

Yesterday, we considered how we view people in the Bible. While it can be inspirational to hear the narratives of Biblical people, it may be just as helpful to know that they are human just as we are. As we begin this New Year, celebrate our common humanity with those who did uncommon things in response to God's presence in their lives. Rejoice in the New Year knowing that God is with us and we can make a difference in our world by our faithfulness to God's purposes on earth as it is in heaven!

### Thursday, January 2

Read Luke 2:22-40. Simeon's joy in receiving the baby Jesus into his arms turns dark as he proclaimed that the child he held "is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed--and a sword will pierce your own soul too." Those words must have shocked Mary and she most likely backed away from Simeon in response to his proclamation. Mary watched Jesus grow strong as well as in wisdom and God's favor. She was there when Jesus hung on the cross, dying for the sins of all humanity. Certainly Mary's heart was pierced. There are no guarantees that we will not suffer even as we faithfully serve our God. In fact, we may suffer because we serve God. Contemplate these ideas and write about why you would still want to be in relationship with God and serve God's purposes on earth.

### Friday, January 3

Read Psalm 148. Yesterday, we contemplated our suffering in following God's direction for our lives. The message ended with the idea that condition of our world is better than in the past and that there is hope for our world. Advent and Christmas are all about having hope, peace, joy and love as we navigate this world of great potential and aching needs. Can we dwell on the goodness of our God and through God's blessings participate in building God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven? Meditate on these ideas and write your reflections here.

## Message Notes – December 29, 2024

### *A Word from the Wise: Look Forward!\**

- I. There's always a bit of a \_\_\_\_\_ in these days after Christmas.
  - A. The pressure focuses like a laser beam on one day out of the year. When it's \_\_\_\_\_, it's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - B. Which is just the opposite of the way the \_\_\_\_\_ looks at it.
    1. We find ourselves in the bright and joyous \_\_\_\_\_ of Christmas that only began on Christmas Eve.
    2. Try to sell that in a culture that believes the Christmas season lasts from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Day!
    3. That sort of seems the same for the \_\_\_\_\_ as they are moving beyond the high drama out on the hillside — shepherds, angels and all the rest.
- II. Mary and Joseph appear, no doubt, utterly \_\_\_\_\_ as they walk into the temple courts with two cooing birds in a battered wooden cage.
  - A. They still end up at the center of attention, all the same; at least they come to the center of attention of \_\_\_\_\_ worshipers.
  - B. Simeon heard the voice of God, the Holy Spirit, speaking to him, "You will not taste \_\_\_\_\_ until you have seen the Messiah with your own eyes."
  - C. All Luke tells us is that Anna is a \_\_\_\_\_, and well up in her 80s. She comes to the temple each day to \_\_\_\_\_, and stays well into the night.
  - D. Simeon and Anna would be \_\_\_\_\_ to us, were it not for this singular incident in Luke's gospel.
- III. Let's consider now what it was that Simeon said about

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\*Luke 2:22-40 and Psalm 148

the \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. The first thing he says to God, in prayer, is “my eyes have seen your \_\_\_\_\_.”
    - 1. Then the old man’s prophecy grows dark. “This child is destined for the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of many in Israel.”
    - 2. Simeon gets up close and personal. He spoke directly to Mary, “... and a \_\_\_\_\_ will pierce your own \_\_\_\_\_ too.”
  - B. We need to pay close attention to Simeon and Anna for it is so easy for us to dismiss the words of those who are – let’s say – more \_\_\_\_\_.
    - 1. They have seen tragedy and hardship and they have witness the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
    - 2. They possess a \_\_\_\_\_ that has led to their \_\_\_\_\_ in our loving Creator and their \_\_\_\_\_ in God’s Messiah.
- IV. Nicholas Kristov in *The New York Times* \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of the \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ about the future of the human race.
- A. The share of the world’s people living in extreme poverty has plunged from \_\_\_\_% in 1990 to about \_\_\_\_% now.
  - B. Kristof predicted that future historians will write about our time as the time of unprecedented gains in human well-being, \_\_\_\_\_ and the survival of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - C. We really shouldn’t \_\_\_\_\_ the suffering some people go through in our world.
  - D. We ought to go out of our way to \_\_\_\_\_ the victories that do take place.
  - E. Listen well to Simeon and Anna. It’s a word from the \_\_\_\_\_.

### ***Daily Devotional Guide***

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

### **Monday, December 30**

The Message yesterday began with the idea that there is a sudden “let down” following Christmas. We prepare for weeks if not months and then all of a sudden it’s over. Do you feel that way? Have you experienced the “let down” after Christmas? Certainly, we can feel this way about anything in life – a big project at work or school, a vacation or a special time with friends or family that you haven’t seen in a while. What do you think? Contemplate this concept of a “let down” after Christmas and record your thoughts here.

### **Tuesday, December 31**

How do you think of the people who are in the Bible? Do they seem larger than life to you? Do they represent faithfulness, courage and wisdom that you believe you will never possess or that many other possess today? The Message made the observation that Mary and Joseph would have been unremarkable as they walked into the Temple to have Jesus circumcised, named and blessed. It is important that you view Mary and Joseph as extraordinary people or would it be more helpful to realize the common humanity that we share with them? Reflect on these ideas and questions and write your reflections here.

### **Wednesday, January 1**

Happy New Year! Read Luke 2:22-40. Joseph and Mary may not have even been noticed in the Temple as they observed the Jewish Laws of having Jesus circumcised, named and blessed as well as the purification ritual for Mary. That is, they would not have been noticed if not for two elderly and faithful servants of God in the Temple. Simeon and Anna would not be known but for this singular mention of them in Luke’s Gospel. Together, Simeon and Anna made others know of the significance of Jesus’ presence in the Temple.