

**JESUS CHANGED MY LIFE**  
**ANNA & SIMEON - I've Moved from Hope to Fulfillment**  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 5**  
**December 30, 2007**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**  
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements and Offering**

<b>SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful</b> <b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b>	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#114 – Light of the world</b> <b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>SB#103 – Christians awake, salute the happy morn</b>	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful</b>	HC-121	HCD11–T11
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b>	HC-141	HCD13 –T11

**Call to Worship:**

This is a story of faithfulness rewarded, a tale that takes place where happy endings meet hopeful beginnings. Its characters lie neglected on the edges of the Nativity story, just as they were in real life. To find and enjoy this tale is to discover one more gift under the Christmas tree, just when we thought our celebration was complete.

The story begins at the Temple in Jerusalem, one of the world’s busiest places. Armies of priests hurry by, attending to sacred tasks. Pilgrims arrive from all points of the compass, eager to see the spectacle and worship the Lord. Here, within the Holy of Holies, dwells the Spirit of God. Only here can he be truly worshiped, will he hear prayers and accept sacrifices.

And here, of course, a number of local eccentrics are always on hand. Every public

monument has a few. We tend to ignore these characters, people like Anna and Simeon.  
*(Why the Nativity?, page 121)*

[NOTE: It is recommended that either the movie clip *OR* the drama be chosen for the service—*NOT BOTH.*]

### Movie Clip



**Jesus of Nazareth (Distributed by Artisan Home Entertainment)**

Scene 20

**Start:** 59:14 Simeon sitting  
**End:** 57:3 Mary and Joseph walking away

<b>Dramatic Reading: Anna and Simeon—The Quiet Ones</b>
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<b>HC#10 – The Light has Come</b>	HC-10	HCD1-T10
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b>	HC-149	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus</b>	HC-151	HCD14-T11
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#189 – Come Thou Fount</b> (new Christmas words below)	HC#189	HCD17-T19

**Come Thou Fount** (words by Geron Davis, Dave Clark and Tony Wood) 2016 Word Music, Woodspring Music, Tony Wood Songs

God of glory, King of Heaven, for this moment robed in flesh.  
 Prince of power, strength and honor, now contained in tenderness.  
 Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud.  
 Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our mighty God.

Here to break the bonds of evil, here to set the captives free.  
 He will triumph; He will conquer, and deliver you and me.  
 Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud.  
 Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our mighty God.

Let us live with hope and courage through the trials we face in life.  
 He will be our Strength in weakness, our Defender in each fight.  
 Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud!  
 Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our might God.

## Responsive Scripture:

- Leader:** Let's imagine a white-headed fellow working his way down the streets of Jerusalem. People in the market call his name and he waves but doesn't stop. Neighbors greet him and he returns the greeting but doesn't pause. Friends chat on the corner and he smiles but doesn't stop. He has a place to be and he hasn't time to lose.
- All:** "Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he *looked forward* to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him" (Luke 2:25 TLB).
- Leader:** Simeon's one incredible moment occurs eight days after the birth of Jesus. Verse 27 contains this curious statement:
- All:** "Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple."
- Leader:** Simeon apparently had no plans to go to the temple. God, however, thought otherwise. We don't know how the prompting came—but on this side of the event, we understand the prompting. Whether Simeon understood or not, we don't know. We do know, however, that this wasn't the first time God tapped him on the shoulder. At least one other time in his life, he had received a message from God.
- All:** "The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen him—God's anointed King" (v. 26 TLB).
- Leader:** You've got to wonder what a message like that would do to a person. What does it do to you if you know you will someday see God? We know what it did to Simeon.
- All:** He was "constantly expecting the Messiah" (v. 25 TLB).
- Leader:** He was "living in expectation of the salvation of Israel" (v. 25 PHILLIPS)
- All:** He "watched and waited for the restoration of Israel" (vs. 25 NEB).
- Leader:** But he was waiting with anticipation. Calmly expectant. Eyes open. Arms extended. Searching the crowd for the right face, and hoping the face appears today. . . . In the end, the prayer of Simeon was answered.
- All:** "Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God; 'Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace, as you said' (Luke 2:28-29).
- Leader:** One look into the face of Jesus, and Simeon knew the hope of his life had been fulfilled.

**All:** One look into the face of our Savior, and we will know the same.  
*(One Incredible Moment, pages 35-39)*

<b>HC#110 – He is Here</b>	HC-110	HCD10-T10
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**Reading:**

For years people will relive this remarkable day at the Temple. The joyful message comes through channels no one expected—not through the priests or the crowd favorites but through two old, forgotten relics of good old-time religion.

It comes to them simply because they have been faithful. And one more message resonates through this Nativity story that is filled with messages—the moral being that God rewards the faithful. The Christ child is a gift to all, to those in the past as well as the future. But those who know him will tell you that some of the greatest joys of all are imparted to the wise, faithful servants that the rest of us overlook.

*(Why the Nativity?, pages 124-125)*

<b>O Come Let Us Adore Him</b>		No CD
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16

**Congregational Prayers:** (Select 2 people from the congregation to read the following prayers from their seats.)

**Prayer #1:**

Thank you for fulfilling the desire of Simeon’s heart—not only did he see you, but he held you in his arms. And I thank you, Lord, that what Simeon waited a lifetime to see has been revealed for all who will open their eyes. You are the Light of the world. You are the hope of salvation for all who believe. Amen. *(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1375)*

**Prayer #2:**

Lord, your people waited a long time for your deliverance. But your word is true and at last you came with an anointing of truth and power that has lasted to this day. Still you bind up our broken hearts and deliver us from our sinful bondage. You comfort us and

fill us with joy. You restore our losses and give us new purpose and hope. Now we worship and wait once more with faith for you to come again in power and glory. Amen.  
*(The NIV Worship Bible, page 990)*

**Message – I’ve Moved from Hope to Fulfillment**

<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#104 – Who is he in yonder stall</b>	TB-319 – Who is he?	HTD10-T19 (6 vs.)
<b>SB#89 – Silent night!</b>	TB-800 – Stille Nacht	
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19

<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>SB#101 – As with gladness men of old</b>	TB-276 – Dix	HTD11-T3
<b>SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!</b>	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#158 – Who is he in yonder stall</b>	TB-287 – Who is he?	HTD10-T19 (6 vs.)

**Benediction:**

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

<b>Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b>	HC-140	HCD12-T20
<b>SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful</b>	TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings</b>	HC-61	HCD5-T11
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b>	HC-141	HCD13-T11
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b>	HC-149	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus</b>	HC-151	HCD14-T11
<b>SB#112 – It was on a starry night</b>	TB-535 – same	
<b>HC#180</b>	HC-280	HCD16-T20
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain</b>	HC-260	HCD24-T20

<b>Week # 5</b>	
<b>DRAMATIC READING</b>	
<b>Anna and Simeon—The Quiet Ones</b>	
Taken from <i>Christmas Hearts</i> , by Tim Roehl, Barbour Publishing, Inc.	
<b>Topic:</b>	God's promises fulfilled
<b>Scripture:</b>	Luke 2:25-38
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Simeon and Anna wait patiently for the Messiah.
<b>Characters:</b>	<b>Reader 1</b> – Older woman <b>Reader 2</b> – Older man <b>Offstage Voice</b> – Man
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Modern dress.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage.

**Reader 1:** Some people see God when no one else can. They are often the quiet ones, unnoticed on earth but famous in Heaven. While the more flamboyant are figuring out new ways to get people to listen to them, the quiet ones are finding new places to listen to God. While the impatient demand their way immediately, the waiters allow God to bring His best in His time. God delights in taking the quiet ones into His confidence. The Almighty chose to share His greatest secret with two of His patient waiters.

They were old. They had little money and even less influence. The movers, shakers, and power brokers of the Temple never even gave Anna or Simeon a second glance as they hurried from one important meeting to another. Heaven, however, leaned in to listen lovingly to their every prayer.

Anna's name meant "grace." She grew up in a home where worship was as natural as breathing. Her parents gave her a love for God's Word and God's house by the obvious way they lived out their love for Him. Even as a young girl Anna could tell when God was whispering special things to her heart. The Spirit of God found in her a heart that loved His companionship. He found far too few like her. The Spirit delighted in filling her open heart, molding it to reflect her name.

Anna married young. Seeing her husband as a gift from God, every morning for seven years she thanked the Lord for her life companion as she woke up next to him. Like every other young wife in her land, she dreamed of being the mother of the Messiah. Pouring out her love for the Lord and praying for her people continued as a natural rhythm in her life. The Spirit delighted in her prayers and let her know it by pouring His love back into her life. It overflowed easily and noticeably to others. Life was good for Anna.

In the seventh year of her marriage, her dream of a lifetime of love with her mate died when she made the painful transition from wife to widow. In the difficult months of sorrow that followed, she faced decisions that would determine her state of heart for the rest of her life. She could let her grief harden into bitterness. She could blame God for her loss and walk away from Him. She could recognize instead how the curse of sin is indiscriminate when it chooses its victims. She could look for another husband and risk

the consequences of marrying on the rebound of bereavement. Anna's options were many. Swirling emotions could have led her down several paths. The advice she received, both invited and uninvited, was as varied as the number of her self-appointed counselors.

During her season of sorrow, the Spirit held her close to His heart, loving her through her pain, reassuring her that He would never leave her. As the ache of her grief was immersed in God's peace, she knew that of all the options presented to her, only one was right. Anna decided her only option was to choose God's option for her life. Instead of blaming God for taking away her gift, she chose to give her heart to the Giver as the Love of her life. It was a decision she never regretted.

Her singleness led her into a new season of life. She emerged from her season of sorrow deepened, sweetened, and even more dependent on the Spirit who so lovingly took care of her. She found herself drawn to pray as never before, finding a level of intimacy with God beyond any human relationship she had ever known.

The Spirit began to trust her with special messages to give to others. As always, she never called attention to herself, but people who hungered to hear from God often found themselves led to her. For many, listening to Anna pray was a rich experience they remembered long after being with her. They noticed in her an intimacy with the Almighty lacking in most of the professional priests. Anna didn't need applause or affirmation from others, she didn't have a position to protect and was oblivious to religious political games. She simply delighted in pointing people to the Lord she loved so much. Just being with Anna made people want to spend more time with God. Many also left a visit with her with a word from God that specifically and directly applied to a situation no one else knew about. Each time she passed along a message from the Spirit, she felt His smile. That was all the approval Anna ever needed.

Over the years, Anna continued to minister in her quiet, powerful way. Decades passed. Some said she was in her eighties; others thought she had been a widow for over eighty years. Age had ceased to matter for her. Her body showed the outward effects of accumulated decades of time, but her smile sparkled with the timeless love in her heart. She continued to pray. She listened to the voice of the Spirit and shared His heart with others as He set up divine appointments for her.

Her hunger for God to move in her nation intensified, and she found herself spending most of her time in the Temple Court of the Women worshipping, fasting, praying and listening. Anna's prayers were sweet music in Heaven. The Spirit spoke quietly to her, letting her know that her time on earth would not be complete until she visibly saw His greatest gift to her and to her people.

**Reader 2:** Close by in the Court of the Men was another of God's waiters. He, too, was old and had known his share of sorrows during the course of his life. Simeon, whose name meant "listening," was known for his complete devotion and holy lifestyle. Simeon not only listened to the Holy Spirit, he lived out what he heard. Here, too, the Spirit

found a yielded heart all too rare among His people. Simeon also spent much time praying for his people over the course of many years. He too knew the distinct and unique experience of recognizing the voice of God speaking to him. It was a privilege he never took lightly and he experienced it often.

There came a day when the Spirit spoke so vividly and clearly to Simeon that His words became indelibly etched on the old man's spirit. Simeon was praying, as he often did, for "the Consolation of Israel," a common term used to describe God's promised Messiah. Some scoffed at him for even praying like that. After all, there had been no miracle or revelation from God for over four centuries. Religion flowing from the reality of a relationship with a living God had steadily deteriorated into a dead system of rules, rituals, and religious politics. The system was corrupt, God was silent, and the Scriptural promise of a Savior no longer inspired many people. Few could contradict Simeon's integrity, but most could not understand the quality of his spirituality.

In this context Simeon continued to pray, ignoring his detractors. He knew others still prayed as he did. The Spirit made sure His quiet ones knew about each other. Although it was not considered proper for men and women to converse in the Temple courts, Anna and Simeon had a Spirit-initiated connection that led them to quietly encourage each other as faithful listeners to the Spirit's voice.

On that special day, Simeon had been praying as he usually did. Everything seemed ordinary, until his heart sensed the unique stirring when the Spirit had something distinct to share with him. He could never really describe the feeling, because the experience was deeper than an emotion. When the Spirit spoke, He did so on a heart-to-heart basis.

**Offstage:** *Simeon.*

**Reader 2:** The Spirit's voice was quiet but clear.

*Yes, Lord?* came his humble, oft-used response. *Your servant is listening.*

**Offstage:** *Simeon, I have heard your prayers for Messiah to come. I am pleased with them. You have wondered why you are still here on earth even though you are so old. I know you long to join your loved ones here with Me, but I have kept you alive for a special purpose. Simeon, your own eyes will look upon your Messiah. I want to announce My blessing on Him when His parents bring Him to the Temple for His dedication.*

**Reader 2:** Simeon's eyes opened wide as he tried to grasp the Spirit's words. Him? An old man most people had long since stopped noticing? Why should he be so honored among all the men of the nation? He didn't question the Spirit's assignment, he just could not immediately comprehend it. What he did understand, he embraced. What he couldn't comprehend, he entrusted to the Spirit.

*Yes, Lord, it would be my great honor.* Simeon's unspoken words were sweet music in the Spirit's ears. In his heart, Simeon felt the warmth of the Spirit's smile. For him, too, that smile was all the approval necessary.

Simeon expected the special message to precede its fulfillment by only a short period of time. Surely he would recognize the Messiah in just a matter of days, or perhaps weeks! Each time he entered the Temple he took particular notice of all new parents presenting their children for dedication. He continued to listen for the Spirit's nudge.

The dedication of children was a sacred occasion in Israel. Boys were circumcised on the eighth day with the intimate identifying mark of being one of God's chosen people. Later the child's parents were required to bring the child with an offering to "redeem" the child from God. Those financially well-off brought a lamb for sacrifice. Poor parents were allowed to bring two young pigeons. The ceremony was a continual reminder that every child was a gift from God. Parents brought their baby to figuratively return the gift of a child back to the Lord.

The ceremony was also a commitment by the parents to live in such a way that their son or daughter would find it easy to dedicate their lives to God when they could choose for themselves. Ceremonial dedication of children took place daily in the presence of a rabbi, friends, and family. Only the Lord Himself knew the true depth of the parents' consecration at that moment. Time would make visible their true priorities to everyone.

God's timing, however, was not Simeon's. Days became weeks. Weeks turned into months. Months stretched into years. Simeon watched diligently, yearning for the moment the Spirit would speak the identifying word. Through it all he kept praying expectantly. Few knew of his special assignment. Anna knew. Together they waited.

It was an early spring day when Simeon sensed the unique inner stirring of the Spirit's Presence. Something important was about to happen. His heart began to beat faster in anticipation. His spirit seemed to lean forward to listen intently for what the Spirit was about to say. Somehow he knew his years of waiting and listening were about to be over.

***Offstage:*** *Simeon.*

***Reader 2:*** He knew that Voice so well!

*Yes, Lord?* The stirring inside was so strong he was trembling.

***Offstage:*** *Simeon, today is the day. Go to the Temple. Watch. Today your eyes will look upon your Messiah.*

***Reader 2:*** The Spirit was enjoying this immensely.

*Yes, Lord!* The joy of an old listener and the Eternal Spirit blended together. Simeon's joy flowed from a heart whose anticipation was about to be fulfilled. The Spirit's joy

flowed from His pleasure in a faithful man. Suddenly Simeon felt as if God Himself was taking his hand. Together they walked out, hand in hand, toward the Temple.

**Reader 1:** Anna was in her customary place of prayer in the Temple when her heart also heard the familiar stirring of the Spirit. Instinctively she held her breath as she listened. The Spirit spoke. Another waiter eagerly anticipated a divine appointment she had prepared for her whole life.

When Simeon arrived, still hand in hand with the Spirit, his heart raced and his face glowed in anticipation. As soon as he entered the Temple gates, Anna knew Simeon was there even though she couldn't see him.

**Reader 2:** It would not be long now. Simeon positioned himself so he could see every baby arriving in the arms of his parents. What would the parents of the Messiah look like? A couple, obviously wealthy, walked by with their newborn son. Their sacrifice of a lamb meant they were people of means. Them? No. Another husband and wife, members of a priestly family, entered with a baby boy. Perhaps from a line of spiritual leaders . . . still nothing from the Spirit.

Through the door of the Temple court came a young couple. The mother, barely a teenager, lovingly held an infant boy. The husband carried two small pigeons in hands rough from long hours of hard labor. It was obvious they were not wealthy. No one seemed to notice them in the crowd.

Suddenly Simeon's spirit leaped to attention. This unlikely couple? They were poor. They were simple, humble, nondescript people like so many.

**Offstage:** *Simeon.*

**Reader 2:** *Them, Lord?*

**Offstage:** *Yes, go behold your Messiah.*

**Reader 2:** Not far away, Anna was hearing the same words.

The old man wobbled in trembling excitement as he wove his way through the crowd to the young couple. He stopped in front of them, speechless, his sparkling eyes speaking volumes.

Joseph and Mary looked into the face of an old man they had never met, but the expression on his face they had seen before—in the faces of shepherds retelling a story of angelic announcements in wonder-filled amazement. In the faces of Zechariah and Elizabeth after their own son's miraculous birth, and now in the face of this man. He knew.

This old man standing before them with the glow of Heaven on his face knew who they were! More importantly, he knew Who their Son was. Once again, Joseph and Mary were humbled and overwhelmed by the protective care of their Heavenly Father. Then the Spirit whispered to them, and they knew who the old man was. A rabbi would perform a ceremony without a clue as to what he was actually doing, but this old man of God would pronounce God's blessing and know exactly who he was blessing. Simeon was God's choice for this sacred moment.

Joseph turned to Mary. The look that passed between them said it all. Without a word, Mary gently put Jesus into the arms of Simeon. The old man who had waited and listened so long was hold the dream of his heart and the Deliverer of the world in his arms at last.

For a long moment, all he could do was gaze into the infant's face. He was much too full of wonder for words to come, so full he ached with the joy pushing open every door in his heart. This Baby, the Consolation of Israel. The Messiah snuggled close to his heart! Jesus looked into the wrinkled, tearstained face of the old listener, smiled, and reached up to give Simeon's beard a baby tug. Joseph, his arm around Mary, couldn't help but give a proud father's laugh at the sight. Mary stood, eyes glistening, her heart recording every moment. Meanwhile, the Spirit had taken Anna by the hand and was leading her to the three faithful hearts and a Baby.

Simeon brought Jesus near until his bearded cheek nestled the Baby's soft infant cheek. What do you say when God has given you the desire of your heart after years of faithful waiting? Looking up, tears of joy still streaming down his face until they were captured by his beard, Simeon's heart overflowed in worship:

“Sovereign Lord, You can now release Your servant in peace as You promised. With my own eyes You have allowed me to see Your salvation; it's now out in the open for everyone to see! Here is Your Light to reveal Yourself to the Gentiles. Here is the One Who will reveal Your glory to Your people Israel.”

Mary and Joseph stood speechless in wonder at Simeon's words. Still holding Jesus, Simeon reached over and put his hand in blessing on Joseph's head, then on Mary's. As his hand rested on Mary, the Spirit whispered something to him. The words thrilled and pained him at the same time. He knew the words were for Mary, so he told her the Spirit's message. As he spoke, he had the look of a man seeing ahead down the corridors of time:

“This Child's destiny is to bring about the failure and recovery of many in Israel. He will be misunderstood and resented because He will reveal people's hearts for what they really are in God's sight. They will reject Him.” Simeon paused and looked at Mary with deep compassion. “And when they do, the pain of a sword will pierce your heart, too.”

Joseph instinctively held Mary closer, and Simeon's hand seemed to rest protectively on her head. Mary, her eyes wide, nodded slowly. More than thirty years later, those words would come back to her as she stood in front of a Cross—her Son's Cross.

**Reader 1:** Anna had come up to them as Simeon's prophetic words began to flow from his heart. Not wanting to disturb the divine moment, she waited until he was finished and then moved to Simeon's side, her face glowing with the same glory Simeon's face radiated. Mary and Joseph looked into Anna's face, then again at each other.

This old listener knew, too.

Simeon looked down at Anna. Neither spoke, but the two who had waited until the very end of their lives to see the fulfillment of their dreams knew the wait had been worth it. The two aged quiet ones stood with the young parents and their Baby in the middle of the crowded Temple court. Few noticed what took place in that sacred moment there. Few had hearts tuned to the Voice of the Spirit. Few had eyes open to see God when He was right there in front of them.

Only the quiet ones knew. The listeners. The waiters. The ones who let God set the agenda, the time, and the place of their miracle.

Looking down on Mary, Joseph, Anna, and Simeon, the Spirit smiled on them. They basked in the warmth of that familiar Smile.

As it had always been, that Smile was all they needed.

***JESUS CHANGED MY LIFE***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 5**  
December 30, 2007

***Anna & Simeon—I've Moved from Hope to Fulfillment***

**Text:** Luke 2:21-40

How many times have I climbed these steps? Although I'm sure the Almighty hasn't added any extra steps at the entrance to the Temple mount, I'm not sure if He hasn't decided to play a little trick on His old friend Simeon and made them a little steeper each year.

Gracious Lord, I thank you that you have promised I will see your Anointed One before I join my fathers. But Lord, this body You have given me is getting tired. I'm not sure how many more times these legs will be able to carry me up the Temple mount.

May the day you bring consolation to Your people, Israel, come soon. I look with expectation to the day of fulfillment of Your promise; Your day of visitation.

I have a vivid imagination. I can see Simeon making his trip to the Temple; communing with God. Simeon was a man of faith, a man of hope. He faithfully lived in harmony with the Spirit, patiently waiting for God to fulfill His promises.

Hope is a powerful, positive emotion. Doctors tell us people with hope are healthier, happier, and live longer than those without hope. Hope for a better result is what keeps sports fans coming back each year. "Surely our team has to do better this year."

Then there are some who live without hope: Virginia was 19 years old and pregnant when she went to live with her 15th set of foster parents. Her case file read like a textbook example of neglect, abuse and bureaucratic failure. She sat silently in a chair, hands neatly clasped, staring into her lap. The foster parents, whose three children were in school, had been apprised of Virginia's story and promised that this placement would be "temporary" (temporary was the story of Virginia's life). Finally, the foster mother said, "Are you frightened, Virginia?" "Kinda," she replied without looking up. Then, "I've been in lots of homes." "Well," the sympathetic woman tried to reassure the bewildered young mother-to-be, "Let's hope this time turns out for the best." Virginia's reply is one of those statements that sticks to your soul—it was flat, without change of tone and without Virginia even looking up—"It hurts too much to hope."

Can you imagine living without hope? Can you imagine the amount of pain it takes for a person to conclude that it hurts too much to hope?

We who claim Jesus as Savior and Lord are to be people of hope. The corps should be a place where hurting, lonely, and empty people like Virginia are transformed and receive hope as a result of their encounter with those of us who have experienced God's grace in our lives.

On this Sunday morning after Christmas, we are going to look at Simeon and Anna; two people of hope who moved from hope to fulfillment as a result of their encounter with the baby Jesus. You may think it's easier for us to look back on the events of that first Christmas. And in some ways it is; for we who claim Christ as Lord, those events are history and the identity of Jesus as the Messiah is settled. But the fact is:

we are still people of faith. There are many aspects of faith and life, which require us to leap beyond the safety of our logic and into the Father's arms, trusting in His love and plan for us. But what does it mean to be a person of faith, living on this side of the manger? We see some wonderful answers in the lives of Simeon and Anna. As we integrate some of the lessons from their lives, we too can be changed from people of hope to fulfillment.

### **I. A Hopeful Person is Ready**

- A. The person of faith is ready because they know the dynamics of faith.
  - a. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Faith is being certain of what we hope for" (11:1).
  - b. This means living as a person of faith is: knowing what God has promised is already a reality.
  - c. The faith called for in Scripture is never a fuzzy "Oh, I hope it's so" attitude. Faith always has a specific object to which it is directed.
- B. The person of faith is also ready when they know the demands of faith.
  - a. The person of faith orders his or her life to make it possible to recognize God's hand at work.
  - b. Only those who are spiritual can understand. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means."
  - c. People of hope live in harmony with their profession.
- C. The words used to describe a person reveal that person's values and priorities.
  - a. "A people person," "Always too busy to talk to me," "selfish," "makes me feel welcome and important."
  - b. Simeon – righteous and devout (Luke 2:25).
  - c. Anna – worshipped night and day, fasting and praying (Luke 2:37).
  - d. What words would people use to describe you?

### **II. The Hopeful Person is Responsive when they see God at work**

- A. God acts consistently with His nature
  - a. He acts from a basis of Love. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9).
  - b. He acts from a basis of Faithfulness. What He has promised, He will do.
- B. When God does act, people of faith respond in the present.
  - a. Being prepared, and living with a sense of future expectation isn't enough.
  - b. You can probably think of people who are so focused on the future, they become oblivious to God's hand at work today.
  - c. Prompted by the Spirit, Simeon goes to the Temple. When he sees Jesus, he responds from a heart of Faith. He knows God has kept His part of the bargain. Simeon moves from a sense of expectation to a certainty of fulfillment.
  - d. Simeon's response is immediately reinforced by Anna's visit. Anna sees Jesus through the same eyes of faith. Repetition in Scripture is a tool of

emphasis. Here God uses a second witness to drive His message home: Immanuel has come.

- e. How do you respond when you see God at work: with skepticism; with intellectual assent but no personal involvement; or do you leap from hope to faith?

### **III. The Hopeful Person Resonates - inviting others to join the celebration**

- A. The normal response to the Good News (including the Gospel) is to communicate; share it with others. Being prepared, having responded ourselves is not quite enough. The person of faith, when they realize God is at work, wants to share the great news of God's activity with others.
  - a. The shepherds wanted to tell everyone (Luke 2:16).
  - b. Those Jesus healed wanted to tell others (Matthew 9:31; Luke 5:14, 15).
  - c. Remember when you first accepted Christ? You wanted to tell everyone.
  - d. Simeon and Anna make pronouncements about the nature and mission of Jesus.
    - i. In accepting Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise, Simeon proclaims Jesus is the Christ (2:29). Compare this to Paul's view of Jesus as fulfillment of God's plan (Galatians 4:4, 5).
    - ii. Simeon declares Jesus' mission is one of Salvation (2:30).
    - iii. Simeon also declares Jesus' target is Gentile as well as Jew (2:32).
    - iv. Destined to suffer (2:35).
    - v. When Luke says Anna "spoke about the child" (2:38), she was reinforcing Simeon's message.
- B. Communication often implies invitation as well.
  - a. The clear implication of both Anna's and Simeon's communication about Jesus is to invite those hearing to accept their same conclusion: this child is the Christ, Savior and God.
    - i. Think about the impact on those passing through the Temple that day—especially those who knew Simeon's story.
    - ii. Think about the impact and encouragement this would have for Joseph and Mary.
  - b. When you and I share the Good News, we should ask people to take the next step of accepting Jesus as Savior.

One of my favorite Christmas carols is "What Child is This?" Through the song you and I are asked to consider the questions posed and decide who Jesus is—to us and to the world. When we conclude as Simeon and Anna did (not to mention the Shepherds, angels, Magi, Mary, Joseph, and everyone else we've encountered these past several weeks), we can proclaim with the song writer:

*This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the child of Mary.*

Who have you decided Jesus is, and how will you respond this morning?

