimes I'm wild.
- Dear Santa, I'll take anything because I haven't been that good.
- Dear Santa, I'm not going to ask for a lot. Here's my list: The Etch-A-Sketch animator, 2 packs of #2 pencils, Crayola fat markers and the big gift...my own color TV! Well, maybe you could drop the pencils; I don't want to be selfish.

Christmas is often about waiting. Today's scripture from Luke presents two additional characters in our Christmas story.

Simeon is described as holy and devout. Simeon waited his entire life to see the Messiah. Luke 2:26 says that it had been

revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Consider the times. Israel was in great despair. They had not heard from God in some time. They were living in a land that was now occupied by Rome, and they were enduring under the cruel reign of King Herod. Israel had truly lost hope that the Messiah would ever come.

Yet when Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple, Simeon sees Jesus for who he is – the Messiah; the one who has come for the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles. The one who has come to unite not divide - God's gift to the world.

Luke 2:28-32 says, "Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a

light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’”

At this point in the story we are introduced to another little-known character – the prophetess Anna. Anna was a widow of many years and had devoted her life to the church. Luke tells us she never left the temple, dedicating herself to fasting and prayer. It seems her primary concern was for the redemption of Israel. Anna was waiting for the one who would provide the forgiveness needed for Israel. Clearly things were not going well for Israel. They had strayed far from God’s will. They were literally once again victims of slavery – the slavery to sin.

It is interesting that we have Anna as a character in our Christmas story. Imagine that – a female prophet. It appears another barrier was being addressed. I think a message we can take from this is that God will use any vessel that is available.

Whether it is a poor, young couple, a devout holy man, a widow, or someone like you or me.

Perhaps we are being called to marvel at the miracle of Christmas. I know in my own experience, when I hang around kids at Christmas time, it seems no matter how busy things get or how stressed out I make myself, just seeing the awe and wonder of Christmas through a child's eyes can reawaken my own awe. God presented us with God's most precious gift. Our God is most definitely an awesome God.

Perhaps we are being called to get going. God has presented us with a lot of opportunities to serve in this area. We have heard from several people how much they appreciated the Christmas baskets and visits they received during the Christmas season. This is truly a ministry and some people here saw this as an opportunity to serve. What other opportunities are out

there? How can we be the hands and feet of Christ in our neighborhood? When Mary was called to serve, she answered, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord.” She didn’t know all the challenges she would face, but she put her faith in motion and accepted God’s call. Joseph also stepped out on faith when called to serve as the earthly father for Jesus. The shepherds jumped into action when they were called by saying, “Let us go and see this thing that has come to pass.” Simeon came and presented Jesus before the temple, knowing that God’s promise had been fulfilled. Are we being called to move and to get going as the Spirit guides us to do all the good that we can for our friends and neighbors in need?

Perhaps we are being called to be a messenger of God. Luke 2:38 says that Anna...’gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the

redemption of Jerusalem.’ Anna shared her story with others.

She did not keep silent but shared the good news of God’s gift to the world – a Savior for both the Jews and the Gentiles.

The birth of Jesus opened the gateway for us to receive eternal life. Jesus came to break down barriers that were set to divide groups from each other. Jesus came to provide comfort, forgiveness, and a guiding light in a very dark world. Let us continue to celebrate the Christmas season in our hearts and with others throughout the coming year. Amen.