

Sermon: Luke 2:22-40
“Presenting Jesus”

© Kate Heichler; Preached at Christ Church La Plata/Wayside
Feast of the Presentation, Year A, Sunday, February 2, 2020

Last week I asked, “When did you decide to follow Jesus?”

It may have been gradual more than one moment to the next, but each of us has made a decision to follow, or stay on this path, or claim this path as our own, or we wouldn’t be here.

So now I have a deeper question: when did you decide not to keep that gift to yourself? When did you decide you were going to make Jesus known – In how you live your life, how you talk about your spiritual self?

Because those two things go hand in hand.

Jesus told his disciples he would teach them to fish for people.

Why would we do that? Because God wants people to know his love.

God wants people to know Jesus.

Jesus is such an amazing guy that everyone should be introduced to him.

What happens next is up to God... but it’s up to us to make the introductions.

How do we introduce Jesus?

The same way we make him known in our lives, the ways we experience him.

That day, Jesus was presented in the temple 40 days after his birth.

His parents had to undergo some rituals –

his mother had to be cleansed after giving birth, they had to offer sacrifices;

But they found out he did not really need to be introduced.

He was already recognized, already anticipated.

So we often think that Jesus is here, and the world is out there and

we know Jesus, and the world does not... but Jesus doesn’t stay here alone

when we leave on Sundays. He’s not cooped up in here, or in our assumptions.

Jesus is out, my friends, out and about! Making himself known in all kinds of ways.

Some Christians introduce a version of Jesus which bears little relationship to the Jesus of the Gospels. The Jesus of the church is laden with cultural baggage.

The Jesus of the Gospels is an interesting dude, in your face, bold yet gentle, humble yet shrewd, a Jewish man of his time and place, yet timeless.

I put on Facebook an [article by David Brooks](#) about who Jesus was as

a first century Jew in what we now call Palestine. Read it.

Re-read the gospels and meet him again for the first time.

One way to carry Jesus is to see where he's already anticipated.
In Acts we read the Spirit tells Philip to go on a certain road, and he meets up with an Ethiopian reading scripture but wanting it interpreted.
So Philip climbs in the chariot and explains the passage from the standpoint of belief in Jesus as the Messiah - and the man ends up asking to be baptized. They find a puddle and do it right there on the road!

I call these Anointed Appointments – we can pray each day,
“God, bring me someone today who wants to meet Jesus.”
We're not likely to go up to people and say, “Do you want to meet Jesus?”
It's not our style. What we do is say, whatever we're talking about,
How our faith informs that. “I'm praying more than ever.”
“Would you like me to pray about that?”
Those kinds of things signal that you are a praying person,
and you're open to spiritual conversation.
And people will either shut that down, or signal that they're open to it.
“I have trouble praying...” “I used to go to church...”
You don't have to try to talk them into anything, just talk about why this is meaningful for you. Often we find the Spirit has prepared the room for him.

We introduce Jesus to the people who are ready to receive him –
To the Simeons who have been watching, waiting in their lives
for the One that brings purpose and meaning;
To the Annas who recognize and praise despite their great losses.

We don't have to come up with a mission, my friends – we need to step into
God's mission, which is already active, already happening in our community.
Jesus is already out there – maybe he'll be on the bus to work.
Maybe he'll be at a super bowl party you attend today.
Maybe you'll have a conversation during halftime in which you can
introduce him – or be introduced to him all over again.

Amen.

Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided 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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then 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 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed-- and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

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 seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At 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.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.