

Memorize & Ponder

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
August 4, 2013**

Seeing the Glory of Salvation

**Luke 2:28-32 & Ps 107:1-9
(248, 499, 39, 765)**

Simeon and Anna are remembered by Luke
in the verses leading up to our memory passage
as devout and wise people.
They have focused on understanding what God desires of human beings.
They have lived lives of prayer, worship, study, and service
in companionship with God, others, and themselves.
They know intimately the promises of God
and the ways their people have experienced God's presence and power.
They are wise elders in the faith.

In their day, such elders were revered and honoured.
They were not dismissed and shelved,
as many elderly people feel today.
This tradition of revered and respected elders
Is much more honoured in Eastern cultures,
even in European cultures,
than it is in North America these days.
My hope is that the church is one community
where our sages will be revered
for their contributions to the flourishing of future generations.

But back to Simeon's encounter with Jesus.

As Luke tells the story,
the Holy Spirit has worked within Simeon
so he recognizes Jesus as the Christ,
the Messiah long awaited by devout Jewish people,
the One who will bring the Commonwealth of God to earth
where it will become a force for good in human affairs.

But there is an interesting dimension of this Christ/Messiah.
He is not for the Jews alone.
He will be a light, a revelation, to the Gentiles.
As Luke uses the idea of 'Gentiles'
it refers to all peoples of the world beyond the Jewish nation.

But Jesus also remains the promised Messiah for his own people.
He is the glory or energy of God come into their midst
in the flesh, full of grace and truth.

So, Simeon, an old man steeped in the wisdom of Judaism,
is open to the revelation of the Holy Spirit
that this 40-day old child is the long-awaited Christ, the Messiah
who will initiate the final transformation of human beings
into a community of loving children and friends of the one God
who creates, sustains, and redeems the whole world.

It's hard to say any of this
without using the unique language of the Christian faith.
Words and phrases like 'revelation,' like 'salvation,'
like 'glory of God,' like 'Christ,' like 'Messiah,'
are crucial to telling the story of Jesus with honesty and integrity.
In this person, as Simeon recognizes, God is doing something unique.
God, out of the goodness of God,
is saving the world,
reconciling the world to himself.
He is bringing back into the council or community of the Trinity,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
all creatures and the creation,
're-counciling' with God so the creation will be blessed.
We are being invited to enjoy that salvation
and be part of making it happen.

That is what excites Simeon.
That is what puts Simeon at peace.
That is what makes Simeon ready to move on
to the next dimension of faithful being
and leave Jesus to do his thing.

There are some interesting lessons here
for how to be a Christian in our own day and age,
how to be followers of Jesus who understand and honour his work,
how to be witnesses to the energy of God that is at work in the world
for the world's *Shalom* or well-being.

One lesson is to trust God to relieve us
from serious pain and peril.
That relief may not be the relief we expect or want.
It may demand from us changes in how we think and act
that challenge to their core our habits of living in uncomfortable ways.
But they do reconcile us to God.

Another lesson is to look for the ways God is putting us
into situations where we can flourish
by discovering and expressing our best selves,
the human beings God has created us to be.
These situations may be related to the church,
to our family, to our communities,
to our work, to our world,
to our inner well-being.
These are situations
where using the gifts of the Spirit blossom into fruitful blessings –
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity,
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control or discipline.
(Galatians 5:22-23)

Yet another lesson is cultivate our relationship with God.
We do this through prayer, praise, learning, being with others, and being for others.
All of these things heal and nourish our inner beings,
That place of soul within each of us
where we meet Jesus, the Christ,
who dwells lovingly at the core of our beings.
This is the kind of devotion and wisdom that Simeon and Anna were given.
It can take many forms,
emerge from many kinds of spiritual discipline.
But it always centres our lives in our friendship with Jesus, the Christ.

These lessons –
trusting God, being aware of where God enables us to flourish,
and cultivating our relationship with God
through the disciplines of the Christian life –
all prepare us to go into the world and bless it.

That's how the glory or energy of salvation spreads.
Each of us takes our devotion and learning
into our multiple relationships in the world
and be for those we encounter some small part of the Christ.
The Spirit then works with all those parts
and weaves them together into Commonwealth of God.

*May the Spirit take these ponderings
and provoke in all of us
a witness of love and good deeds.*

Written by
The Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser
Minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Burnaby, BC