

A Prayer for the New Year

Opening Prayer/Call to Worship

Rev. Mindi-Welton Mitchell

A new day has dawned, a new year begun
O Lord, call us so we may hear Your voice

The world turns to hopes and dreams of the future
O Lord, keep us in Your ways and on Your path

We enter this new year with hope and excitement
O Lord, remind us that You lead us. O Lord, guide us as we look to You and worship You. Amen.

The Lesson

Luke 2:22-40 (NRSV)

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will

be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Responding to the Word

Luke reports that after Jesus left the temple that he grew and became strong and filled with wisdom. One of our goals in 2024 is to grow in faith and to grow in wisdom as we seek to become the people that God has created us to be. We believe that with God’s help, we can grow in strength and wisdom as we grow closer to God through things like worship, prayer, Bible Study and serving others. The new year can often be a good time to evaluate how we can intentionally seek growth by evaluating what to keep, what to let go of, and what to prioritize in the New Year.

Looking Back on 2023: Questions for Reflection

When you think back on 2023, what were the most memorable parts of your year?

What were the biggest moments of joy from last year? What were the successes that you want to celebrate?

What were the biggest challenges you faced? Were there any habits or patterns you would like to change in the new year?

Looking Ahead to 2024: Setting Faithful Intentions

What are you most looking forward to in the new year?

How do you hope to grow closer to God in the new year?

What is one thing you want to leave behind and one thing you want to add to your life in 2024?

Closing Prayer

Rev. Daniel Ogle

Gracious God, we thank you for the beginning of this new year. Fill us with your love and draw near to us so that we can grow in wisdom and stature as we seek to become who you have created us to be. Forgive us our sins and lead us out of the habits and patterns that keep us separated from you. Restore us with your grace and renew us with your love in this new year so that we might grow closer to you and share your love at home, at school, at work and in all the places we go in this new year. Amen.

Resources Cited:

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