

## The Days after Christmas

Ch1 YrB Luke 2:22-40 December 27, 2020

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This morning's gospel reading is a quiet and calm compared to the excitement and action of the nativity. There is no long difficult journey, no sudden excitement as angels pronounce the good news of great joy, and no rushing to Bethlehem with shouts of praise to see the promised child. This morning there is just Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to the temple like every other parent does in their day.

And even the reaction of Simeon who praises God and declares this child is the promised one who will bring the light of God to the world and Anna who announces that the child is the salvation of the people doesn't have the same impression as the story we read a few days ago.

Because when we hear their words we nod because we have heard this about the child and we may be pleased that these elders were able to see this salvation for themselves. But other than that there is not much in the reading to capture our attention or interest. It's not that there is anything wrong with this morning's lesson, just that there doesn't seem to be anything new.

And honestly there isn't. This is a quiet little story about the days after Christmas. And it is a reminder that after the angels go home, the shepherds go back to the fields, and the excitement of that night starts to fade that the promise we celebrate at Christmas continues to unfold in our world.

Which makes this a good reading for December 27<sup>th</sup>. Because we have opened the presents, shared the meals, connected with family and friends, and been to worship. We still can enjoy the lights and music and everything else about the holiday we're not looking forward to Christmas anymore but rather toward the new year and wondering what will come. And that is actually where this story builds on the nativity.

The baby Jesus grew up. I know that a few days doesn't sound like that much has changed but that verse at the very end of our lesson which explains what happens when those days add up is important. *The child grew and became*

*strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.(2:40).*

Because when think of the good news of great joy that the angels sing about- that God is with us and the salvation of God has arrived- it is easy to forget that the promise, the salvation of God comes in the form of a child. A baby who needs to be cared for and cherished by his parents. Who needs to be nurtured and needs time to grow. And I know all of that also sounds obvious because that is the human condition.

But that is actually part of the good news of great joy. The fact that God chooses to be with us as us. That the salvation of God comes with an understanding of what life is like for us. God chooses in Jesus to experience life not as an all powerful God but as a normal human being. To enter into our world as a baby needing food and shelter and protection and love just like each and everyone one of us. For God is with us as one of us.

Which means that God knows what we need because God experiences that need in Jesus. So God understands the difficulties, the sorrows, the pains, the emotions of human life not as an observer at a distance but as one of us because God lives human life in Jesus. And that in an of itself is good news but not good news of great joy.

Because the words of Simeon and Anna from our lesson, their excitement about the salvation of God, the light of heaven entering our world isn't simply because God understands our life and existence. No, it is that in Jesus God is coming into our world to change that world. For in our need, in our pain, in our longing, in our fear, God answers by entering into our lives.

The good news of great joy is that in Jesus the power of God comes to be with us. Sharing in our journey through this world as a friend, a companion, and more. For God understands human life but more than that God shares in our lives and, and this is important, God touches our lives with forgiveness, mercy, love, and grace.

And all that God gives to us in Jesus, the hope, the peace, the joy, the love, the salvation, the new life, all that needs to be cared for and nurtured in our

lives just like the baby born in Bethlehem needed to be cared for and needed to grow. Just as Jesus grew so we are to grow in our Christian lives. We are to mature in our faith and discover what we can do and what we should be at this point in our lives. Like Jesus grew in wisdom and strength and found favor with God, we are to grow in wisdom and strength and find favor with God.

And that means taking time in our lives with the Bible to better understand what God wants and who God is as well as challenging us to be better people. Taking time in our lives in prayer to grow closer to God and the people we are called to be. Taking time in our lives for service to others to discover and understand how to love and experiencing being loved. Taking time in our lives to grow as disciples each and every day.

For we are not yet the people God is shaping us to be. So in faith we grow, we learn, we experience our faith. Trusting that God is with us and opening our lives up to God and then, by following the way which Jesus leads, becoming more like Christ with each day. There is always that promise in our lives- of eternal life, of spiritual blessings, of what we can do and be as God's people.

Which is why this quiet reading in the days after Christmas is such a meaningful one for us to hear this day. Because as we look at the year past and wonder about the year ahead we need to be asking ourselves how am I going to grow in faith? How am I going to answer God in my life? How am I going to become the person God calls me to be in the days to come?

Because the Christmas story, the promise of salvation and all that Jesus brings to us and our world, continues with every faithful step we take in our lives to be the people of God for with each step of faith we are part of the salvation Jesus brings to the world.