

Luke 2:21-38

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

²¹ When the eighth day came, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²² 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

²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in JERUSALEM whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your **salvation**,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke :: is one of the four gospels. Only in two (Luke and Matthew) is the story of the birth of Jesus told in detail. Luke’s gospel is written according to tradition by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul. Our reading today is a story told only by Luke.

the eighth day | Samuel 2:1-10 :: Biblical Scholars point to the close connection between Mary’s song and that of Hannah (at the birth of Samuel) in 1 Samuel 2. The connection is in both the themes and the specific vocabulary employed.

their purification according to the law of Moses :: this points back to the ritual established in Leviticus 12: 1-6 :

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the Israelites, saying:

“If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³ On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing or come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. ⁵ If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days.

⁶ “When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtledove for a purification offering.

TO JERUSALEM:: the capital city, where the Temple was.

Jerusalem means the city “JERU–“ of peace “–SALEM”. The temple was thought to be the unique place in the world where heaven and earth touched and overlapped. Hence it was the place and space to go to encounter the presence of God in prayer, worship and ritual. It was a city whose history is laden with promise and also suffering. It was dominated by the occupying Roman power, longing for freedom, and the hope of a different future and God-given liberation.

a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- What do I (or we) want & need to let go of & leave in 2023?
- What doesn't serve me (or us) well to carry into 2024?
- Are there things to leave in 2023, things to shake off and stop carrying around?
- What is it there to pick up and live into for 2024?
- Where & how will we share our voices and power for good, justice and peace- for ourselves & for others?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

“There Should Be More Rituals! The small acts that keep a society together” by David Brooks. The New York Times. April 22, 2019. [nytimes.com/2019/04/22/opinion/rituals-meaning.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/22/opinion/rituals-meaning.html)

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

salvation:: σωτήριος, pronounced /sótérios/: meaning saving, bringing salvation, deliverance (as in freedom).

amazed:: θαυμάζω pronounced /thaumazó/ meaning to wonder, marvel, admire, be amazed. Used in Mark 12:17 "Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly *amazed* at him." And also in Luke 1:63 "Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of the people were *amazed*."

Reflecting upon the role of Rituals in our life together:

In a New York Times article, David Brooks writes:

“Rituals provide comfort because they remind us we’re not alone. Billions of people have done this before as part of the timeless passages of life. Rituals also comfort because they concretize spiritual experiences.”* While joy is not necessarily a prominent emotion named in this story, we might imagine that Mary and Joseph are bolstered by the community that surrounds them as they dedicate their child. In this ritual act, they are connected to their ancestors of the past. Through the words of the prophets Simeon and Anna, they are connected to those in the future. As they internalize the fullness of Jesus’ calling, they are not alone. Consider all the ways rituals can connect us—to those in the past, present, and future, as well as to the community who bears witness to the ritual. What rituals foster deeper connection?

Today is New Year’s Eve Day. A moment filled with many cultural and family rituals, ranging from special meals (like black eyed peas or tamales) to wearing white or polka dots, or making resolutions. These rituals and traditions help to remind us, like baptism, communion, and memorial services, who we are and how we are together. Some of these are universally shared by people who follow Jesus some are unique to our community such as “letters of love,” chocolate kisses at Christmas, giant post-it notes. What rituals of our shared community life speak most to you?