

“Imagine: Meeting the Messiah” (Advent Week 4)
(Luke 2:22-38)

- **Christmas is Over – Now What? (EMILY)**

- Wow, we made it! Christmas 2025 has come and gone. How do you feel? The perfectly-wrapped gifts have been opened. The delicious food has been (mostly) eaten and you probably still have leftovers that honestly, no one wants to eat anymore. The decorations today don't sparkle in quite the same way as they did on Christmas Eve, and maybe some of you have taken them down already. This has been our first Christmas at Connection, and what an amazing season it's been! So much excitement and energy from the past few days, it can be overwhelming to take it all in. All of this begs the question—**now what?** After everything is over and everyone goes home, life goes back to...normal. Or does it? That all depends on what *you* want to make of it—what you want to take with you from Christmas into the new year.
- Here at Connection, we spent Advent imagining a different kind of Christmas, where Jesus takes the center stage and we recenter on the real meaning of Christmas—really, the whole meaning of *life*. We imagined the feelings of prophecies and promises fulfilled, like Elizabeth and Zechariah. We imagined what it would be like to hear from Heaven, like Mary. We imagined the sights and sounds of a sky full of angel armies, like the shepherds. And on Christmas Eve, we imagined holding the humble Savior, treasuring it all in our hearts.
- Today, although many of us are already itching for 2026, we want to invite you to pause. To take advantage of this last bit of margin we have between Christmas and a new year. To take just one more

moment to *imagine*. Because although the events of Christmas might be over, the mission Jesus had on earth was just beginning.

- **Jesus is Born – Now What? (DAVID)**

- For Mary and Joseph, that first Christmas, the circumstances were *vastly different*, but the dynamic had to be similar: **“Now what?”** What God had spoken had come to pass: the Son of God had arrived, they were finally *holding the Savior—that’s a really big, “NOW WHAT?!”* All they could do after this extraordinary moment...was get on with ordinary life, as new parents: nurture this special child, wait to see how God’s purposes would be fulfilled as He grew. So, they took the next faithful step: they followed God’s commands. **“When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord ‘Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: ‘a pair of doves or two young pigeons.’” (Luke 2:22-24)** The new parents of the Messiah, naturally, follow the Law of Moses properly and piously. After childbirth, mothers had a 40-day period of rest and purification. After that, they followed Exodus 13 and Leviticus 12 which commands the dedication of the firstborn to the Lord. The sacrifice Mary and Joseph offer indicates they were poor—if you couldn’t afford a lamb, 2 doves or pigeons could be substituted. Maybe this little detail also points to something deeper: **they didn’t offer a lamb because here in their arms was the true Lamb of God.**
- This act of ordinary obedience sets the stage for God to show up in yet another extraordinary way. Here in the Temple, we get to see

Christmas through the eyes of one more set of characters, whom we don't often hear too much about: *Simeon and Anna*.

- **Simeon (DAVID)**

- ***“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.’ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.” (Luke 2:25-33)***

- Hardly anyone in Israel knew what had happened yet. The amazing calling that had now become ordinary life for Mary and Joseph, was a glorious truth waiting to be revealed to the rest of the world. But on this day, God would converge the customary obedience of Jesus’ parents with the attentive expectation of two special people. The first was Simeon, this elderly, Spirit-led man of Israel. He was watching closely for the Messiah because of what the Lord had quietly revealed to him. On this day, he felt the “nudge” to go and visit the temple courts. Christmas came about 40 days late for him, but it was no less glorious: in some mysterious way that you can’t explain unless you’ve experienced it yourself, God gave him a deep “knowing,” an inner-

revelation that *this child right here was the One*. Much like John the Baptist would have about 30 years later when he saw Jesus step into the Jordan River to be baptized—“*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29) Simeon got an inside look, before everyone else. And he gives us the last “Christmas Song” of Luke’s Gospel—in Latin it’s called ***Nunc Dimmittis, “Now you may dismiss your servant in peace.”***

- Isn’t it wonderful to *imagine* this man, full of years and full of faith, *meeting the Messiah, holding the newborn Savior*, and saying, ***“My eyes have seen your salvation.”*** That’s what the name “Jesus” or “Joshua” means—***the Lord is Salvation***. Nobody else in the Temple Courts that day had eyes like those—to see this Hebrew infant and be able to say, *my eyes have seen the Lord’s Salvation*. But God gave Simeon eyes to see this truth that would later be shouted from the rooftops—so that he could reassure Mary and Joseph. One more gracious gift of confirmation from the Lord for them to keep walking by faith as Jesus’ grew up.

- **Anna (EMILY)**

- Simeon wasn’t the only person paying attention at the temple that day. We’re told of another character who was there to witness this presentation: ***“There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four she never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the***

child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” (2:36-38)

- We aren't given much information about this woman, but what we learn about her is insightful. Anna is a prophet. Her name, which comes from the Hebrew name Hannah, means “favor” or “grace.” How interesting that she shares this name with Hannah from the Old Testament, who yearned deeply for a child and poured her heart out in prayer at the Tabernacle, eventually giving birth to the great prophet, Samuel. Female prophets like Anna were somewhat rare. Throughout the Old Testament, we're introduced to only 5 prophetesses, like Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Deborah, one of Israel's Judges. In the New Testament, female apostles, teachers, and leaders are mentioned, but Anna is the only prophetess referenced by name. Anna is also a widow, and she has been for a long time, making this a big factor in her identity and social status. Luke goes out of his way to give details about her timeline: if you factor in the average age of 14 for marriage back then, with the 7 years she was married, she's been a widow for over 60 years, over 75% of her life. And for all those years, despite the trials, grief, and marginalization she most definitely faced, where do we find her? What is she doing?
- **“She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”** She is not dwelling and staying in her grief or using her life situation as an excuse to live in despair; she chose to turn her desperation in life into *desperation for God*. She offered it all to Him and now spends every day seeking the presence of God. So, it's no wonder that at the very moment Simeon is blessing the baby Messiah,

Anna takes notice. We don't hear a specific song from her, but we read that she, **"gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."** By daily living in the presence of God, she is able to see when something miraculous happens right in front of her. And just like the shepherds, she goes on to tell others, those who were also looking forward to God's redemption. Her actions confirm what Amos 3:7 says: **"Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets."**

- **Living at the Ready (DAVID)**

- 4 characters, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, and Anna, converge around Christ in this awesome story. Each of them were living in daily obedience and attentiveness to God in their ordinary lives—and this positioned them to be receptive to the extraordinary revelation God wanted to bring to them and through them. This is the perfect story to help us with our "now what?" after Christmas, into a New Year. The Big Day has passed, Jesus is born, now ordinary life continues again. But **how can we use this time of calm before 2026 rushes on to make sure we're taking the wonder of Christ-with-us into every day to come?**
- Mary and Joseph realized that their next faithful step was to obey God's commands and bring Jesus to the Temple. Simeon and Anna spent their daily lives listening to God's voice. These lives of obedience brought them together to see God's faithfulness and become witnesses of the great things God was doing in the world, in their lives, for such a time as this. And that allowed them to continue to live in attentiveness and expectation for what God was going to do

through Christ—we know from the rest of the story that He was just getting started!

- **Preparing for a New Year (EMILY)**

- So, **what is your next faithful step after what God has revealed to you this Christmas? How is He calling you to enter 2026?** One obvious and simple answer may be something you've practiced this Advent season, but it may be the most difficult thing to give in the lives we lead today. *Time*. This Advent season, we've given ourselves the time and space to pause and reflect on different aspects of Christmas together. We've also given you opportunities to do this on your own or with family at home through weekly devotionals. Many people we've talked to have really appreciated this time to daily reflect and refocus.
 - And guess what? That daily time spent with Jesus doesn't have to end just because Christmas is over! We've talked a lot about how Advent is supposed to be a time to *reset*. But it's not just meant to affect us during Advent. The whole point of a "reset" is to change everything that comes after. We can live in expectation and anticipation for Christ's return in *all* seasons. Have you enjoyed that peace you've found? Have you noticed a difference in your attitude or demeanor with others? Have you been more patient or loving this season? Then keep doing what you're doing! We can take this posture and spiritual discipline into our everyday lives.
- Enter the New Year deciding that quiet, daily time with Jesus and obedience to Him isn't just something you desire, but it's something you *need*. You need to daily walk in with the Presence of God so that you can be ready for what God has next for you, like Mary and Joseph, or

Simeon and Anna. If we make this our way of life, we will most definitely find that God shows up in extraordinary ways.