

December 28, 2025, presented by Pastor Kath

Announced by the Holy Spirit

Luke 2:22-40, Hebrews 2:14-18

In the tradition that I was raised, my parents brought me, as an infant, to church to be baptized when I was not quite a month old. I did the same for all three of my children, when they had no idea what was happening.

In the Baptist tradition, we don't baptize infants, but we certainly dedicate our children to God, acknowledging that they are precious gifts He has sent us. By dedicating them, we vow to God that we take our responsibilities, our commitment seriously: to care for them, to teach them, to love them – to raise up these beautiful gifts so they too would love God, to help them understand what we believe as parents and to grow to accept that faith, while becoming compassionate people. It's a covenant, a promise, between ourselves and God. And those who are present witness this promise, share in the responsibility and they promise to encourage and support the family.

Not long ago, we read about the adult baptism of Jesus by John. We heard that the Holy Spirit came down upon Him and God declared Jesus His Son. But this wasn't the first time that the Holy Spirit announced Jesus to be the Son of God.

Jesus' arrival was announced by the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 7:14, *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with Child and will give birth to a Son, and you will call Him Immanuel.”*

In today's gospel passage, following the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord when He was one month old. This is part of the reason we dedicate our babies at such a young age.

At the time of Jesus' birth, parents would bring their first-born sons and offer two pigeons or two doves, representing the “purchase” of their child from God, recognizing that their child rightfully belonged to God. It was common for parents to bring their infant sons to the temple, so to everyone else who was there – nothing unique or special is happening.

While Mary and Joseph are at the temple, they see Simeon, who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die without first seeing the Lord's Messiah – Jesus. That's the passage we heard today.

We live in a world that wants instant gratification, that has forgotten the definition of patience. And here we have Simeon, who has been waiting expectantly and patiently all of his life and now has been guided by the Spirit to go into the temple at the exact same time as Mary and Joseph arrive.

We aren't promised that we will see Jesus before we die, but we are promised that we can be with Him in Heaven if we choose to accept Him as our Savior, turning from our sins and living for Christ. Jesus knocks on the doors of our hearts, but we must choose to open the door and welcome Him in.

Simeon believed the Spirit's promise and knew, after waiting a lifetime, that he could now die in peace, for he had seen his Savior. Forget just “seeing” ... Simeon held that baby, his Savior, in his arms – and he praised God!

I love holding a baby in my arms, looking down at that miracle of life. I cannot even imagine what it would be like to hold that cuddly body and look on the face of the baby Jesus!

Just as Simeon believed, we must also believe the Holy Spirit's promise, that we can have salvation through Jesus Christ and only through Jesus Christ!

Simeon felt a presence guiding him into the temple that day. Sometimes we hear a quiet voice within our heads that encourages us in our decisions, that guides us when we're lost, that comforts us when we feel alone. That's the presence of the Holy Spirit, letting us know that we have not been abandoned, that there is a promised future for us with God. We are encouraged to leave behind our old ways and to walk with Jesus. We are encouraged to follow the path God has set for us – sometimes it's a ministry, sometimes it's a career, sometimes it's a relationship, sometimes it's a badly needed place of calmness.

The Holy Spirit is the most difficult of the three parts of the Trinity to understand. But we can be confident that the Holy Spirit was sent to work in our hearts.

Romans 8:26-27 say “... *the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*”

We are not left to our own resources to cope with our lives. We can claim what we have been promised, and just as Simeon and Anna never lost hope to experience what they had been promised, we can have that hope, too.

Simeon spoke up about whom he knew Jesus to be. He said “*my eyes have seen your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*”

Simeon looked at the infant Jesus and knew He was the One who was promised. Simeon understood who Jesus would become because the Holy Spirit had announced it.

And Simeon confidently declared Jesus to be his Savior. He said that Jesus would be the Savior not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well!

We must also be ready to be witnesses, with the power of the Spirit as our Guide. In Acts 1:8, Jesus says to His disciples, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”

The Holy Spirit gives us power beyond the ordinary – we are given courage, boldness, understanding, confidence, abilities and the words to use. These are traits we can all claim and that I’ve certainly experienced in my life – a life that’s been filled with drastic changes as I have grown in Christ.

Matthew 10:20 lets us know that when we are witnessing about Jesus, when we are teaching, when we are giving advice, when we are sharing words of encouragement, it is the Holy Spirit that makes the hearer listen and believe, not ourselves – that’s not our job. “*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*”

This is what Simeon was joyfully doing – witnessing about what he knew of Jesus – this little baby that would grow into his Savior. He told Mary and Joseph who this Child was destined to be, and they were amazed by his words!

We must allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. We have to accept the Spirit’s guidance in being good witnesses for Jesus Christ.

As Simeon did, allow the Holy Spirit to take up residence, to live within you, accepting a joyful life filled with the Spirit’s presence, accepting the gift of encouragement and obeying His voice.

Today’s passage also speaks of Anna, a prophet who never left the temple, dedicating her life to worshipping, fasting and praying. She, too, spoke of what she knew of Jesus – the Redeemer of Jerusalem. She only has three sentences written about her – but we hear of a faith-filled woman spreading the word of Jesus’ destiny! We hear of a woman who spent all of her time desiring to be in God’s presence through prayer and worship – who’s great faith was rewarded with a glimpse of the promised Messiah.

She is an example we should all follow. Knowing that God is not only in the temple, that He is everywhere, we can continue to live our lives prayerfully and worshipfully, with Anna as a model. Like Simeon and Anna, we have to allow the joyful news of Jesus Christ to bubble up inside of us and spill out for all the world to hear and to rejoice with us!

The Gospel passage says: “*When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they (Joseph, Mary and Jesus) returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.*”

We know that after a year or two, the Magi would follow a star, and come to worship Jesus, bringing the family gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. King Herod will become extremely jealous and paranoid about this new king that has

been born, sending his soldiers to find and kill Jesus, so angels will come to Joseph to warn him and tell him to take his family and flee to Egypt until they are safe.

But this passage ends with, *“The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.”*

I cannot finish today’s message without looking at the passage from Hebrews 2, verse 17: *“For this reason, He (Jesus) had to be made like them fully human in every way, (some versions say “like his brothers and sisters in every respect”), in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.”*

As we head into a new year, we will hear more of Jesus becoming fully human so that He could take our sins to the cross, paying the price for those sins – while He was pure and sinless.

But this will be the message: No matter our sins, we can have faith that God loves us and we can be forgiven. Like Simeon and Anna knew, no matter our sins, God calls us to accept His Son and the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. No matter our sins, the shedding of Jesus’ blood can wash us clean – if we make the choice to fling open the doors of our hearts and joyfully welcome Him in! Amen.