

**UNDER THE INFLUENCE****Luke 2:21-40**

**INTRO:** You can really tell when people are under the influence. I'm not talking about the person who is weaving back and forth on the highway because they've had too much to drink or smoked a joint or a hit of some drug legal or illicit. And I'm not talking about the person who is drawn on by the crowd and worked into an emotional frenzy by a speech or a concert. I'm not referring to the person who gets lost in the power of a beautiful song. These are all examples of being under the influence – but what I want to talk about today is being under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Our text today is a vivid picture of that. (Read Luke 2:21-40 – because of the length of the scripture it is not on the screen)

We have Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus – both under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We have Simeon, a righteous and devout man in Jerusalem who blessed Jesus and his parents as he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And we have an elderly widow name Anna who lived at the temple and also under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Let's see how. First, Mary and Joseph showed the influence of the Holy Spirit in how they did everything . . .

**By the book**

- Sometimes being by the book can be seen as a negative characteristic. It implies inflexibility and an inability to adapt. That is not what I'm talking about when it comes to Jesus's parents. Instead I want to point out that they were careful to do everything according to the law. God's word meant something to them so they followed it. Verse 21 says *On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus.* This is very much in keeping with the law. They didn't miss a beat. The day of circumcision came and they went to the rabbi to have it cared for - they didn't stray. And notice, they name him Jesus because that was the name both of them were separately instructed to name the baby who was to be born. (Joseph – Matthew 1:21, Mary Luke 1:31). They were obediently by the book.
- And roughly a month later – when Baby Jesus was 40 days old, they took him to the Temple in Jerusalem for the required purification rites. The law required that the firstborn be consecrated to the Lord. In actuality it was a payment to the temple as well as a sacrifice. The sacrifice was to be a lamb, but because of their poverty, Joseph and Mary offered doves or pigeons. They were too poor to offer a lamb, for their baby who was the ultimate lamb.
- When it was time and according to the law these godly people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, did everything by the book. We'd do well to follow suit. This book isn't a suggestion box – it's the Word of the Living God. So what if we're accused of being out of touch or naïve, let's go by the Book.
- Next we see Simeon, under the influence, and . . .

**Living in anticipation**

- Let's look at Simeon a bit. F. B. Meyer describes him like this: *“Note the concentric circles of Simeon's character: “a man”; “a man in Jerusalem” – i.e., a Jew; righteous toward his fellows, “devout” toward God; looking; Spirit anointed, to whom it was “revealed”; Christ in his arms. What more can be said?”* Talk about under the influence!
- Simeon was looking for the Messiah. I've told you about it so many times, you're probably sick of it, but I'm going to tell you again: When I was on my sabbatical back in 2012 I was away from Kathy for five weeks before she joined me for two weeks in England, Scotland, and Ireland. I desperately missed her. So when I arrived at Heathrow Airport in London from Nairobi a couple hours ahead of her flight in from Chicago, I didn't just sit around waiting – it had been twenty-six hours since I had left Eldoret in Western Kenya the day before and I needed freshening up. So I went to the washroom and shaved and brushed my teeth and made sure my African suit looked as spiffy as possible. And then I figured out where she would be arriving and I watched that gate with giddy anticipation for probably an hour. And finally, there she was. And she looked even better than my anticipation had conjured up. So I can imagine what this holy man named Simeon felt as he looked for signs that the Messiah's arrival was imminent. We get the idea that he was old – but that he had been promised *“by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen*

*the Lord's Messiah.*" (v. 26b). And being the man of God that he was, he took God at his word. He was looking for the Messiah.

- Not only that, Simeon was eagerly waiting for the Messiah! It wasn't just sitting around waiting for word of the arrival of God's anointed – he was regularly checking in. When God tells you it'll happen – it WILL happen. So you can hardly wait.
- And when Simeon had seen God's Messiah, he knew he could now be promoted to glory. It was now okay for him to go. It's like this: Back in 1978 I drove home from New Mexico. I was eager to get back to my girl – that same Kathy I was waiting for in London Heathrow – but she was 17 and still had her daddy's last name. I was so eager to get home, I drove straight through with a few rest stops for cat-naps here and there. I finally pulled into my parents' driveway at 4 AM on Sunday morning August 12, and as I walked into the house my mother walked into the kitchen and sat down heavily and said, "*I don't know when I'm ever going to stop worrying about you, Boy!*" Well she did stop worrying about me 5 years ago when she was received into the arms of her Savior.
- Listen to G. Campbell Morgan's description of the blessing Simeon received when he reveled in the gift of holding his Savior in his arms: It's long but it's wonderful,  
*With "The Child in his arms, he said in effect: Now Thy bond-slave, held of Thee by the terms of law, and bound to Thy progress in the world, is set free to pass over. To hold that Baby in his arms was to have death revealed to him, not as dissolution, but as emancipation. The great and glorious fact that would emerge presently when this Child had bowed to death, and had broken it's power; the fact which presently found expression in apostolic writing, and through the centuries in countless hymns, that He abolished death; of this Simeon was already conscious. He held only the Baby in his arms. How dare I say only the Baby! I love George Macdonald's poem about the Baby, but I always feel that it is only perfectly fulfilled in this Baby,*  
*"Where did you come from, Baby dear,*  
*Out of the everywhere into the here?"*  
*Simeon held that Baby in his arms . . . and sang "Now O Despot, thy bond-slave thou art setting free."*  
*And the reason for his confidence he declared;*  
*"For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."*  
*Thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples"* (End Quote)
- During the Christmas season I had funerals for two people – one was our own little Ruth Sulcer. My own dad died on December 10. You know, for a servant of God – for us Christ Followers, Christmas is a really good time to die. Know why? Because ANY TIME IS A GOOD TIME FOR A CHRIST FOLLOWER TO DIE! Because our eyes have seen his salvation. That's why, like Simeon, when we're under the influence, we live in anticipation. Instead of being worried about what a mess this world is, let's live with the joyful expectancy that comes from knowing the salvation Jesus provides. And, for the world's sake, don't keep it to yourself.
- Anna eagerly anticipated too. And like Mary and Joseph, and Simeon, she was under the influence and she was also . . .

### **Completely submitted**

- There are just three verses about this elderly saint, but this we know about her, she had waited on the Lord and for the Lord for 60+ years. There was expectancy as she worshipped, fasted, and prayed in the temple day in and day out. And she too was there as Jesus, the Messiah was brought to the temple. She gave thanks and looked forward, even with more anticipation for the redemption that God promised through this baby.
- We don't have to live in a physical temple to be completely submitted, but it is required. If we say "Jesus is the Lord of my life." then let's live it! After, that's what happens when you're under the influence.

**Conclusion:** I need to wrap this up so we can truly celebrate Communion. Our text says that Joseph and Mary, having done all they were required to do, went back to their home. They did everything by the book. We don't know how long Simeon waited after held Baby Jesus in his arms until he got the reward he was waiting for but we know he lived in anticipation. And we know that Anna, Simeon, Mary and Joseph were all in and totally

submitted to God as they each served in their own unique way. This is the very essence of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit and it's a good thing to live out in our own lives. Amen.