

## The Presentation of the Lord - February 2020

### The Coming of Christ Was to Simple Folk!

I have an embarrassing confession to make. I realized only a few days ago what Luke is trying to do in this text. For years I had read it and made the unwarranted assumption that old Simeon was a priest. Anna is described as a prophetess so I assumed Simeon a priest -- good balance and symmetry.

But something about the text kept nagging me. And then I realized what it was. Simeon was not a priest at all. He was a simple old man -- a layman -- an ordinary person. And Anna was not an official prophetess. She was merely a devout old woman who came to the temple a lot.

Luke was only underlining a point he had begun to make by telling about the shepherds who were called from their fields and flocks to worship Christ: The coming of Christ was to simple folk! Luke, did you notice, doesn't even tell the story of the wise men; that's Matthew. Luke's whole concern, in the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus, is to emphasize one thing: Christianity is based on the faith of simple folk.

Come to think of it, that's what Luke's whole Gospel is about. It's what the book of Acts is about. Luke wrote the book of Acts. It wasn't the priest and Pharisees who received the Kingdom of God, it was the laypeople, the untutored, the untrained, the unsophisticated. It was simple fishermen like James and John and Peter.

It was unimportant public officials like Matthew. It was women like Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene. Christianity my friends, has never been a religion of Priest and theologians, minister's and teachers; from the very beginning it has been a religion of devout men and women with no claim whatsoever to professional expertise about their faith.

This is important to remember. God never intended the church to be an organization of ministers. What he did intend it to be is an organization of laypersons, all "righteous and devout" like old Simeon, all devoted to fasting and prayer like old Anna, and all ready, in simple faith, to receive his Kingdom and rejoice in it. Ministers, in Christianity, are expendable; good, simple folk

are not! (by James W. Cox from *The Minister's Manual 1995*, New York: Harper, 1994, p. 275.)

### A Sight for Certain Eyes

The boy Jesus was a powerful and expected sight for certain eyes born of devout and unwavering faith. It has been said that Harriet Tubman was known to wait in train stations without the aid of train schedules or knowing when the train was coming.

When asked why she would do that, she simply said because she knew the train was coming.

In an age where people want to know, in an age of GPS, in an age of PDA's and all information load, this may sound strange, but what does it mean to wait without a schedule but to be certain that the train is coming? Could it be that Tubman knew that the station was the place to be when waiting for coming trains?

Might it have been that Tubman recognized that the tracks had already been laid outside the station for traveling beyond where her stationed eyes could see?

Likewise, Simeon and Anna were stationed in the very place, the temple, where certain eyes were able to see and recognize the boy Jesus for who he was and is--the Messiah! We know that not all would or could not see Jesus as the Messiah. Experience had clouded their expectation, but this text calls us to expect to experience and to express what the Lord has shown us in the midst of all else.

The world would not recognize him as the Messiah, certainly not a man on a donkey from an off-the-beaten-path like Nazareth. What a word!!! What a sight to see consolation and redemption in a baby that was yet gurgling. How it must have been for Joseph and Mary to see and hear what they heard!

The text says that they were amazed! (by Ozzie Smith from *A Sight for Certain Eyes*)