

Focus on Luke 2:22–40

WHAT is important to know?

— From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” William R. Herzog II

Anna’s name in the Greek is Hannah. It is important to emphasize this in light of Luke’s allusive use of 1 Samuel 1–2, the story of the birth of Samuel to Hannah and Elkanah. What the two events share is the sense that God is doing something new to facilitate the fulfillment of God’s purposes in history. Both are transitional events. If Simeon spoke to God and then to Mary and Joseph, Hannah speaks “to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” The Word becomes public in a way it has not been. This means that Anna is more than a distant echo of Simeon, but has her own distinctive role to play.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “*Theological Perspective*,” James C. Howell

Jesus was just a baby—and this is God’s shrewdest device. As Luther put it, God became small for us in Christ; he showed us his heart, so our hearts might be won. Infants wield a kind of power. Muscular men with calloused hands become gentle as pillows when handed a baby; potent people with gruff voices adopt a falsetto and coo to an infant. God came down, not to thrash evildoers or crush the Romans, but as an infant, to elicit love, to nurture tenderness.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “*Pastoral Perspective*,” William V. Arnold

Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple for the required Mosaic ritual of purification. The birth of a child, regardless of family resources, brings with it responsibility. Jesus’ parents are acknowledging and honoring their faith commitments and their recognition of the special quality of their child. Further, this case reminds us that there are particular rituals available both to remind and to encourage mothers and fathers in their new tasks of parenting. The temple represents the presence of a much wider array of persons, a community, and resources to undergird them. That was important in the life of Jesus, and it is important for all of us in our continuing care of children.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “*Homiletical Perspective*,”

Shelley D. B. Copeland

Perhaps this text is pleading with those of us in this generation to create a more just society for the children who come into the world through parents of limited means. We have questions with which to grapple. If Jesus were born today, to teen parents in American urban poverty, would he be better off now than he was 2,000 years ago? Will we answer the call to create a global community that makes sure all mothers and fathers have adequate health care, food, education, clothing, and shelter? When we consider the abundance of our nation, do faithful people of means have an obligation to the poor beyond offering them verbal blessings?