

The trio walked along the dusty path to the Temple Mount. It was their bounden duty to bring the child here. It was her bounden duty to be purified. And so, they journeyed into the city. They joined all who had business at the temple. The rites must be performed. God's law must be obeyed.

Another day in Jerusalem.

They weren't alone. There were the vendors selling animals for sacrifice. Joseph had purchased two doves to offer in thanksgiving for "his" son. There were others, with other sacrifices: grain, lambs, and more, all offered to appease Yahweh for sins or thank him for harvests (or pray for the harvests to come).

Watching the movement of people and animals from the place he'd claimed for his own was Simeon. Simeon was an old man. His productive days well in the past, Simeon spent his time praying for the consolation of Israel. He believed the prophetic visions of Isaiah. At some point, the chosen one would appear. He just had to be patient.

The Spirit had told him that he would see the reconciler of Israel in his lifetime.

But, he knew that time was ticking.

More and more, his time was spent in the Temple, because he didn't want to miss what he had been promised. But on this particular day, Simeon wasn't there. On this particular day, the Spirit moved Simeon to go to the Temple.

He went. And there He was.

I wonder. Was Simeon surprised to see a baby? Wouldn't it have made more sense to see a young rabbi walk into the Temple? Perhaps. But, it was obvious to Simeon that this Family was indeed Holy. He made his way over to them.

And, then, something amazing happened. It may not have been so amazing in that century, but I doubt highly that an old man could walk up to a woman in a worship space today, grab her baby, and proceed in a loud voice to give thanks to God. It's not according to Safe Church practices.

Now, it's not in our gospel today, but there was another person in this scenario.

Her name was Anna. Anna had been a widow for over 50 years. She too was an old woman. Unlike Simeon, she never left the temple. Hers was a life of continual prayer. She also recognized the child for who he was to become. Her praises joined those of Simeon's.

But, this wasn't just a love fest. There were revelations spoken. Revelations that we, who know the end of the story, know full well. Mary would not be unscathed. Her heart would be pierced with sorrow. Some thirty years later, with Joseph long gone to sleep with his ancestors, the community that welcomed them into that sacred space would turn her Son over to the Romans.

I sat with this text this week placing myself in the role of Simeon. How well would I have been waiting for the Lord? Could I have come to the house of God nearly every day in hopes of seeing a child who held the promise of salvation. Could I be attentive enough, ready enough, to seek the One who was and is to come?

Then I realized that God didn't want me envisioning myself in the position of Simeon. No, give up that 'old person' metaphor in your head. In my meditations I began to see myself as a child in my mother's arms. Or, as God's child in the arms of my sacred parent. In my imagination, God took Simeon and Anna's place. God took me into God's arms and proclaimed that I was God's very own.

God had been waiting for me. God is always waiting for us.

This day, we come to this holy place, dragging with us the dust of our lives' road.

We may be here to do our bounden duty. We may be here because we are seeking something greater than ourselves. We may be here because we need a healing touch, a warm welcome, or a familiar face. No matter why we are here, God has come to meet us.

“Welcome, welcome,” God says. “You are my beloved child. Come to my table. Eat the bread. Drink the wine. Become the body of my Son and be a light to the world.”

But we cannot forget the words of Simeon. Holding the Christ Child in our hearts and souls is an invitation to sorrow. That’s why we need each other. When the burdens and sorrows become too much to bear, we have others to hold us up. We have each other to speak the truth – that God is faithful, strengthens us, and loves us deeply.