

## CHRISTMAS PRESENCE | Present with Future People | Week 4 | December 23, 2018

**Luke 2:25-38, John 14:16, Matt 25: 34-46**

**Opening:** “Christmas Presence”, Immanuel—God with us, is a presence highlighted in this season because God’s promised redemption, Jesus the Christ, is what we celebrate. With Jesus presence came an awareness and an understanding of a “spirit presence” not widely known before. Jesus, near the end of his time on earth, explains the coming of the Helper, the Spirit. (Jn 14:16) We now understand that Helper as one of the hallmarks of our faith as disciples. Let us further explore the mystery of entering that presence.

**Context:** Our American Christmas is so physical. We have Christmas trees with decorations, we give physical presents as tokens of love and there is always the Christmas dinner. We’ve learned these traditions, and we value them. “That IS Christmas” we say. But what if all that physical background wasn’t there? What if, instead of the Hallelujah Chorus on “Alexa” we were trying to sense, out of the hum-drum of life, the “promised presence”? That’s our story today.

**Two Characters:** Read Luke 2:25-26. We need to know the man Simeon. *What do you learn about Simeon? Who do you imagine when you read this? What modern character would he play?*

Read Luke 2:36-37. *What do you learn about Anna? Who do you imagine Anna to be like?* Pastor Stearns added some additional color to these people with his description “Quiet in the Land”. *How do you imagine the “presence” of these two compared to the Pharisees and Saducees? What differences would you expect in demeanor, in loudness, in listening?*

**A Watchful Heart:** Pastor Stearns draws the contrast of expecting a triumphant conqueror vs. vigilantly waiting for the PRESENCE of God. *How does our mindset affect our notice of the presence? If we expect a certain form or definition of presence how likely are we to notice something different? What’s your “form” for the presence?*

**A Promise Fulfilled:** Read Luke 2:27-32. The text doesn’t tell us this but since Simeon was part of the ceremony he must have had some position in the Temple. Imagine the response of the Pharisees with their expectation of “conqueror” as Simeon utters these words. *Who does Simeon bless? What does he describe in this blessing?* Simeon then blessed Mary and Joseph. His prophecy portends great anguish in Israel and opposition; and for Mary a “sword will pierce your soul”. *How are you feeling as Mom and Dad after the baby dedication?*

**Independent Verification:** A Jewish principle was that you needed two witnesses. We don't know if Anna was present for the dedication, the text just says "and coming up at that very hour" she began to speak. *Describe your image of this scene. Are the Pharisees hearing all of this? What was the purpose of the recognition of Jesus by these two strangers in the temple?*

**The GOOD NEWS of the Redemption:** Jesus, the babe in Luke 2, has redeemed us. And more, He has given us the Spirit filling that Simeon and Anna experienced. We have the opportunity to hear the Spirit, to live in the good news, that Simeon and Anna had. *How do you respond to that? What comes up in you? Questions? Disbelief? Can you talk about that now?*

**Our Tension:** We see life and our "current" priorities more present than our "eternal" priorities. Pastor Stearns says "we live in a culture that recognizes the power of the present in impacting our future". Examples of the present giving us "power" in the future are: our nest egg, our education applied to our profession and our ACT scores applied to our education choices. *How do you get past the "get ahead" demand of the immediate to deal with the PRESENCE and eternity? Give an example of one thing that has worked for you.*

**Another kind of Future:** The Bible says much about the next coming and, like Simeone and Anna we do not know when that will be. Read Matt 25: 34-46. "The power of the present **WILL** impact our future". This is not a message of fear, it is instruction in priorities. *What questions does this cause you to ask?*

### **Practice of the Week: Reflecting on THAT future**

We live in the world. Competence, cordiality, personal presence are all gifts from God and remarkable blessings. But the call upon us is higher. We are asked to live looking for the opportunity to give that to others—"love your neighbor as yourself". Choose something that happened to you this week. Listen to the spirit around these three questions: What did my conscience say? Why did I do that (motivation)? Who was I in that moment (identity)? (e.g. was I a child of God, bought with a price?) Journal on this conversation with the Spirit within you.

### **Family Formation: How did they know???**

Revisit prayers..... Read the account of Simeon (Luke 2:25-32). Develop Simeon's character and personality (low key, dedicated, faithful, observing, waiting and *Yearning*--use your own interpretation on this). Then describe his awareness of the presence of God. Ask the question "Do you ever feel like God is talking to you?" *What do you do when that happens?*

**Additional Resources:** <https://ministry-to-children.com/bible-lesson-simeon-and-anna-see-the-savior/>

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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