

# Pastoral REFLECTIONS

December 22, 2024

## The Reason for the Season

The Christmas season does not erase all the events that may have occurred in our lives this past year. For some people, it may be an added financial burden. For some, the pain of losing a loved one heightens in this season because of all the things that the person did during Christmas that are missed. Christmas may be the culmination of events, but it does not erase them. A reflection on what Christmas was like for those who God used to establish this magnificent act of God in human history may refresh us.

When you reflect on what Christ meant for Joseph, Mary, and all the mothers in Jerusalem who had lost their sons, it was a very stressful time.

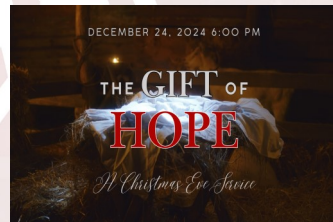
Joseph, who had to make plans for a year to build a house and prepare for a wedding, is told by his fiancé that she is with child immaculately conceived from God. This thrusts her life and his as well in a direction they never imagined. Her life has now moved from Bethlehem to a dirty manger on a journey to Egypt. A journey with no rest stops, no hotels or restroom facilities for anyone can not be pleasant. I can't imagine that for a pregnant woman. There are some glorious moments of angels, shepherds in the field, and Magi with gifts, but that does not erase what it was like for them day-to-day trying to care for an infant in a distant land with a husband who had to find work each day. They did not become rich because Jesus was given to them. They did not become powerful. They had to move from one place to another, brave the winter, and face several challenges. Mary had to bury her husband (now a single mother with several children), and watch her oldest son wrongfully accused and nailed to a cross. At the cross, she needed a home; Christ provided her protection through John. How could they endure all of this, and Mary and her son eventually accept Him as the Christ; her Savior (Acts 2:14)?

Christmas, then, was about purpose, and it should remain that way. It is about Immanuel; God being with us. It was, therefore, honorable, not just stressful. As a result of the resurrection, He is permanently with us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). The world cannot say Christ was not born. It is an event in space and time, historical and factual. The only debate that is left is the resurrection. If we lose the purpose, the debate gets more decisive for the doubters. So, like Herod, the world wants to steal it and call it the holidays (the world doesn't do that for any other religion). It's about Santa Claus and reindeer. It is about shopping and eating, not worship like the shepherds and Magi. Just like Herod, they try to profit from Christ's birth, rather than be saved by His death and resurrection.

What does Christmas mean to you?



# UPCOMING Events



**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE—12/24 6 PM**  
Join us for a Christmas Eve service like no other on December 24, 2024 at 6 pm, where the LWFC Drama Ministry and Creative Jams present, "The Gift of HOPE". This amazing service and play will venture into how trials can lead to transformation—how the spirit of Christmas brings us all together. Celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and how the Gift of HOPE is available to all of us all year-long.



**LEGACY YOUTH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**  
Legacy Youth we need you this Christmas season to help stuff the Packs of Love on Dec. 22nd at 11:30 am and to serve the unhoused population of Houston on Christmas Day. Register at <https://bit.ly/UMTChristmas2024> and for more information contact **Natividad Smith** at [nds\\_smith@yahoo.com](mailto:nds_smith@yahoo.com)



**URBAN MISSIONS TEAM OUTREACH DECEMBER 25, 2024—8:00 AM**  
Join UMT as we go out as a church to serve the unhoused of downtown Houston near Minute Maid Park. Meet at LWFC at 8:00 am to load the buses, to pray, and caravan near Minute Maid Park. We will be distributing Packs of Love and praying with the unhoused. This is a churchwide opportunity to serve for all ages. Dress accordingly for the outside temperatures.



**ONE SERVICE AT 9:30 AM & DEACON FAMILY FELLOWSHIP**  
Living Word Family, join our church body for ONE SERVICE at 9:30 a.m. followed by the last Deacon Family Fellowship of the year. End your year with your church in joy, fun, love and fellowship! For more information, contact **Rashaud Hudson** or **Keron Brown**.



**JOIN THE NET TEAM**  
Join our NET Evangelism Team that goes out to spread the gospel in the community. We have opportunities for you to serve on the street team that goes out, on the hospitality team that provides refreshments, or on the phone team that makes phone calls to spread the good news of Christ. For more information sign up on the events page of the website or contact **Pastor Duane Lawrence** or **Omari Dawson**.



# ORDER OF WORSHIP

Announcements

Communion

Worship In Giving

*Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses*

Special Music

**"A Moment Worth Waiting For"**

*Luke 2:36-38*

Assistant Pastor Pierre Cannings, Ph.D.

Click "Sermon Notes" on the Website

Call to Discipleship

Please remain seated at this time

Visitor's Welcome

Benediction

Children are now required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children's wing.

Infants—6th grade





## A Moment Worth Waiting For Luke 2:36-38

### I. A Woman Waiting v. 36

- a. Jesus Brought to the Temple
- b. Prophetess
  - i. προφήτις She was known as such before this occasion. Like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and the daughters of Philip, Anna was a woman divinely inspired to make known God's will to others
  - ii. As a προφήτις (Rev. 2:20) Anna possessed divine insight into things normally hidden from ordinary people, and hence was able to recognise who the child in the temple was and then to proclaim his significance to those who were interested
- c. Daughter of Phanuel
- d. Tribe of Asher
- e. Advanced in Years
  - i. Seven years after marriage
  - ii. 84 years a widow
    1. Jewish and Greco-Roman culture often viewed widows who never remarried as pious and faithful. Judith, a famous widow in Jewish tradition, was said to have lived as a widow till her death at 105. If one adds the two numbers given in the text here, seven and eighty-four (taking eighty-four as the length of Anna's widowhood rather than her age), and she was married at the common age of fourteen, one could see her as 105
    2. The reference to Anna's age indicates her long and single-minded devotion to God. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:6) and Simeon (2:25), Anna was devout and righteous and a model for the believer.
    3. She was of great age, because she had lived seven years as a wife and eighty-four years by herself (Rom. 7:25) as a widow. The ἔως draws attention to the great length of her widowhood; "up to as much as" (Mt. 18:21, 22). That she should be considerably over a hundred years old is not incredible.
    4. That she had never, in spite of her early widowhood, married again, was held to be very honourable to her: comp. 1 Tim. 5:3, 5, to her: comp. 1 Tim. 5:3, 5.

### II. A Woman Serving v. 37

- a. Never Left the Temple
  - i. Simeon comes to the temple under the influence of the Spirit; Anna (Hannah) dwells there continually. The sight of the Messiah makes him at once long for death; it seems to give her renewed vigor of life.
  - ii. but spent her time there in religious devotions. ἀφίσταμαι is frequent in Lk. with the intransitive sense 'to go away' (4:13; 8:13; 13:27; Acts, 5x; rest of NT, 4x; transitive, Acts 5:37)
- b. Serving Night and Day
  - i. Fasting and Prayers
  - ii. Night and day" corresponds well to the Jewish reckoning of time since a day began at sunset (cf. Acts 20:31; 26:7). This expression should probably not be pressed to mean twenty-four hours a day, i.e., she lived in the temple, because women were not normally allowed to stay in the temple during the night. It is best therefore to interpret it in the popular sense of all the time, i.e., she was "in church" all day long (cf. 24:53).

### The Moment She Waited For v. 38

- a. Gave Thanks
  - i. She gave thanks to God. This serves as an example of model Christian behavior.
- b. Speak of Him to all Looking
  - i. Like the shepherds, Anna includes in her praise proclamation about him (sc. Jesus) to those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (cf. 1:68; 2:25). The phraseology is based on Is. 52:9
- c. Redemption of Israel
  - i. Looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. The "redemption of Jerusalem" (cf. 1:68, "redeemed his people") serves as a synonym for the "consolation of Israel" in 2:25
  - ii. Being a prophetess, Anna recognized the child and Jesus' salvific role. Just as Simeon's righteous and devout character qualified him to give reliable information concerning Jesus, so Anna's prophetic role and piety (2:37) qualified her in a similar way. She clearly was a reliable spokesperson for the reader
  - iii. the Pharisees, who expected a political deliverer; the Sadducees, who expected nothing; and the blessed few, who expected the spiritual deliverance or consolation (ver. 25) of Jerusalem.

# BOOKSTORE

'TIS THE SEASON

BUY YOUR  
PERFECT GIFT IN  
THE BOOKSTORE



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING  
EMAIL GAIL O'NEAL AT GONEAL@LWFELLOWSHIPCHURCH.ORG

SUNDAY DECEMBER 29TH

Deacon Family  
Fellowship

JOIN US FOR ONE SERVICE AT 9:30AM

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**Grieving:** Lucretia Lewis & family, Vicki Wilson & family, Tomitra Wiley & family, Arthur Latham & family, Dean'na Mitchell & family, Mary Wheatley and Carol Dickerson and their families, and Randy Hadnot & family.

**Health and Healing:** Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Cici Sharpe, Margaret Baptiste, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Eric White, Pat Crawford, Tanisha Collins, Jon Heard, Rutha Patrick, Kevin Carey, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clarke, Clara Williams, Kathryn Ford-Cheatham, Anthony Thomas, Beverly Austin, Joshua Williams, Ruby Hunter, Elizabeth Bean, Patsy Gatterson, Joyce Newsome, Arleatha Housley, Patrina Johnson, Elvis Anderson, Cheryl Walker, Walter Banks, Angelique Hudson, Sheryle Crowe, Arnie Glover, Clarence Coleman, Diana Doyle, Vivian Phillips, Shannon Rice, Freddie Reid, Janie Buchanan, Yolanda Barnes, Rochelle Carter Brown, Terrance Ford, Robert Edwards, Beatrice Williams, Jessie Austin, and Evelyn Harvey.

A MOMENT  
WORTH WAITING FOR

Luke 2:36-38