

It was an auspicious time. A promising and favorable time.

- The snow was melting on the ground
- The icicles were dripping and breaking off the eaves
- The temperatures had risen into the 50s
- And the sun was shining brightly.

Yes, it was an auspicious time – so I put my red rubber boots on and went outside to see...

To see if something had begun.

- To see if the tender green sprouts of crocuses had poked out of the soil.
- To see if the daffodils and hyacinths were pushing up from the earth.
- To see any signs of the rebirth of spring.

It was my annual ritual – awaiting the auspicious time to witness the coming of Spring.

It was just such an auspicious time that God's people were eagerly awaiting.

The time of the Messiah – the time of redemption – the time of restoration to the goodness of God.

Not everyone could wait in the same way, though.

- Young children didn't yet understand.
- The older children had their schooling and chores.

- The mothers and fathers working to put food on the table barely had time for the daily prayers,
 - let alone a focused waiting and expectation.

But the elderly and retired

– the Senior Citizens – of God’s people,

who no longer worked

and who did understand fully what God’s promises meant – **they had time.**

They could devote their lives

to the prayerful watching and waiting

**for the auspicious time of God’s coming to visit
the earth with righteousness and salvation.**

Luke’s Gospel tells us of two such senior citizens who devoted their lives to watching for the auspicious time of God’s coming.

Old Simeon – a man of great age and devout faith.

And Old Anna – a widow and prophet – who spent her days in the temple at prayer.

These two represent more than just themselves

– **they stand for the whole people of God**

– **all who long for the day**

**when God will heal the wounds sin and death have produced in
the whole creation and in the lives of people.**

...

In my childhood spring ritual, there were particular changes in the climate that signaled the auspicious time.

But there were no such regular signs for the coming of the Messiah.

So, of all the babies being brought to the temple in Jerusalem,

how did Simeon and Anna know that *this* baby,

brought by Mary and Joseph,

**is indeed the One promised of old who would save
God's people?**

As Luke tells it, this is the special work of the **Holy Spirit** – to let Simeon and Anna know that this is God's auspicious time

And to lead them to Jesus and identify this child as the anointed of God, the promised Savior and Redeemer.

What is the child to be called? Jesus, Yeshua, the One who saves.

So with tears in his eyes, old Simeon lifts the baby to heaven and sings,
*"Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.*

³⁰ *I have seen your salvation,*

³¹ *which you have prepared for all people.*

*³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”*

And Anna hears his song and begins to praise and thank God for Jesus,
and to tell everybody about the arrival of the Savior.

Simeon tells Mary and Joseph who their child is,
and Anna tells everybody else.

Now is an auspicious time for us— **time for us to go out and see this
new thing that God has begun.**

The baby Jesus is like the crocus sprout or the daffodil leaves peeking
out from under the snow.

In the baby, we cannot yet see what the flower will be – but we know
from God’s promises that he will bring

- **consolation** to those who mourn the consequences of sin,
- **restoration** to the ruins of faith,
- and **redemption** for those who are slaves to the evil one.

And at this end of the ages, we know what sword pierced Mary’s soul
– that same sword that pierced the side of her beloved son Jesus as he
hung on the cross,

giving his life for the life of all people.

**And we know that he is the first to rise from the dead and bring
with him all who trust him for mercy and forgiveness.**

So now is God's auspicious time – the time of his favor toward his people.

The time of mercy and justice

The time of new life.

For us – you and me and all the people of the world.

For in the midst of the cold, dark, and faithless world

– the world where

- human consumption affects the climate,
- where fake news trumps the truth,
- where pain is so great that people die trying to escape it,
- where poverty threatens the security of children
- and fear prevents us from knowing our neighbors,

Into this world – where you and I live, and work, and play, and love –

Jesus is born

– and his is the new birth that restores everything to God's design.

...

No, it is not finished yet. The Salvation project is still underway.

The Holy Spirit is still leading people to Jesus.

And people of God, like Simeon and Anna,

we are the means by which the world knows that Jesus is the Savior,

- the one who comes to free us from sin,

- redeem us from the devil's clutches,
- and empower us with life and peace beyond our own making.

We are the ones who lift up Jesus to the world singing "Here is your God! Here is our Savior!"

We are the ones whose greatest joy is to tell others, "Jesus is here to make everything right."

He is here to heal and forgive,

to comfort and console **with his victory over death.**

So when people ask – as they often do

– If this is true, why is there still so much pain and evil in the world?

We can look at Jesus in the arms of old Simeon, with old Anna bending over him and say,

"Well, just as the sprout is but the beginning of growth, so the baby is just the beginning of salvation.

The fact that Jesus came as a baby – and not as full-grown – is so that we might grow in faith and new life even as he grew and matured in wisdom.

So, too, there is still pain and evil in the world because not everyone has yet gone out to see the new thing God has begun in Jesus.

Not everyone has come to faith in the Savior.

What a blessing and privilege it is for us to be part of God's mission to make Jesus known as the Savior and Redeemer of all people.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen