

*My name is Anna. I know you don't know much about me. My story rarely appears in the lessons for Sunday, except when The Feast of the Presentation falls on a Sunday, as it has today. So let me tell you a little about myself.*

*I was young when I married my husband, and life was full of possibility and adventure and love. We never had any children, but we had each other and that seemed to be enough. He and I came to the temple as required, and to the synagogue to hear God's word. We had a good life, my husband and me. And then everything changed. He died suddenly and I found myself alone. I felt that all hope had died with him.*

*There weren't many options for me at the time. I asked God what I should do with my life. I didn't understand what was next for me for a very long time. And then, one day, when I was in the temple, a word from God came that THAT is where I should be. In the temple.*

*So I made a life for myself there ---- praying, constantly praying. Meeting people. Watching them come to give their offerings, to pray for their futures, to offer themselves and their children to God to use in whatever way he saw fit.*

*I missed my husband, the life we had, but I found great joy in being so close to God and God's people where God promised to meet them. Sometimes I felt sorry for myself and the dreams that had been shattered when I became widowed. But for the most part life was good. God gave me the gift of prophecy ---- I could see hope when others could not. I could see light when others saw only darkness.*

*I eventually found a deep hope in God's future. I found that I had to care for it, and nurture it --- with scripture and song, with connection with those who came to the temple. I fasted in order to keep my priorities straight. I praised God for each day I was given, and for the hope that he had planted in me. After a while, it became real to me --- this hope. It was like a candle lit in my heart. It carried me along through my dark times, through my times of sadness and loneliness, Every time I would wake up to a new day, I would thank God for it and ask him to sustain this hope, to solidify it, to make it real. And he did.*

*I made friends in the temple. Spiritual friends. My closest friend was Simeon. He, too, had suffered loss. He was old, and had lost much of his eyesight. But he was wise. Oh, was he wise. He told me that God had promised him that he would not die until he had seen God's salvation, that we had all been waiting and praying for.*

*He was truly an inspiration. His faith was so strong. His face would light up whenever someone would enter the temple, because he believed in God's promise that he would behold God's salvation. Sometimes I would worry about him, that he would be disappointed. But he was convinced. Years passed, without a hint of God's promise*

*becoming fulfilled. I began to pray harder for God's salvation just because I didn't want my friend Simeon's hopes to be dashed.*

*And then, one day, I walked a young woman and her husband. They were no different from any other couple coming to the temple for her purification, forty days after having given birth, and for the presentation of their first born, now forty days old. They brought with them two turtledoves, which was an offering that people brought when they couldn't afford a lamb.*

*But there was something different about them. I couldn't put my finger on it, but their son was special. I could see it in his face. His face seemed to glow, and he smiled the minute he saw me. I could tell that his parents were absolutely in love with him. I fell in love with him immediately, wondering if that's what my son would have been like if I'd had one. I was enthralled with this little one.*

*It was my job to receive the couples when they came in. Simeon usually was with the middle aged people coming to the temple. Something told me I needed to let Simeon see this baby. I knew he couldn't see very well, so I ran to him and put the child in his arms.*

*He was enraptured. He held the child up as his blinded eyes lit up, and broke into praising God for this child, calling him the light of the world, the entire world, ALL the peoples of the world.*

*THAT's exactly what it was about this child! He was a light. He lit up Simeon, He lit me up, his parents were lit up.*

*God, said Simeon, you can now release your servant; release me in peace as you promised. With my own eyes I've seen your salvation; it's now out in the open for everyone to see: A God-revealing light to all the nations and of glory for your people Israel.<sup>1</sup>*

*The parents were amazed at these words! They had known their little boy, just 40 days old, was of God, was God's beloved one, but they didn't know anyone else knew. They were amazed that this had been revealed to Simeon as well. They had brought the light of the world to me and then straight to Simeon's arms. And I got to witness this incredible moment, the moment the light of the world was revealed to all.*

*My life will never be the same. Simeon told me he would die happy now because I had brought the light of the world to him. And I will die happy too: knowing that God keeps his promises, after so many years of waiting. And praying and hoping. God keeps his promises.*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2: 29032, The Message

Today, among many other celebrations ---- Ground Hog Day, the Super Bowl, the Feast of the Presentation is also celebrated as Candle mass in the Christian world. In some churches, people bring their candle from home to be blessed. When I was at St. Paul's the priest had us scour the church for all the candles --- and there were a lot ---- and bring them into the small chapel so they could be blessed.

The world can be a very dark place. And we are blessed to have a glimmer of hope, a deep seated glimmer of hope in God's goodness. So

Today I invite you to come light a candle and remember the person who brought you to know the light of the world. thank God both for the light and the person who brought it to you. Then ask God to show you those in your life who need this light.