

Harsh Words

...so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Luke 2:35 (NIV)

Every parent recalls easily the detail surrounding the birth of their first child. Those of us who have welcomed several children into our families over the years may have fuzzy memories about detail of the younger children. But the firstborn is etched forever in our minds.

Becoming a parent is such a momentous event. We love to recount to our children about when we learned they were on their way, what the grandparents said when we announced the news, the name of the doctor who delivered the baby – and so on.

Mary and Joseph were no different. Undoubtedly they rejoiced as they went to the temple a few days after the birth, according to the Law of Moses. What an exciting day it was for them!

As they went into the temple, an elderly man of God

met them and asked to hold the infant. Mary obliged, and as the man held Jesus and looked into His face, the Lord spoke to him and told him that this infant was the promised Messiah.

He immediately said some remarkable words about Jesus that must have thrilled Mary and Joseph. They knew who He was, but to have public confirmation like this was more than they could have asked.

Then the elderly man, Simeon, said something that startled and horrified the parents. He looked directly at Mary and told her that her heart would break over the child. The words were, "a sword shall pierce your own soul."

About 30 years later, Mary would recall this prophecy as she stood, a widow, at the foot of Jesus' cross and weep at the dreadful sight of her

sinless Son being crucified as a common criminal.

That day in the temple her joy was mingled with confused sorrow as she celebrated her Son's arrival.

In our faith journey we may have experiences similar to Mary's. We have incredible joy and it sometimes comes wrapped in pain. This is the way of God's mysterious providence. And as the poet William Cowper wrote:

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

If you experience the mingling of joy and sorrow patiently wait on the Lord until He explains to you the wisdom of His way.

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