

# Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



**Luke 2:22-40** And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." <sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." <sup>33</sup> And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed <sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." <sup>36</sup> And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, <sup>37</sup> and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup> And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

I haven't been to most of your houses recently, but I bet I know what is in most of your refrigerators: Leftovers! This is one of the times of year where it seems there's always some good leftovers still hanging around. There was a week or so of leftover turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, mac and cheese from Thanksgiving. And then before you knew it, Christmas came and your fridges were probably re-stocked with the Christmas leftovers. I don't know how you feel about leftovers in general, but I've always really enjoyed holiday leftovers specifically. There's something about eating the same rich meal a few days or a week after the fact, it just sort of brings back all the good memories of the holiday. They serve as a nice reminder of the happiness and rest that you were enjoying just a few days before.

Today, we find ourselves just a few days after Christmas. Just like your refrigerators, we're still enjoying some of the lingering goodies from that special day. It's a long text before us this morning, which means that it will be hard to treat everything in great depth. Instead, let's just graze from the buffet that is before us and enjoy some of the **Christmas Leftovers** as we (I) **Rejoice with Simeon**, (II) **Marvel with Mary and Joseph**, and (III) **Join Anna in Giving Thanks and Witnessing** to others about Jesus' arrival. We can rejoice along the way throughout this Christmas feast, because God intends it all for us.

## Rejoicing with Simeon

As our text begins, Luke has jumped ahead 40 days from Jesus' birth up to His presentation in the Temple. Mary and Joseph made the six mile trip from where they were staying in Bethlehem up the hill into the capital city of Jerusalem. This was all part of God's ceremonial commandments for the people of Israel. After seven days the boy would be circumcised, and then thirty-three days later you were prescribed to bring the child to the temple and offer a sacrifice.

Now, Luke reports for us that at this time living in Jerusalem there was a godly believer by the name of Simeon. Simeon had been waiting for the arrival of His Savior, that's what it means in our text when it says, he was ***"waiting for the consolation of Israel."*** And even though many Old Testament believers before him had been waiting for the same Savior, God saw fit to give Simeon a very special promise: ***"he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ"***—the Anointed One from God.

And that brings us to the events unfolding at the center of our text. The Spirit of God directed Simeon to go into the temple, and through the Lord's help, he saw that 40-day-old bundle in Mary and Joseph's arms, and he knew. There he was! The Consolation of Israel had arrived. He knew that this was the moment that all Old Testament believers going back to creation had been awaiting.

And he showed it too with overwhelming joy. Even though he had missed out on the birthday celebration on Christmas night, it doesn't diminish his joy. He takes the baby Jesus into his arms and praises God with the familiar words which we now call the Nunc Dimittis, which we sing on communion Sundays, so we'll sing it next week: ***"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to your people Israel."***

Even though this child is only five weeks old, that's not what Simeon sees. In this baby boy, he sees the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. Still about 33 years away from the cross of Calvary, Simeon sees that in this boy Jesus, God's plan of salvation is already completed. With that, he's seen everything he needs to see; now he can die in peace having this special assurance that his sins are indeed forgiven.

We too can join Simeon in his rejoicing. Because, like with Simeon, the Lord has told you where you can find Him. You don't have to try to open your mind and wonder if you'll hear him and worry if you don't. You've been told exactly where to look: in the Word of God, after all, Jesus is the Word made flesh. You can also find Jesus in Holy Baptism. Just like that baby in the temple, Baptism doesn't look like much more than a simple application of water. But in God's Word He gives us promise of much more: the gracious water of life through which He saves us! (Titus 3:5-7; 1 Pet. 3:21) And then of course, there's Holy Communion, where many see just plain bread and wine, but Jesus tells us in these elements we find Him. After all, He says, ***"This IS my body. . . This IS my blood."*** (1 Cor. 11:24ff) And even when we assemble in His name, Jesus says He is present with us. (Matt. 18:20) Maybe it's not quite the same as Simeon taking the boy up into His arms, seeing Him and holding Him—but even we're blessed by Jesus' presence all the same.

He comes through Word and Sacrament with the same assurance that God provided for Simeon—that he's accomplished *our* salvation, He's taken *our* load of sin upon Himself and removed *our* guilt forever. Even with Christmas already in the past, we can continue to rejoice, just as Simeon did. Being given the Lord's grace, we can say, ***"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace."***

### Marveling with Mary and Joseph

In Luke 2, we hear a lot about people “marveling” over the Christ-child. During the events of the first Christmas, we heard that all who heard the message of the shepherds, **“marveled at those things which were told them.”** (Luke 2:18) Here at the Temple, 40 days after Jesus was born, we find more marveling. Jumping to verse 33, **“His father and his mother marveled at what was said about Him.”** Kind of strange to find Mary and Joseph marveling at what was said about Jesus, is it not? After all, they already had heard a similar message from the angels and then from the shepherds at the stable.

Well, while it might seem surprising from that standpoint, consider how much time has passed. We’re at the 40 day mark since the manger scene and the arrival of the shepherds. That’s 40 days of taking care of a newborn. That’s 40 days accompanied by many sleepless nights. That’s 40 days of nursing and changing soiled diapers. In those 40 days, it was probably pretty easy for some of the excitement from that first night in Bethlehem to sort of wear off. After all, how many of us are still excited about Christmas gifts on February 2<sup>nd</sup>?

What a blessing for Mary and Joseph to be given this reminder. And so they marvel. They don’t marvel that they’re getting all this extra attention, they marvel at **“what was said about Him.”** They marvel to hear about their baby boy’s worldwide affect. He was not just one who would change the world for their fellow Jews, but who would even light the way out of the darkness of sin for all people!

Let’s marvel right along with them, whether it be 2 days after Christmas or 40 days after Christmas, it doesn’t matter. Because what was said about Jesus is timeless. We can continue to marvel that in this human flesh, God himself rested. That Jesus did not consider his status as God in heaven as something to be clung to, but willingly came down. That as a baby boy, as a child, as a young man—all along the way He knew what He ultimately must do to bring about Your salvation. Marvel that God bore all of our burdens for us, **“that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”** (2 Cor. 8:9) I think we can all agree that this is worth marveling at far beyond Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

### Giving Thanks and Witnessing with Anna

And the fifth person identified in our text is someone that some of our members can relate to very closely. Her name is Anna. She’s 84 years old. She is a widow, one who was only married for seven years before her husband died. She did not spend the rest of her years trying to find another husband or anything like that, instead we’re told, **“She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and praying day and night.”** Just like Simeon, she was an Old Testament believer that was waiting for her Savior to arrive. Even after losing her husband after just a few years of marriage, she did not cease worshiping and serving the Lord.

And like Simeon, she didn’t know anything about what had happened 40 days prior. She knew nothing of the angels, the shepherds, the manger. No angel appeared to her to give her the news. She missed out on any songs of “Glory to God in the highest.” But she evidently saw Simeon holding that child in his arms, **“And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”** Even though Anna missed out on the excitement of the first Christmas, that didn’t stop her from enjoying these Christmas leftovers. That’s because she was waiting for her redemption, and it was finally here. What does she do with her leftovers? She gives thanks and like the shepherds of Christmas, goes to tell others the reason for her joy.

Let's join the widow Anna in doing the very same thing. Maybe you feel like you missed out on some of the Christmas joy this year since the Christmas Eve service was postponed and the Christmas Day service was only online. And yet does that change anything? We can still sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!" He has come for you and He has come for me. We can still rejoice that God loved us enough to give up His own Son for us. We can still give thanks to God for giving us the eyes of faith like Simeon and Anna so that we can see Jesus as not just an inspirational first century story, but as the Son of God and the one who unlocked heaven for us! And we can share that joy too. If you know someone who's struggling over the holidays, you can assure them that the arrival of Christ on Christmas means that their sins have all been forgiven. He is the source of joy for every day of our lives, not just on Christmas, not just when we're young, but our whole life long.

You know, some leftovers actually start tasting better after a few days in the refrigerator. It has something to do with some of the flavors incorporating more, and perhaps there's a few other scientific reasons that I won't pretend to know about. At the very least, you can often enjoy a good plate of leftovers just as much as you enjoyed the original course. We have found that in our text today. We are reminded that the true, lasting joy of Christmas is not in the earthly trappings and visual feasts. It's where Simeon found it, in the Lord's Anointed One. It is in seeing the salvation God has won for us through the Christ-child. It is rejoicing that our consolation, our everlasting comfort has come. It's marveling at all the amazing things that have been said about Jesus, and realizing that they all mean good from God towards us. And it's giving thanks for this and sharing this Christ Child with others.

What a feast the Lord has prepared for us. May we continue to give thanks, rejoice, marvel, and testify that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners, which certainly includes each of us too. Thanks be to God for delivering these wonderful gifts to people like us. Amen.