

Messiah Moravian Church (Virtual Sermon)  
First Sunday After Christmas Day  
December 27, 2020  
Text: Luke 2:22-40  
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## SIMEON'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

For some of my thoughts about today's Gospel passage, I am indebted to David Lose's commentary on Simeon.

One of the many things I have missed during this Covid Christmas season is not being able to sing favorite Christmas carols among fellow believers. I miss the majestic organ fanfare that bills to a crescendo for the opening note of "Joy To The World" when the congregation practically shouts "Joy." I miss singing "Angels We Have Heard On High" with others who improvise our own harmonies on the sliding notes of "Gloria" in the chorus. A few folks harmonize beautifully, while the rest of us, well, let's just say we are joyful.

But the good news is that there are still 10 days of Christmas left, according to the church calendar. We can still belt out those carols in the privacy of our homes! In our world of constant images and noise and incessant talk, it's easy to forget that sometimes, when words fail or become trite, all we can do is sing.

In today's Gospel lesson Simeon knows, as does Anna, that sometimes all we can do is sing. They know the power of song and prayer to create meaning and identity and courage in a way that words alone seldom can.

Before the fall of the Berlin wall on November 9, 1989, the citizens of the city of Leipzig peacefully protested week after week. Gathering every Monday evening by candlelight around St. Nikolai Church, the church were Bach composed so many of his cantatas, they sang. For two months their numbers grew from a little more than 1000 people to more than 300,000 protesters, over half the citizens of the city, singing songs of hope and protest and injustice. They sang until their songs shook the powers of the nation and changed the world.

Later, after the fall of the wall, a journalist asked one of the commanders of the East German secret police why they haven't crushed these protest like they had done so many others. He replied, "We had no contingency plans for songs."

I wonder how startled, perhaps even frightened, Mary and Joseph were when an unknown old man, face aglow in religious ecstasy, radiating confidence in his own personal revelation, suddenly approached them, took their precious infant and then began to sing or chant?

Eugene Peterson's translation of Luke captures the songlike quality of his outburst:



upon its own destruction, God is at work and, we, his beloved children as well, cannot help but proclaim, along with Simeon, that salvation is near.

So let us rejoice with Simeon and his carol of praise, acknowledging that we have seen God's face in this small baby, sent for all people. Just as God was incarnated in Jesus long ago, so too is God embodied in each and every one of us right here and right now.

In these remaining ten days of Christmas, even if we cannot sing together as a congregation, let us sing to celebrate that Christ came for us so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Let's sing carols of hope and joy! Let's sing loudly or softly, in the shower, at a stoplight, on your morning walk, raking leaves in the yard—wherever and whenever you discern God's abiding love. Sing like no one—no one, not your family, friends or even strangers—sing like no one is listening because, sometimes, in God's presence, all we can do is sing.

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Dear Lord,  
Our lives flow on in endless songs.  
Above earth's lamentation  
We hear the real though far off hymn That hails a new  
creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife We hear that  
music ringing.  
It finds an echo in our souls.  
How can we keep from singing?

No storm can shake our inmost calm While to that  
Rock we're clinging.  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, How can we  
keep from singing? Amen.

### **BENEDICTION:**

We have seen the Savior.  
Let us go now in peace.  
May we be lights to illumine everyone we meet, And may  
our lives reflect the glory of God In the face of Jesus  
Christ. Amen.