

Two Wise Owls

(a reading and drama based on Luke 2:22-40 and Luke 1:8-22)

Scene: the temple in Jerusalem forty days after the birth of Jesus.

Cast: Narrator; Simeon; Anna; Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus.

Narrator Now there lived in Jerusalem two wise owls, Simeon and Anna. (*Simeon and Anna totter in from within the congregation and mime actions such as singing, worship, prayer, dusting and welcoming those who come in while the narrator is speaking. After a while, Simeon needs to sit down, and does so where he can see what is going on everywhere.*) They were very old, and spent their days at the temple praising God and welcoming those who came into the temple. They dedicated their lives to God and were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were waiting expectantly for God's word to be fulfilled. Anna was a prophet and had lived in the temple ever since her husband died when she was young – she was now 84. Simeon had had a special message from God that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah, so he was constantly on the look-out as people came in through the door.

They knew it could not be long now – Simeon was getting very frail. Besides, something wonderful and baffling had happened a year and a half ago, so they knew that God was on the move. They had been at the annual service when a priest goes into the Most Holy Place. Zachariah, the chosen priest, had gone in, and not re-appeared for far longer than expected. When he eventually came out, he was as white as a sheet and totally unable to speak – it was obvious that he had seen a vision. At the end of the service, Simeon and Anna had taken care of him and taken him home to his wife Elizabeth and explained to her what they could. They had gone back to visit him time and again and learned of the announcement of a prophet who would prepare the way for Messiah. What times of prayer and praise they had had together in that home – even though Zachariah still could not speak!

After about 6 months, when Elizabeth was finding it difficult to move around as her pregnancy advanced, they had been delighted to find that her god-daughter Mary had come to look after her – a young woman of faith, who was devoted to Elizabeth, joined in the prayer and praise, and who was obviously going to be a wonderful godmother to young John. There was something mysterious about her – an inner smile, and yet some sort of inner trouble. You never could understand the young!

(*Enter through the main door Mary carrying the baby Jesus and accompanied by Joseph*) So imagine the scene when Mary walks into the temple

Simeon (*Standing up from his chair with a broad grin on his face and hobbling over to where Mary has come in as fast as he can*) Mary! What a lovely surprise! Welcome to the house of God! What are you doing here, and who are these with you?

Mary Greetings, Simeon. We thought we might see you and Anna here. How are you? Let me introduce you. This is my husband, Joseph ...

Simeon Your husband? I had no idea that you were married.

Mary It's a long story. I'll tell you sometime. And this is my son Jesus. We've come here to consecrate him to the Lord.

Anna (*Coming over and giving Mary a big hug*) Welcome, Mary! The Lord be with you!

Mary (*Showing her the baby*) As you can see, He has been. This is Jesus.

Simeon *(Still bewildered)* I can't believe it! It's not even a year since we saw you with Zachariah and Elizabeth.

Anna *(Taking control before he puts his foot in it even more)* Now, Joseph, why don't you take Mary and Jesus to the office to arrange the ceremony, and we'll catch up with you later? *(Exeunt Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Anna turns to Simeon)* Simeon, you're a prize turnip!

Simeon What do you mean? How can she have got married and had a baby since we last saw her? I wouldn't have thought it of her!

Anna Open your eyes. What is the child called?

Simeon Jesus.

Anna And what does that mean?

Simeon He saves.

Anna And what have we been waiting for? A Saviour who is Christ the Lord?

Simeon *(With growing understanding)* Noooooh! Yes! *(He sits down and wipes his brow)* And I nearly missed Him! *(By this time, Joseph, Mary and Jesus are up in the sanctuary presenting Jesus to the Lord. As they turn back and come down to centre stage, Simeon hobbles up to them and takes the baby in his arms, and looks up. Anna follows behind him.)* Sovereign Lord, I can die a happy man now, because I have seen your Saviour with my own eyes, the one you have prepared to fulfil your purposes. He will be a light for the whole world, and the glory of God's people Israel.

Mary How do you know this?

Simeon May the Lord bless you and keep you. This child will turn many people's lives upside down. He will reveal truth and cause division and be rejected, and a sword will also pierce your heart. *(He returns the child to Mary.)*

Anna Thanks be to God, and praise His holy name. This child is the hope of all those who long for the restoration of Jerusalem. Let everyone listen to him!

Narrator *(Exeunt Mary and Joseph with Jesus towards the outside door)* Then Mary and Joseph returned home, and the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.