

# Behold! Two Faithful Parents

## Luke 2:21-24, 39-40

### Introduction

All throughout this Advent Season, and now continuing on into the Christmas season, we have re-telling the birth story of Jesus. We have three more sermons in this series. In two of those sermons Jesus will still be a baby (or a young child, depending on how you time the arrival of the Wise Men). Along the way, of course, we have been looking for a word:

### BEHOLD!

That word will become scarce now. In fact, it does not appear in the portion of the text that I read for you just now. It does appear however in the verses I skipped. Before pointing it out, let me set the context.

As you heard, Mary and Joseph were required by the Law of Moses to take their firstborn son to the Temple when he was eight days old. This was done so that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in His life. This was so important, that nothing in that culture took precedence over that. Eight days. Exactly. Non-negotiable.

While there, this young family would meet two old saints: Simeon and Anna.

Anna was a long time widow. Her husband had died 80 years before the events described in Luke 2. As a widow she devoted herself to prayer and ministry in the Temple. On this occasion she brought a word of blessing to Joseph, Mary and Jesus. I imagine she had done a similar thing to hundreds of other families over the years. But on this occasion, on seeing the baby Jesus, the text records these words:

*And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)*

We don't know how old Simeon was, but based on what happens here we believe he too was well along in years. He probably didn't spend every day at the Temple like Anna did. But he did have a special revelation from God that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

*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. (Luke 2:26)*

On this day at least, he was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to the Temple. Which he did.

*He came by the Spirit into the temple... (Luke 2:27)*

He saw the baby Jesus. He knew this was the Promised Messiah. He took the baby in his arms and rejoiced that God had done what He had promised, and that he (Simeon) got to see Him. After blessing God (with a hymn we now call "Nunc Dimittis" which means "Now dismiss me), Simeon utters the "behold." Notice TO WHOM the "Behold" is directed.

*And Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and as a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35)*

The "behold" is directed to the parents. So, what do we need to see? Three observations:

### **OBSERVATION #1: THEIR FAITH WAS SEEN BY OTHER BELIEVERS**

We refer to verse 22:

*Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ... (Luke 2:22)*

Mary and Joseph were faithful people. They would not have been chosen by God to be the earthly parents of His Son if they had been anything but faithful people. The angel greeted Mary as one who had found God's favor:

*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. (Luke 1:30)*

And Joseph was known to be a righteous man, so righteous in fact that he didn't even considered stoning Mary – which would have been his legal right:

*And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. (Matthew 1:19)*

So it is not unexpected that we see them in the Temple, doing exactly what God expected His people to do when their firstborn son was eight days old.

The Psalm we read today – Psalm 127 – portrays a family like God intends the family to be. Listen again to how that psalm begins:

*Unless the Lord builds the house, they who build it labor in vain ... (Psalm 127:1)*

We hear a lot of chatter about how the family unit is the cornerstone of a great society. That is true to a point. The future of our world depends on faithful families. Moms and Dads who are anchored in the Christian faith, who can be found doing what God asks of them and who themselves find favor with God.

## **OBSERVATION #2: THEIR FAITH WAS BOLSTERED BY OTHER BELIEVERS**

In verse 33 – a verse not read as part of today's text – we read these words:

*And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. (Luke 2:33)*

When Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth's house before the birth of Jesus – remember the John the jumping baby? – Elizabeth poured out a blessing on her:

*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (Luke 1:42)*

When the shepherds came, excited that they had been given first notice of the birth of the Messiah, we are told:

*But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)*

Mary and Joseph did not live their faith on an island, even though they were raising a special child. Their life was within the community of faith, and that community supported them and built them up.

It was John the disciple who cared for Mary when Jesus died. And when the 120 faithful Christians were gathered in that room waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit, Mary was present with them:

*All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)*

The Apostle Paul, writing to young Timothy, reminded him how the community of faith had contributed to his own spiritual development.

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

That continues to be my biggest burden during these COVID days. The politicians and medical professions keep calling out for us to “isolate.” And when they do, I cry out “connect!” I get how disease is spread, but I also know how faith is transmitted. It is the faith of other believers that builds us up and helps us grow.

I pray earnestly for you as you make the decisions you deem best at this point in time. Please know that I support you in the decisions you make. But please know I am burdened about your faith, too.

### #3: THEIR FAITH WAS TRANSMITTED TO THEIR CHILDREN

Look at verse 40:

*And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him. (Luke 2:40)*

That was written about Jesus obviously. But we also know that the siblings of Jesus were people of faith too.

- As you saw earlier, the brothers of Jesus were gathered with the disciples awaiting the Holy Spirit.
- One brother would become the leader of the early Christian church, and would be martyred for that role.
- Two brothers would write books of the New Testament

Timothy, cited earlier, was the child of a believing mother and grandmother. And throughout the ages men and women of faith have credited their faith to the faith of their parents and grandparents. I am one of those people.

#### APPLICATION

So what does this all mean? And how does it apply to our lives today? Let me make two applications:

1. To every parent and grandparents listening to my voice ... Please do not neglect your faith.
  - No matter what the pressures of the world around you might be.
  - You might build them into world class athletes, successful executives, scholarly thinkers, but every one of those things lasts only as long as life lasts.

That is what the Psalmist mean when he said that if God is not doing the building, you are wasting your time.

2. To every person associated with this church ... Please do not neglect our corporate responsibility to support the efforts of our parents as they endeavor to bring up their children in the faith.
  - Pray regularly for those who carry the responsibility for teaching our children – and volunteer to be one of them.
  - Pray for and speak to the young people of our church, and their parents. Encourage them in their efforts.

Amen.