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Luke 2:22-40  
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“Temple Meets Tabernacle”

Grace and peace...

Christmas was five days ago, which means from a retail perspective, we can expect Back to School shopping anytime now. For us who actually care about the church calendar, this is actually the Christmas season. It's a chance to consider the details of the early life of our Savior. In Luke 2, we are already on Day 40. The fortieth day marks a milestone in the life of Jesus for it is the day of purification for Mary and consecration for Jesus. That means going to the temple. So this is a significant event: we have the Jesus, as the Word made flesh, God Incarnate dwelling with his people. He has tabernacled among his people. He is the tabernacle who goes to the temple. You know there'll be spiritual fireworks and there are with Simeon and Anna. If their response to Jesus was proper then, how should we respond to Jesus today?

In our model of discipleship, we know there are different levels or spheres of response. Discipleship is head, heart, hands. We should lock that in if we haven't already. If we need information, there's something here to put in our heads. But if we need transformation, then we can ask God right now to work in

our hearts. And if we need to take action, then we should respond with our hands and actually do it.

So as for information, according to Leviticus 12, childbirth rendered the woman unclean. If she had a boy, the time before she could be declared clean again was 40 days. If she had a girl, the time was 80 days. I don't think that lines up with Title IX, but hey, it's Leviticus! Further, the law said to "bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, and he shall offer it before YHWH and make atonement for the mother. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take **two turtledoves** or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean" (Leviticus 12:6-8).

The sacrifice to be brought to and offered by the priest was either a lamb, or two turtledoves (hence the verse of the song, 12 Day of Christmas) or two pigeons. This humble sacrifice of two turtledoves, still permitted by the Levitical law, is an indication that Joseph and Mary were poor. That tells us the Magi hadn't caught up with them yet.

Joseph and Mary are greeted by Simeon. Luke tells us that Simeon is righteous and devout. He had been waiting for the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and He had shown Simeon that he would see the promised Messiah before dying. Simeon is under the influence of the Spirit when he comes into the temple, and he somehow scoops this kid up in his arms and blesses God. And then, Simeon says to Mary, *“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed<sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”* This is called foreshadowing. It’s an event that is so powerful, Simeon basically says, “I’m ready to die now. That was all I was waiting for!”

I don’t know what events rise to that level—maybe it’s seeing your kids grow, your grandchild graduate, or maybe even welcoming a great grandchild. Maybe it’s finishing a major task in life—you’re life’s opus. Sometimes we don’t see the significance of the event at the time, but this one comes close. My family and I went skiing at Bogus Basin on Friday. We needed a third person for the chair lift because they like to fill the chairs up so the line goes faster. So the worker yells out, “Single rider!” and this guy out of nowhere who looks a lot like David Banker, because it is David Banker, joins us. To ride in a ski lift with David

Banker, that's as close as I can get to what Simeon must have felt. Now I can die in peace, Lord!

Simeon is happy because his mountain top moment is knowing salvation has come for all people. He even comes right out and says it. Don't go all churchy and Nunc Dimittis on me and miss this. Simeon caused a scene. He says,

<sup>30</sup> *...my eyes have seen your salvation*

<sup>31</sup> *that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

<sup>32</sup> *a light for revelation to the Gentiles,*

*And for glory to your people Israel."*

I mean, think of it. Here we are in the capital of Judaism, in the Temple. Simeon said the name of the reviled Gentiles out loud, practically shouting it! That was certainly a taboo thing to do. It's like swearing in church or something like that. But the Gentile emphasis is there, front and center, from the very beginning! Jesus is Savior of the whole world.

Now, what about Anna? She is an 84 year old widow and prophetess. She is from the tribe of Asher. The Bible tells us that she did not depart from the temple, but worshiped and fasted and prayed night and day. Apparently, there was a crowd of faithful people there, watching and waiting for the Messiah.

We don't know what she said, but we know all we need to know because of where she's from. She's the daughter of Phanuel, from the tribe of Asher. Who is Asher? Asher was one of Jacob's twelve sons, son #8. So Asher was also the name of one of the Twelve Tribes. The tribal boundaries didn't exist at this point; but it's very interesting that Asher is the territory up north, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in Phoenicia, where Tyre and Sidon are—Gentile country. That might ring some bells because Jesus goes there in his ministry. Anna is from Gentile territory.

Simeon and Anna—two devout Jewish believers forecast for us hope for the Gentiles! These are great details provided by us exclusively by the only Gentile author of the Bible, Luke. That's good information. But what does it mean for your heart?

God is faithful to His promises. He promised a Savior and He kept that promise. This is what "my true love gave to me" and your true love gave to you. This gift is for you. There's nothing to do. It's done for you. We simply receive the gift of Jesus given to us and appreciate the Giver all the more.

Yet for so many people they know about the gift of Jesus and yet they have Him sitting by the door to be returned. Nothing is wrong with the gift. They just don't like how He will cause them to live their lives differently. So they don't

want it. Or for others, perhaps the more nominal believer, they will keep the gift of Jesus, but they never spend time with Him.

But a good gift is one that says, "It's exactly what I needed! He knows me so well!" It's the gift we talk about for days, the one that even defines the holiday. It's a gift that we enjoy and use again and again, recognizing how it's made our lives complete. That's what Simeon and Anna did. They recognized and rejoiced at the Gift. Simeon scooped that kid up in his arms. Anna worshipped. They publicly and privately proclaimed the hope of the world. And this is still our message today.

The Temple will meet the Tabernacle again, probably every year at least, as Jesus grew. We know of these experiences when Jesus is age 12, again when He is a rabbi in his thirties. Each encounter is unique and different. With every encounter, more lives are changed as people meet Jesus. We want people to know Jesus, but we don't have a 40 day old Jesus like Simeon did. Our way of encountering Jesus is different for He has chosen to locate Himself and be found in His people who together are His temple. We have Jesus with us, in us, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the single factor that determines whether or not we can be at peace and truly be ready to die. **Once someone knows Jesus, they really are ready to depart this world. But if they don't know Jesus, they aren't**

**ready to depart.** So how can we arrange so people can meet Jesus? People are going to meet Jesus in the Word and through the Spirit but they're also going to meet Jesus as they encounter the temple of God's people. But this happens best when it's intentional encounter that we call discipleship. If we want people to know Jesus, we can't just tell them, we have to disciple them. That means showing them. That takes hands. Discipleship is meant to be our life work for this is how people today meet Jesus and are transformed by Him.

In Jesus' name, Amen.