

“What Would You Tell the Parents of a Newborn Baby?”

Luke 2: 25-35

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What would you tell the parents of a newborn baby? What advice would you give them? My humorous side would tell them to fasten their seat belts and then reassure them that they will get a full night's rest, in about twenty-five years. My serious side would tell them that the greatest joys and sorrows they will experience in life will revolve around this child. Chances are the child they birthed will take them places they have never been emotionally.

Perhaps this was what Simeon was saying to Mary and Joseph in the temple just days after Jesus was born. Luke tells us that Simeon approached Mary and Joseph, took their baby in his arms and thanked God for allowing him to see and hold this child of promise and hope.

It was Simeon's words to Mary that were so emotionally charged, though. He turned to her and said, *“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too”* Luke 2:34-35.

What was Simeon saying to Mary through these prophetic words? I sense two things, one she welcomed and one she didn't.

What was it she was glad to hear? That Jesus was going to make a difference in the world, a big difference. What parent would not beam with pride upon hearing this, especially from a holy man? Mary had to smile upon hearing Simeon's prediction.

Just what did Simeon predict? He said that Jesus would cause the falling and rising of many in Israel. Only someone with great influence and power could do this.

What did Simeon mean by this? From my vantage point, I think he meant that Jesus would be responsible for lifting up the oppressed, the forgotten and the weary. He would lift them all the way into the presence of God. On the other hand, he would expose their deceptive oppressors and bring them toppling down from their lavish towers.

Then, what did Mary not want to hear? That Jesus would pay a high price for pursuing justice and exposing evil. As a matter of fact, the price would be so high that her pain would be immeasurable. It would be similar to the pain that would be felt if a large sword pierced her heart.

Do you think a day went by that Mary did not dwell on the dark side of Simeon's prophecy? I cannot imagine it.

Holman Hunt has a painting titled, “The Shadow of the Cross.” In it he depicted the interior of the carpenter's shop with Joseph and Jesus at work. When Jesus paused from his labor and stretched in the doorway, the shadow of the cross formed on the wall behind him. For many, this is not the focal point of the picture, though. Instead, it is the expression of fear and sadness reflected upon Mary's face as she stares at the shadow of death on that wall and contemplates its meaning for her son. I wonder if Hunt was thinking of Simeon's prophecy when he painted Mary's expression?

How do you think Simeon's prophecy influenced Mary as a mother? It had to have a profound effect upon her. It had to influence the kind of person she became and

home she provided for Jesus. I think it caused her to do some things that perhaps she would have done anyway, but now she would do for sure.

I think Simeon's words caused Mary to **pray a lot**. No doubt she prayed for wisdom, understanding, strength and stamina. Surely she prayed everyday that God would lead and guide her son to be the person he needed to be and do the things he was sent to do.

I think Simeon's words caused Mary to do all she could to **provide Jesus with a peaceful, happy home**. She wanted conflict and pain to be no part of his home as a child if that was waiting for him as an adult.

I think Simeon's words **compelled her to be the best person she could be** so that she would not lead Jesus astray or distract him from his Father's business. After hearing Simeon, the last thing she wanted to do was confuse Jesus by being a bad role model.

I think Simeon's words **motivated Mary to make the most of every day** and even every moment with her son. His time was going to be limited. She did not have the luxury of wasting any.

I think Simeon's words caused Mary to **let Jesus know how much she loved and appreciated him**. Evidently, not everyone in his life would embrace him. She was going to make sure that he knew that at least one person loved him unconditionally and always would.

No wonder Jesus looked down from the cross even in great pain and agony and asked John to take care of his mother. She had taken such good care of him.

On this Mothers' Day, let me challenge every parent to provide the kind of home that Mary must have provided for Jesus. Make your home a happy, peaceful place where love abounds and gratitude is expressed. Make your home a place where values are modeled as well as taught and there is no confusion about what it means to be good. Make your home a place where the pursuit of justice and mercy are on an equal footing with the pursuit of a quality education and a fulfilling career. Make your home a place where children are encouraged to be Good Samaritans lifting up the most vulnerable around them. Make your home a house of prayer where God's will supersedes all others. And if you do, I have no doubt that you, too, will have children that will make a difference in this world, a big difference.