

CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

KEY POINT

At the temple, Jesus is announced as the savior of the world.

As an infant, the prophets Simeon and Anna marveled at Jesus. Even as a child, Jesus showed wisdom. Through these events at the temple, he is revealed that he is the savior of the world. The story confirms this when it says that Jesus continued to grow in wisdom and God's favor.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:21-38
(Psalm 131)



OPENING PRAYER

Begin your time together with this, or another, prayer:

Lord of all nations, God of heaven and earth, you have brought us here in this time and place to begin our new year with celebration, with hope, and with wonder. Open our eyes and ears today, that we may see and hear your Holy Spirit working in the word and in us. Amen.

READ

Luke 2:21-38

ABOUT THE STORY

Beginning in the very early histories of the Israelite people, there had been hope for radical change. Whenever the people went "off track," forgetting to keep honor for God and love for others as the center of their practice, prophets arose to proclaim God's judgment on their choices—and to get the people to "turn around."

Today, we read the last of Luke's great hymns, Simeon's song of praise (Luke 2:29-32). Like Luke's other great songs by Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and the angels (Luke 2:14), Simeon praises God both for the mercy shown in the past and the promises that will now be fulfilled through Jesus. The people of Israel were greatly oppressed by the Roman Empire who ruled their lands.

The Israelites could not make their own laws, were burdened with heavy taxes and were often surrounded by soldiers and other armed guards, ready to dish out brutality at the slightest provocation. They were forced to comply with a registration that uprooted their lives and left at least Mary and Joseph momentarily homeless. It was a hard life in dark times.

Into that darkness comes the proclamation of "light for revelation" (Luke 2:32) the promise of something new coming through the work of God. For the many Jewish people scattered throughout the countryside and living in Jerusalem, there was great hope that God's promised messenger, the Messiah, would come soon to restore the Jewish nation to its rightful place as rulers of the land and followers of God.

Luke, in writing down the stories of Simeon, Anna, and the reaction of the teachers at the temple sets up this Messiah to surprise us all—a messenger who comes, not with dominating power like the Romans, but as a helpless baby who will become a man who shows the love of God through his work in the world.

SHARE

- What does the word "spiritual" mean to you? What about the word "Spirit-led"? How would you explain these two phrases to someone who had never heard them?
- When have you finally seen something that you waited a long time to witness? What emotions did you experience?

PRAY

Pray this or another prayer aloud together:

God, you are the one who prepares us for all things: for the surprising, the ordinary, the wonderful, the painful. You work in us to shine light on a weary world, and make struggling paths into safe ways. As we go from here, may we be prepared to see your work in the world and to speak with joy and hope of your Son, our Savior, Christ Jesus. Amen.

BLESS

Share this verbal blessing with one another: "Jesus goes with you wherever you go."

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Pay special attention to the children in your life this week. Perhaps send a card to your grandchild, niece, or nephew, or, if you have your own children, do a fun activity with them as a family.
- Take a moment to read Luke 1:57-80. What themes does Zechariah's song share with Mary's and Simeon's songs?

