

Meditations / monologues

Simeon and Anna – those who are watching, see

Over the past few years, the Sanctuary has gradually been growing its collection of meditative monologues, especially for Christmas and Easter. We love the practice of imagining ourselves inside the stories and heart-posture of some of the key Biblical figures who welcome, serve, and follow Jesus and his priorities – and using this prayerful experience of bringing to life their potential inner wrestles and sacrifices as a gate way to deeper worship and obedience ourselves. (Find the full set at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-seasonal)

As we turned to explore the extraordinary encounters with Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:29-40 again, we were struck by just how much their faithful, listening hearts and trust-filled, whole-hearted focus on God in can teach us. Both lived through times of violence that must have felt devastating, chaotic and confusing. And Anna, at the very least, suffered significant, personal loss. But they both devoted their lives to waiting, watching and praying for their people's Messiah to come – clinging on in trust to the promise. Neither were priests or religious leaders, and one of them at least may well have been on the fringes of society. But both were used by God to confirm again the true identity of the child Mary and Joseph brought to the temple that day. And both were beautifully rewarded with the greatest treasure hearts so set on God could receive – they saw Jesus!

Whether you use the following meditations individually, or share them by dramatising them for a group, or as part of a service, you can reflect on just one of the characters' words – or allow them both to speak, and interweave together.

Simeon sees:

I keep turning it over and over in my mind. If I hadn't responded to that prompt... if I hadn't gone to the temple courts... if I hadn't let that nudge in my heart lead me there, would I have missed seeing him?

But no. The Lord had promised me I would not die before I'd seen the answer to all our prayers – to everything I was waiting for. This is no co-incidence. It is prophecy confirmed and promise fulfilled. It is prayer answered. He would never have let me miss going to the temple when the child was there.

The Lord is always faithful to his word. In all my years of seeking him, he has always proved himself faithful.

And now, he has fulfilled my greatest desire. I have seen his Messiah! He is yet young. But I have *seen* him.

Such indescribable joy!

So many of our people have fallen to the sword. We have cried out in the confusion and chaos. Longed, waited, and prayed more than ever for the Lord's deliverer to come. For the comfort he promised to appear.

And now here he is. He has come. And I have *held* him!

My heart burst with praise when I took hold of him – when I took hold of everything I have been waiting for. The Lord's Messiah was lying in my arms. The Sovereign Lord's salvation was cradled in my embrace; the Light for the gentiles, the Glory of Israel – was held close to my heart *at last*.

How could I hold such brightness? How could I touch such purity? How could Purity himself have come to be purified?

Praise be to the Lord God Almighty! Praise be to the Lord!

But oh.

Such bittersweet joy is mine.

Because I had to tell his mother something of the cost I saw too.

This *is* the Prince of Peace.

But we are not past the sword yet.

Her very soul will be pierced.

For his truth will reveal the hearts of many – and cause the rising and falling of many. No, we are far from being past the sword yet.

But he is with us now. And that *will* change everything.

I can die in peace, knowing he is with us. Yes, that *will* change everything.

Whatever we face – whatever he faces for us – the Light is here. We need never walk in darkness again.

Anna sees:

How can I tell you? How can I explain the wonder of what I have just seen? Of *who* I have just met?

This moment – this one, fleeting sight – it is the crown of all my long years of waiting. It is the sweet, sweet balm to all the loss of my yesterdays. It is the answer to my decades, and my people's centuries, of prayer, fasting, and deep, deep longing. It is the promise of a new government of righteousness, justice and peace amid all the horrors we have seen.

He is *here!*

He is here...

Now. Today. In my last years, such a child has been born to me. Such a Son has been given to us. *The* child. *The* Son.

Just now, right there, in the temple's outer courts, the Holiest of Holies was *there*. He was wrapped in cloths, and *held* by a young girl.

He is *with us*. He is *among* the people. He is *one of us*. And yet, to the humble hearts that know him, and the eyes that look at the heart from the heart, it is clear. He is not just one of us.

How can I make you see? How can I explain the honour I have just received? The gift of *who* I have just met?

For many have pitied me.

Poor, widowed Anna. She lost her husband so young.

Poor, grieving Anna. What future will she have now?

They saw only what I had lost.

Yes. It is true. It is all true. The protection and companionship of my husband's love – gone. No longer for me the ease of shared status and experience with the other women in my community. Not for me the rush of maternal wonder. No nursing of babies, no raising of toddlers into towering youths. No children's children to welcome with joy.

They saw *only* what I had lost. They didn't understand.

I have not been alone. I have been in the temple. All these years I have been as close to the Lord our God as it has been possible for a woman to be.

No doubt some of them thought me odd too. Strange Anna, spending her life in the temple courts. Peculiar Anna, with her eyes always looking for the unseen.

But let me tell you who I am. I am highly blessed Anna.

My less has made space for more of him. And I have received so much more of him. Because there has been so much more *room* for him. In my heart. And in my life. Day and night have bled and merged into years and decades of seeking him – of pursuing his presence and listening for his voice.

But even that. Even that blessing fades now, compared to this.

Today, because I was in the house of God rather than my marital home... I *saw* him! Today, because I am not with my own children's children, I have seen *the* child.

The child who will redeem Jerusalem .

Messiah has come.

How can I tell you? How can I explain? How can I make you understand?

My years are crowned and I am highly blessed. I have *seen* him!