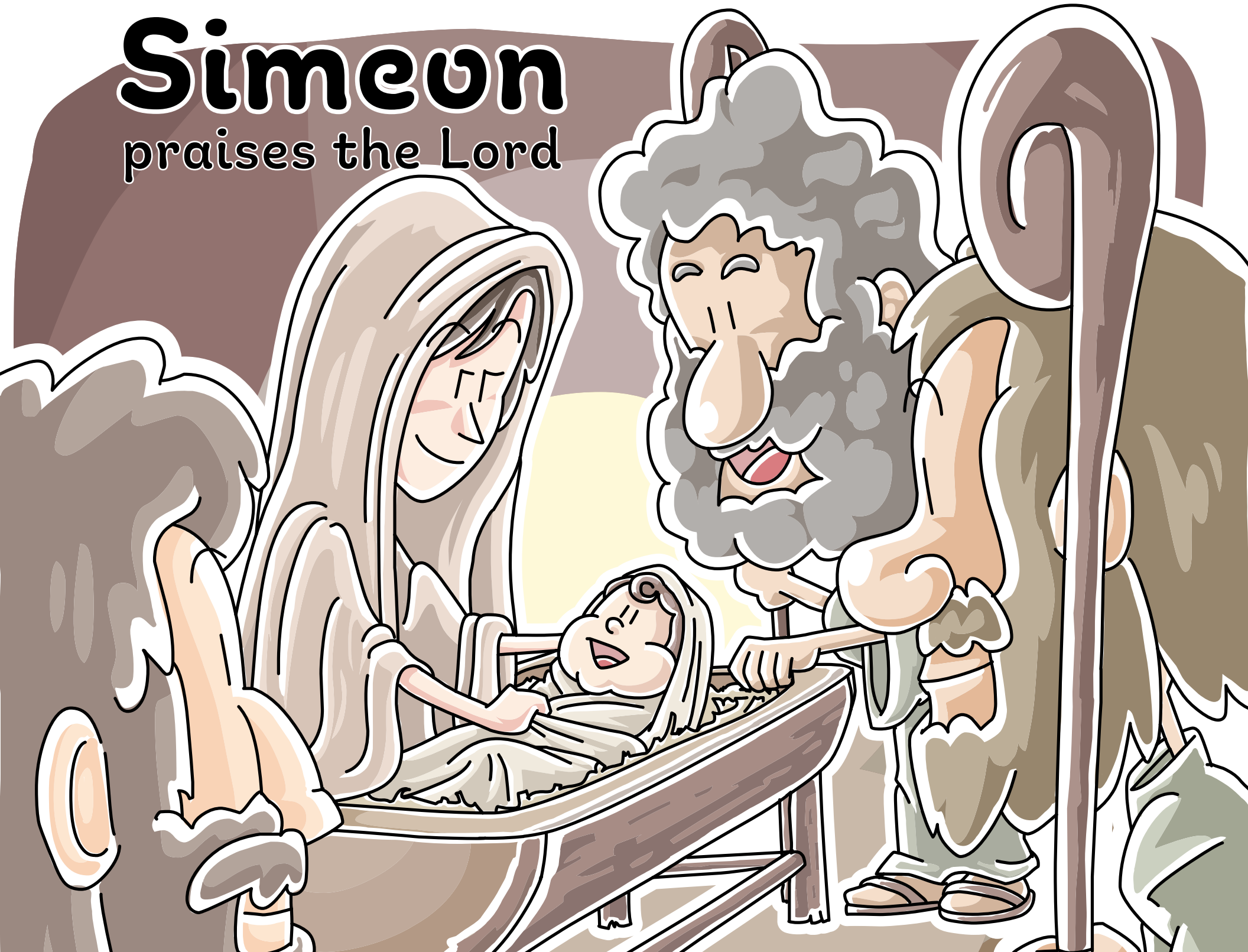
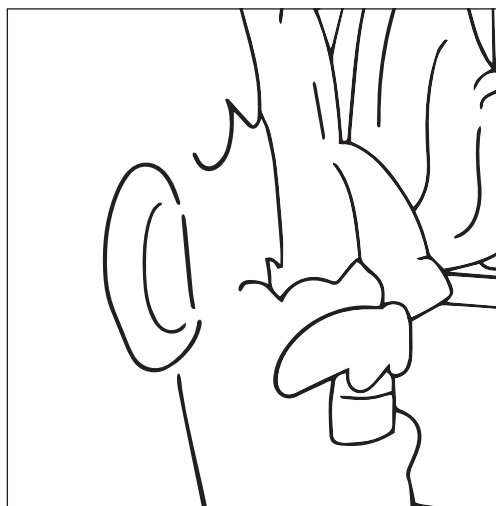


Simeon

praises the Lord



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Luke 2:22-35

The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each firstborn baby boy belongs to the Lord." The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving at least a pair of doves or two young pigeons. So that is what Mary and Joseph did.

At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God's Spirit came to him and told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God, "Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me. With my own eyes I have seen what you have done to save your people, and foreign nations will also see this. Your mighty power is a light for all nations, and it will bring honour to your people Israel."

Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said. Then he blessed them and told Mary, "This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him, and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking."

Commentary

All life is a gift from God, and every child is a sign of God's generous love to the world. To help people remember this, the Jewish laws said that the firstborn child in a family 'belonged to God' and that there needed to be a special ceremony to celebrate the birth. Jesus was Mary's firstborn son and, because Bethlehem wasn't far from the temple in Jerusalem, they went there for the service; however, it didn't turn out quite as they expected. An elderly man called Simeon turned up and began singing praises to God about how special Jesus would be.

Simeon was a man of prayer and, like many in Israel, was waiting for God to come and rescue his country, just as the promises in the Old Testament said would happen one day. Simeon had the faith to recognise that this rescue had arrived in the shape of a baby and he rejoiced to have seen him. He sang about what Jesus would do, but also spoke some sad words to Mary, because the way Jesus would one day rescue the world would break her heart. Can you work out why?

Questions

- ▶ This story takes place about six weeks after Christmas, at the beginning of February on our calendar. What new things about Jesus do we learn from what Simeon said?
- ▶ What sort of man was Simeon?
- ▶ Mary and Joseph always knew that Jesus was special and that he was from God, so why were they surprised by what Simeon told them?
- ▶ Mary and Joseph brought doves to say 'thank you' to God for the gift of a new baby. What could you give to God to say 'thank you' for something?



Visual aid

Use a walking stick as a way to introduce old man Simeon, who had been waiting patiently all his life to meet Jesus.



Activity idea

Simeon sang a song of praise to God as he held the baby Jesus—his very own, belated Christmas carol. He talks about Jesus being a light for the whole world. Cut out a picture of the earth and then pierce it all over with tiny pinpricks. Hold it carefully in front of a candle or a small light in a dark corner of the room and see how the whole world is lit up.



Prayer idea

Take it in turns to compose a short prayer of thanks for every person in your family. Thank God for each person's personality, gifts, funny ways, support and love. Make sure that everyone has a chance to offer a thank-you prayer in this way, for someone else rather than themselves.

Key verse

Your mighty power is a light for all nations. (Luke 2:32).

Old Testament story link

Isaiah 11:1-9: This is Isaiah's song about the child who will come as the true king to rescue everyone one day.



Colour me!

