

Contemporary Reading: *Wait and See* a poem by Richard Baulkham from *Tumbling into Light: Collected Poems*)

In the drab waiting-room
the failed travellers, resigned, sleep
on the hard benches, inured
to postponement and foul coffee.
Hope has given up on them.

There are also the impatient,
pacing platforms, and the driven,
purple with frustration, abusing
their mobiles, for the hardest part
of waiting is the not doing.

Truly to wait is pure dependence.
But waiting too long the heart
grows sclerotic. Will it still
be fit to leap when the time comes?
Prayer is waiting with desire.

Two aged lives incarnate
century on century
of waiting for God, their waiting-room
his temple, waiting on his presence,
marking time by practicing

the cycle of the sacrifices,
ferial and festival,
circling onward, spiralling
towards a centre out ahead,
seasons of revolving hope.

Holding out for God who cannot
be given up for dead, holding
him to his promises – not now,
not just yet, but soon, surely,
eyes will see what hearts await.

Pause

For words of spiritual insight in contemporary expression.

We give thanks.

Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified, as laid down by the Law of Moses, the couple took Jesus up to Jerusalem and presented him to God. For it's written in the Law of our God, "Every firstborn heir is to be consecrated to God." They likewise came to offer in sacrifice "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accord with the dictate of the Law of our God.

Now there lived in Jerusalem a man named Simeon. He was devout and just, anticipating the consolation of Israel, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. She had revealed to Simeon that he wouldn't see death until he had seen the Messiah of God. Prompted by her, Simeon came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child to perform the customary rituals of the Law, 28 he took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Now, O God, you can dismiss your servant in peace,
just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the peoples to see—
a light of revelation to the Gentiles
and the glory of your people Israel."

As the child's mother and father stood there marvelling at the things that were being said, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, the mother, "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that is rejected, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare. And a sword will pierce your heart as well."

There was a woman named Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was also a prophet. She had lived a long life, seven years with her husband, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple, worshiping day and night, fasting and praying. Coming up at that moment, she gave thanks to God and talked about the child to all who anticipated the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the couple had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the Law of God, they returned to Galilee and their own town of Nazareth. The child grew in size and strength. They were filled with wisdom and the grace of God was with them.

Pause

For words of challenge and inspiration in scripture.

Thanks be to God.