



MINISTER
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First Sunday After Christmas
January 1, 2006

Luke 2:22-34

Simeon's Wisdom

Intro to reading: Our reading this morning comes right after the Christmas story in Luke. Forty days have passed, Jesus is being presented in the temple, and Mary is coming to be purified after having given birth. So the family has come to Jerusalem.

There is a story told of a preacher who put

While they received the chance that was promised to them and left the temple with a sense of fulfillment, their prophetic words brought both hope and sorrow to the parents. Simeon had spoken so wonderfully about this child's future that the parents are amazed.

Then Simeon blessed them, and his words spoke of the cost of discipleship. He told of the difficult road before all of them. And to Mary he says "A sword will pierce your own soul too." Mary may not have known that he meant the parent will bury the child. That is not the way things are supposed to be. But for Jesus and Mary this is what will be. The coming of hope also will mean sorrow.

Simeon words remind us that there is suffering in the midst of Christmas. Pain is a reality at this time of year. We often expect so much out of Christmas that the pressures can lead many to depression, or exhaustion. Some truly dread the annual return of the holidays.

Sometimes as our heaviness of heart is comforted by others, at those times we see the hope that comes with the love of Jesus. It may be in the outpouring of love from families, or friends that lend an ear, or offer a hand to us as we are feeling down that we see reflections of God's love for us. Jesus was born in a place of poverty, to a poor family. It is into places of darkness and need, that comes the light.

We will all have times when our Christian faith causes us pain. When Jesus shows us something in ourselves that should be

changed; when we face a confession or a duty that might not even occur to us if we weren't Christian. Sometimes pain is part of the process of entering a new level of life. Jesus came to make a difference, and sometimes change involves pain. A modern day prophet might say "the truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable."

A woman in our story who know misery was Anna, a poor widow. She would be at the bottom of the social heap. In that culture, a widow with no male relatives had no protection at all. She had almost no rights at all. Yet she is the first person to go out and tell people about the Good News of Jesus. Literally she is the First evangelist. Although, her years were advanced and she had seen so many years of hardship. She did not give up the hope, that the promises were true. God would some day send a savior. and she would live to see this. Her eyes were not dim to this possibility and she recognized it when she saw it.

May we, have the strength to hope for what is yet to be, in our lives, may that hope see us through all our days. It is a new year, it is a new day. Look for signs that God's grace is here! Amen.