

Second Sunday after Epiphany/National Bible Sunday

Lectionary Title 8: **Simeon and Anna: Witnesses to the Appearance of the Messiah**

Old Testament: Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV, 1989)

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

New Testament: Luke 2:22-38 (NRSV, 1989)

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' ³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' ³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

General Concept: Waiting for God's deliverance requires perseverance and patience.

The Bible remains a faithful witness to the unfolding of God's plan of salvation.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **The Bible tells about God.**

ME/OE: **The Bible tells about our relationship with God.**

Y: **The Bible tells us the covenant relationship between God and people.**

A: **The Bible remains a faithful witness to the unfolding of God's plan of salvation.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

This text is part of a later edition of the Book of Isaiah which came out of the Babylonian exile. It speaks clearly of hope and strength amidst the times of hopelessness and despair. It also anticipates the coming end of their captivity. The writer speaks of an imminent historical event when the Babylonian empire would soon be defeated by the rising Persian army. The opening verse of chapter 40 already proclaims messages of comfort and assurance of restoration to the exiled people. The whole chapter 40 reflects so much the spirit of hope and excitement as it envisions the imminent fulfillment of the promise of God where they will be liberated from their captivity. There is a tone of renewed strength and revival of the spirit of being a unique covenanted people of God, reasserting and reclaiming the distinct identity of a religious community bound historically to a covenanting God. This is a powerful reassurance from the prophet addressed to a people who may have been losing their hope already of ever returning to their homeland. The prophet strongly asserts that in the midst of a growing sense of hopelessness and despair in the midst of their captors, they should never give up their faith and their hope in Yahweh. For no matter how much the people may have gone down to the depths of sorrow, loneliness in a foreign land, and utter despair, their God remains faithful to those who will remain steadfast and loyal to their covenant God. They will be sustained even in the most difficult and trying of times until the day when the Lord will deliver them once again from their captors and restore them back to their beloved homeland. Their God remains a God who hears and responds to the cries of the despairing and the helpless. This is the faithful witness of the prophet which has become an enduring proclamation and statement of faith in the rest of the Scriptures.

Following required ritual of circumcision, it has also been the practice and tradition of the Jews to dedicate the first born. It is required in the law that the very first born should be set apart (Lk. 2:23). To be set apart means being the first choice. The practice of dedicating the first born and even offering the first fruit or livestock is a clear message of giving priority to God. Simeon has discerned a strong implication of this act of Jesus being offered and presented at the Temple. With this act, Jesus becomes the expression of one who is taking in his life the prioritization of God and all matters and concerns of God now becomes the priority of Jesus when he grows up. This is what Simeon has clearly seen in this act of the child being offered and presented to God at this moment. That is why he has to tell what he has discerned to the mother of Jesus: *"This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed- and a sword will pierce your own soul too."* This rather cryptic prophecy of Simeon will actually set the pattern for the rest of the life and ministry of Jesus, something that the rest of the gospels faithfully testifies to. After being dedicated to God, his life now becomes dedicated to a kind of ministry that will be opposed by the powers that be, but also one that will give hope and new life to the once hopeless in his society. But what eventually happens to him on the cross will certainly pierce the heart and soul of his mother Mary.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The basic posture of the Christian believer is that of waiting in hopeful anticipation of salvation. It waits upon the surfacing of the unknown to the realm of the known—the revelation. Hence, the basic virtue of Christian piety is patience and perseverance. Giving life to it is the Spirit-inspired power of discovery and discernment. If you don't have it, you have not known the joy and pain, the agony and ecstasy of being a Christian.

For the Christian believer, this future is not simply wishful thinking which is characteristic of religious infantilism. Rather, it is based upon an objective rock of faith – the revelation of God in Christ according to the witness of the Holy Bible. There in the holy book is drawn up the architecture of a reality that is emerging from the present realities. As in music, it is the overture that carries within itself the whole symphony that is yet to unfold. This is how faith is defined: “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

The personal and social consequences of faith in the Biblical sense are astounding and far-reaching. Astounding because it crosses the bounds of reason and far-reaching because it draws the believer to overcome the limits of the possible. Faith is able to explain miraculous change from one kind of personality to another, and fundamental social change that reverses the established order of a political economy into one that follows a new logic. The “assurance of things hoped for” and the conviction of things not seen” render a seemingly indestructible status quo puny and evanescent. The same holds true of personal transformation. The Apostle Paul's exhortation “not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” is a testimony of faith.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. be aware that the Bible is about the Word of God;
2. be conscious of the Bible by actually observing it physically, to see, to feel, to touch and to open; and
3. express one's desire to have own Bible.

II. Concept: The Bible is a faithful witness to God.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, crayons, pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly and set an atmosphere of good learning environment.
2. Opening prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the many things that you have done for us. Give us strength to tell other children about You and Your wonderful love. Amen!
3. Opening songs:
 - “Read Your Bible”
 - Read your Bible pray and obey, pray and obey, pray and obey
 - Read your Bible pray and obey, pray and obey, pray and obey
 - And you grow, grow, grow
 - “Jesus Loves Me”
 - Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.
 - Little children here below they are weak but Jesus strong
 - Yes Jesus loves me (thrice).
 - The Bible tells me so.

B. Getting Ready

Put the Bible at the center table and open it. Hold it and ask the children: “What is this children? (Bible) Let's spell the word "B-I-B-L-E". Follow me.

C. Learning Time

1. Ask: “Do you know how the Bible came to us? Are you ready to learn how the bible came to us?”
2. Tell the story.

The Story of the Bible

(By Iris H. Tibus)

A long time ago, God showed his love to people.

The story of God's love is written in a book with many books, like a library. This book is called the Bible. It started with stories told by mouth.

Later on, some persons inspired by God wrote these stories.

The Bible has two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament talks about the promises of God to his people.

Then he sent his only son, Jesus, to live with us. The New Testament talks about the fulfillment of God's love and grace through his son, Jesus.

The Bible is the Word of God. It is about God's love for us. It also tells us about Jesus, who is also called Christ, because he came to save us.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions as you show pictures of the story.
 - a. What is a bible? (It is a book with many books.)
 - b. How did people learn about it? (The stories were told by mouth. Then they were written by people inspired by God. Later, the stories were printed.)
 - c. What is the Bible about? (It is about God's love for us. It is also about Jesus who loves us.)
2. **For YE:** Assist them to look at their bibles and introduce the different parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament and the books under each.
3. Let the class share how they felt as they saw, touched, and opened their bibles. Encourage them to own their own copies and read them regularly.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "Yes, we like to have own bible. Ask: Why is the bible important? (It is the Word of God. It tells us of who God is. It tells of God's salvation for us. It tells us what to do.)"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the biblical verse: "For my eyes have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:30)
2. **For N/K:** Tell the class to cut the letters in the activity sheet and paste them in a separate paper to form the word "BIBLE". Then let them decorate it.

For YE: Using the same activity sheet and after cutting and pasting the letters, tell the class to write the following near the letters:

B: Believe. It is God's word. Read it.

I: Inspire others to read it.

B: Bring it with you.

L: Learn from its stories.

E: Enjoy reading it.

Ask the class to decorate their artwork.

3. Teach this song: "The B-I-B-L-E"

The B-I-B-L-E, Yes that's the book for me.
I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E! (Bible!)
The B-I-B-L-E,
I'll take it along with me.
I'll read and pray, and then obey, the B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)
By F-A-I-T-H, I'm S-A-V-E-D,
I'll stand alone on the word of God,
The B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Remind the class that as they give their offerings, they are reminded of God's love for them and they can show their thanks by giving.
3. Closing songs: Recall the songs they have learned during this session.
4. Closing prayer: Coach a child to read this prayer poem.

Dear God,
The Bible is about your word.
Thank you, for giving us the Bible.
Thank you God for letting us know you and your son, Jesus.
Thank you for we can see, touch, feel and own a Bible. Amen.

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain that the Bible tells about our relationship with God;
2. express one's appreciation for having known the Word of God through the Bible;
3. retell the story how Simeon and Anna witnessed the appearance of the Messiah; and
4. make a conscious effort to own a Bible and bring it to class.

II. Concept: The Bible tells about our relationship with God.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, crayons, pencils, Manila paper, Pentel pen

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us to Sunday school to learn about Your word. Give us strength to tell others about You and Your wonderful works. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.
3. Opening song:
"Read Your Bible"
Read your Bible pray and obey, pray and obey, pray and obey
Read your Bible pray and obey, pray and obey, pray and obey
And you grow, grow, grow
"Jesus Loves Me"
Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.
Little children here below they are weak but Jesus strong
Yes Jesus loves me (thrice).
The Bible tells me so.

B. Getting Ready

1. Say: "Jesus who loves us so much. This fact is written in the Bible."
2. Prepare the class for a game called "Alphabet Movement". Form two groups. Give the rules of the game.
 - a. Provide a sheet with questions and provide the choices below.
(L-O-V-E, G-O-D, H-O-L-Y, G-R-A-C-E, P-R-O-M-I-S-E, F-A-I-T-H,
M-I-R-A-C-L-E-S, W-O-R-K-S, W-O-R-D, S-T-O-R-I-E-S, O-B-E-Y, T-R-U-E)
 - 1) (3-letter word) Who is the main character in the Bible? (God)
 - 2) (7-letter word) What did Jesus perform? (miracles)
 - 3) (5-letter word) What makes us believe in God? (faith)
 - 4) (5-letter word) What book has many books? (Bible)
 - 5) (4-letter word) What shall we do with God's word? (obey)
 - b. As soon as they have finished answering the questions, they will be asked to show their answers by body movement of each letter.
 - c. The first group that has the most number of correct answers and is able to show the letters by body movement wins.
3. Process the game. Ask these questions.
 - a. How did you find the game?

- b. What words have you formed?
- c. Where can you find these words?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let's get ready to read an interesting story found in the Bible."
2. Present the story.

Meet Simeon and Anna

(Based on Luke 2:22-38)

Long before Jesus is born, God gave Moses laws for people to follow. One of those laws is that a firstborn will be offered to God at the temple. The family should bring a sacrificial offering when the parents present their child to God.

Joseph and Mary love God so much. They follow the law of God. It's time for them to bring Jesus to the temple. They bring baby Jesus to the temple of Jerusalem. They bring a pair of turtle doves and offer them to God.

In the temple, there is Simeon, an old man. He loves God so much. He lives a life that pleases God. God's promise to him is he will not die until he sees the Messiah. Simeon believes that and waits for the promise of God to happen.

One ordinary day, Simeon goes to the temple. Upon entering the temple, Simeon sees a young woman with a baby in her arms and young man standing beside her. The Spirit of the Lord guides to know that the baby is the promised Messiah. Simeon gets so excited and he hurriedly runs to Mary and holds the baby in his arms.

Happily, he says, "Lord, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation."

Mary and Joseph are amazed upon hearing the praises of Simeon to God.

Another person is in the temple at that time. Her name is Anna, a prophetess.

Anna is an old widow. At 84-years old, she devotes her life to the temple. She fasts and prays there day and night.

Her attention is caught upon hearing Simeon and finding baby Jesus.

Like Simeon, Anna praises God for the coming of the Messiah. She begins to tell everyone in the temple about the appearance of the Messiah.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who is Simeon? (A good and God-fearing man)
 - b. Who is Anna? (An old prophetess, a widow)
 - c. What is the promise of God to them? (They will see the Messiah before they die.)
 - d. How did God give His promise to them? (Through the Holy Spirit)
2. Tell the class to tell how similar Simeon and Anna are.
 - a. According to age
 - b. According to work
 - c. According to their mission in life

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: God speaks to us through the Bible. The Bible is the word of God for us. It tells us how God works with us. It tells us how human beings respond to God. Ask: Which story in the Bible tells us how God works for our salvation?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "With my own eyes, I have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:30)
2. Prepare the class to play "Show and Play". Tell the children to open the Bibles in the Table of Contents. Form two groups. Tell each group to do the following:
 - a. Discuss the two major parts of the Bible. Ask them to read all the books in the Old and New Testament.
 - b. Tell them to close their bibles. Give them a manila paper and Pentel pen and ask them to write down all the books that they can remember. Give them 5 minutes to do it as a team. After the given time, check their work. The group that remembered the most number of books wins.
3. **Express Yourself!** Go back to what Simeon and Anna did in the story. Ask: How can we be like Simeon and Anna in spreading the Good News found in the Bible?
For ME: Tell the class to write in their journal what they can do at their age to be like Simeon and Anna.
For OE: Tell the class to write in their journal a prayer showing gratitude to God for making Simeon and Anna witness to the coming of the Messiah. Expect them to include what they plan to do to spread the Good News.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: Ask the class to read what they have written in their journals.
3. Offering: Everybody should offer their thanksgiving to God
4. Closing song: The B-I-B-L-E
The B-I-B-L-E, Yes that's the book for me.
I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E! (Bible!)
The B-I-B-L-E, I'll take it along with me,
I'll read and pray, and then obey,
the B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)
By F-A-I-T-H, I'm S-A-V-E-D,
I'll stand alone on the word of God,
The B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)
5. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for the Bible. Thank you for Simeon and Anna who have seen and proclaimed the promise of your salvation for us. Through Jesus our Lord, this is our prayer. Amen!

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain the significance of Simeon and Anna's declarations in relation to who Jesus is and what His role in human history was going to be;
2. scrutinize the physical characteristics of the Bible, its two important parts and its 66 books;
3. support the spiritual significance of the Bible and its divinely inspired writers in proclaiming God's covenant relationship with his people; and
4. make a commitment to regularly read the Bible in accordance to one's willingness and ability to read it in order to understand God's Word and to apply it in real life.

II. Concept: The Bible tells us the covenant relationship between God and people.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, YouTube video and video player, Bible reading guides, pre-prepared KWL chart

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer
3. Opening song: "Worship the Lord, Worship the Father" (HFJ #314) first three stanzas

B. Getting Ready

Introduce the KWL Chart. This activity is used to connect a student's prior knowledge to what they are actively learning.

1. Present the Bible as the subject matter.
2. Create a table with three columns and two rows--- one row for the headings and one larger in which to write. Label the first column with a "K" for what I know, the second with "W" for "What I want to know," and the third with an "L" for what I learned.
3. Brainstorm things of what they KNOW about the Bible, (let them write on the first column). Next would be brainstorming what they WANT to know about the Bible. The third column will be reserved for realization or reflection later.
4. Collect the chart and use the data written by the students.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the students to read the Biblical references in unison.
2. Let them list down the qualities of God's relationship with people as described in the texts. Have two or three students share their list in the larger group.
 - a. Isaiah 40:31
 - b. Luke 2:22-38

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Have the learners discuss the lesson in small groups of 3.
 - a. What inspires you about the texts we just read?
 - b. What does the Luke 2:22-38 text tell you about Simeon and Anna's relationship with God?

- c. Who is Jesus according to Simeon's declaration in the temple?
2. Have the class come together after 10mins of small group discussion.
 - a. The Bible teaches us to wait patiently. The prophet Isaiah reminds us to wait patiently for the Lord and this was affirmed in the NT through the lives of Simeon and Anna.
 - b. The Bible is a faithful witness of the revelation of God in Christ
 - c. The Bible tells us that when we wait patiently for the Lord, we shall be rewarded like Simeon and Anna.
3. Have the class watch the YouTube video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4u474ZYQeY>
4. Tell the class to take note of information that they did not know before about the Bible. Elicit from the students the following in summary:
 - a. The Bible is a library. It is a collection of different books. It made up of 66 books. The 66 books consist of the Old Testament and New Testament.
 - b. The Bible is written by different authors in a span of many years yet it is divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim God's covenant relationship with his people
5. Distribute the KWL Chart. Let the class fill-up the third column.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How should we rejoice knowing that Christ came to restore His relationship with us?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "... but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)
2. *Reflect on this:* Say: The Bible tells us the covenant relationship between God and people. Ask: What must you do/What lifestyle or schedule adjustments must you make in order to read the Bible regularly?
3. Prepare some Bible reading guides and distribute to the class. Tell the students that they should read the Bible every day so that they will grow in wisdom and knowledge about God. Ask them to share his/her testimony of reading the Bible regularly and the impact this has had in his/her growth in the faith. Inform them there are a variety of reading guides that they can follow and they can choose which reading guide is appropriate for them.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Reflective action: Let the students read what they have written on the third column of the KWL Chart. Let everybody say they promise to read my Bible every day.
3. Closing song: "Worship the Lord, Worship the Father" (HFJ #314) last two stanzas
4. Closing prayer: Choose one student whose answer in the third column of the KWL chart is in a prayer form and have him or her use it to the class in prayer.

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. realize that God uses people who will witness God's revelation of His salvation plan;
2. tell the significance of the witnessing of Simeon and Anna about the appearance of the Lord's Messiah;
3. search one's heart in order to decide to witness for the Lord;
4. pray for God's leading in choosing the appropriate ministry of the church that one can get involved; and
5. accept God's plan for one's life and do every effort to fulfill it through service.

I. **Concept:** The Bible remains a faithful witness to the unfolding of God's plan of salvation.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Father, we raise our eyes in praise and bow our heads in gratitude of your love for us. Guide us today as we determine the right path to take to please you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!
3. Opening song: "Worship the Lord, Worship the Father" (HFJ #314) first three stanzas

B. *Getting Ready*

Ask the adults to get ready to look for biblical verses in their bibles without looking at the Table of Contents. Tell them that the exercise to find out how familiar is each in finding given verses. Consider the following verses:

1. John 3:16
2. Matthew 20:28
3. John 21:18
4. Psalms 86:6
5. Proverbs 2:6
6. Isaiah 40:21
7. Luke 2:22-38

C. *Learning Time*

1. Tell the class to read the OT text in unison. Then have them share what they think of these phrases: wait for the Lord; mount up with wings like eagles; shall run and not be weary; and shall walk and not faint.
2. Ask the class to do a responsive reading of the NT text. Then ask them to compare Simeon and Anna in accordance to their stay in the temple, their age, their long wait of God's promise, and their attitude when the promise is realized. (If possible employ reading through a speech choir or presenting the text through a role play.)

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the lesson.
 - a. What was the event why Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem?
 - b. Who is Simeon? Who is Anna?
 - c. What were their pronouncements about Jesus?
 - d. Were Anna and Simeon ordained to be witnesses of Jesus?
2. Tell the class to discuss in their own words the assertion of Anna and Simeon.
3. Ask the class to share their thoughts on the following:
 - a. The Bible is a faithful witness of the revelation of God in Christ. Every Christian should be available to be witness of God to humanity.
 - b. God uses Simeon and Anna in revealing His plan of salvation. God uses us to reveal His plan.
 - d. Simeon and Anna consciously and patiently waited for the Lord's coming. Every Christian should learn to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Studying the Bible is knowing the great plan of God." Ask: "How can we use the Bible to become a faithful witness to the unfolding of God's plan of salvation?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Make a chart of the different ministries of the church (children/youth/adult Sunday school, visitation, outreach program, clean and green, Bible Study, choir, preaching) and let the class write their name under the ministry where they want to get involved.
2. Distribute a heart-shape. Let them write their affirmation and commitment to submit themselves to God by joining or participating in Church ministries.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Reflective action: Tell the students to share the reason for choosing a specific ministry where they want to get involved. Let them offer this commitment to the altar as a zeal of privilege.
3. Closing song: "Worship the Lord, Worship the Father (HFJ #314) last two stanzas
4. Closing prayer: Father, once more we are thankful for giving us the opportunity to affirm our faith to wait patiently for you. Help us to live by your word in our daily living. Bless us even as we continue to worship you in spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.