

INTRODUCTION 引言

Valuable things sometimes come in ordinary forms. About two weeks ago a man ate a banana that was worth \$ 120,000 in an art gallery in Miami. Yes, I am talking about the same tropical fruit that sells for 19 cents a pound at Aldi or Kroger. This expensive banana was part of an artwork created by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan. The “masterpiece” is simply a banana attached to a wall with some duct-tape. It is not that hard to be an artist after all! The person who ate the banana was not arrested for the crime. The director of the gallery was not panic either. An assistant taped another banana minutes later. Problem solved! However, because of the weird incident, it drew a lot of visitors to the museum. More photos of the special banana were shared on the social media than even the Mona Lisa portrait. An ordinary but valuable banana became famous. Some 2,000 years ago God gave the mankind a valuable gift. Jesus Christ was born. He is the reason why we gather here this morning to celebrate Christmas. What does Jesus mean to you today? We shall learn from our passage today that our response to the Christmas Child reflects our spiritual status.

有價值的東西有時以平凡的形式出現。大約兩週前，一個人在邁阿密的一家美術館吃了價值 12 萬美元的香蕉。我說的是同樣在 Aldi 或 Kroger 賣 19 分錢一磅的熱帶水果。這根昂貴的香蕉是意大利藝術家毛里齊奧·卡特蘭（Maurizio Cattelan）創作的藝術品的一部分。這件“傑作”就是一根普通的香蕉，用膠帶將它貼在牆上。其實成為一名藝術家一點都不困難！吃掉那根香蕉的人並未因犯罪被捕。美術館的館長也不感到驚慌。幾分鐘後，一名助手用膠帶貼了另一根香蕉。問題解決了！但是，由於這件奇怪的事件，它吸引了很多人到那一所美術館參觀。在社交媒體上分享那根香蕉照片的次數甚至比蒙娜麗莎的肖像還多。一根普通但昂貴的香蕉成名了。大約 2000 年前，神給了人類一份寶貴的禮物。耶穌基督出生了。他是我們今天早上聚集在這裡慶祝聖誕節的原因。今天耶穌對你有什麼特別意義？我們將從今天的經文中學到，我們對聖誕嬰孩的回應反映出我們的屬靈狀況。

In our story, Joseph and Mary, the earthly parents of Jesus, took their baby to the temple. The parents had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. The procedure is to indicate that a Jewish male is in God's covenant. Joseph and Mary named the baby “Jesus,” which was given by the angel earlier. Also, Mary went through a purification ritual. According to Leviticus chapter 12, a woman giving birth to a boy has to remain at home for a total of 40 days. That is similar to the month-long “sit-in” tradition for Chinese. The mom will then present animals to be sacrificed by a priest. After that, she will be declared as ceremonially clean. Besides, all the first-born sons will be dedicated to God. The parents have to pay a sum of money to redeem their sons. All that explains why Joseph and Mary traveled to the temple in Jerusalem. The rest of our story happened when a man named Simeon met the family.

在我們的故事中，約瑟和馬利亞，耶穌地上的父母親，把他們的嬰孩帶到聖殿。他們在耶穌出生後第八天給他行割禮。這個禮儀是表明一個猶太人的男生是在神的約中。約瑟和馬利亞將嬰兒命名為「耶穌」，這是天使早些時候所定的。另外，馬利亞經過了潔淨

的儀式。根據利未記第十二章，生男孩的產婦必須待在家裡總共 40 天。這是類似中國人一個月「坐月子」的傳統。然後，媽媽將付出由祭司獻祭的動物。在那之後，她將被宣佈為禮儀上被潔淨了。此外，所有長子都將奉獻給神。父母必須支付一筆錢才能把兒子贖回。這一切程序解釋了約瑟和馬利亞為何前往耶路撒冷的聖殿。接下來的故事是講述一個名叫西面的人與這家人見面時所發生的事。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Divine One 至聖者

Simeon had been waiting for the coming of the Divine One promised in the Old Testament. The Jews called Him the Messiah, meaning Savior. Simeon had no idea that the Divine One would come as a baby. The passage tells us three times that the Holy Spirit was at work in Simeon. We can understand the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would see the Divine One before he passed away. Simeon was a righteous and devout person. We can say that he is a religious man. Simeon believed in what the Bible says. Therefore, he waited with anticipation for the arrival of the Divine One. On that particular day, the Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to go to the temple to meet the Divine One. How did he receive insider information from God? Surely God can say to us in an audible voice: “Johnny, I am sending you to downtown Memphis to start a new ministry for homeless people!” But more than likely, God speaks to us through the Bible. That is why we call the book God’s Word. When we keep a habit of reading the Bible, God’s truth will be retained in our hearts. Gradually, we will develop a desire to think, say and do things that please God. It is like you will obey your parents if you love them. When you were small, your mom alerted you not to follow strangers. Or your dad taught you to turn counter-clockwise to loosen a screw. Next time when you face the same situation, you recall what your parents told you. Likewise, if you have a close relationship with God, you will follow His instructions. Therefore, if you do not read God’s Word, then whose advice will you follow in your daily life? When Simeon saw baby Jesus, he held Jesus in his arms. Simeon then praised God in **verses 29-32**, saying: 29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” Simeon’s heart was completely satisfied because his hope was fulfilled. Notice three phrases Simeon used to describe the Divine One. Simeon said Jesus was God’s means to save us. In fact, the name “Jesus” means “Jehovah God is salvation.” Simeon said Jesus was also “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” This Savior is not only for the Jews. He is for every person in the world. Then Simeon said that Jesus was the glory to Israel. God’s glory was revealed beginning from a Jewish baby boy. God used Simeon to speak about why Jesus was born. Even today, God can use ordinary people like you and I for His purposes. Just like Simeon, first we have to know what the Bible says, we have to be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and we make ourselves available to God. Perhaps God asks you to share the gospel with a classmate or colleague you see every day. Perhaps God reminds you of a person who has not been coming to our church lately. Give the person a call and encourage him/her to come back. Or may be God prompts you to care for someone who is suffering from hardship. Gather a few brothers and sisters, write a card and mail to that person. It is quick and convenient to send a message from your phone. But it means a lot more when the person can hold the card in his/her hands and read

some encouraging words written in ink. There are many more simple things you can do to tell others that God loves them. The key is to have a submissive heart to be used by God.

西面一直在等待舊約中所預言的至聖者來到。猶太人稱祂為彌賽亞，意思是救世主。西面不曉得這位至聖者會以嬰兒的形式出現。這段經文三次告訴我們聖靈在西面的心中工作。我們可以將聖靈理解為神的靈。聖靈告訴西面，他去世之前會見到至聖者。西面是一個公義而虔誠的人。可以說他是一個熱衷的信徒。西面相信聖經所說的話。因此，他期待著至聖者的到來。在那一天，聖靈感動西面去聖殿迎接至聖者。他是如何從神那裡獲得內幕消息的？今天神絕對可以用人聽得見的聲音對我們說話：「小張，我要派你去孟菲斯市中心，為無家可歸的人建立新的事工！」但是，神更有可能通過聖經對我們說話。這就是為什麼我們稱這本書為神的話。當我們養成閱讀聖經的習慣時，神的真理就會留在我們心中。逐漸地，我們會產生一種願望，思想、說話和做事情都希望討神的喜悅。就像如果你愛父母，你就會聽他們的話一樣。當你小的時候，媽媽提醒你不要再跟隨陌生人。又或者你的爸爸教你逆時針旋轉來鬆開螺絲。下次當你遇到同樣的情況時，你會回想起父母的指示。同樣，如果你與神有親近的關係，你就會遵循祂的吩咐。因此，如果你不讀神的話，那麼你日常生活中會遵循誰的建議？西面看到嬰兒耶穌時，他將耶穌抱在懷裡。西面隨後在第 29-32 節中讚美神，說：29「主啊！如今可以照你的話，釋放僕人安然去世；30 因為我的眼睛已經看見你的救恩，31 就是你在萬民面前所預備的；32 是照亮外邦人的光，又是你民以色列的榮耀。」西面的心完全滿足，因為他的期望已經實現了。請注意，西面用三個詞語來描述這位至聖者。西面說耶穌是神拯救我們的方式。實際上，「耶穌」這個名字的意思是「耶和華神是拯救」。西面說耶穌也是「外邦人的光」。這位救主不僅是給猶太人的。祂也是給世界上每一個人的。然後，西面說耶穌是「以色列的榮耀」。神的榮耀從一個猶太男嬰開始顯現。神使用西面講述耶穌為什麼出生。即使在今天，神也可以使用像你我這樣的平凡人來達成祂的目的。就像西面一樣，我們必須先了解聖經的內容，然後敏銳聖靈的引導，並隨時準備好被神使用。也許神要你跟每天見面的同學或同事分享福音。也許神讓你想起一個最近沒有來聚會的人。你可以給他打個電話，鼓勵他回來。也許是神提醒你去關心一個正在遭遇困難的人。找幾個弟兄姐妹，寫一張卡片，然後寄給那個人。從手機發信息當然是又快又方便。但是，當人們可以將卡片拿在手上，並閱讀一些親手寫鼓勵人的話時，那份感覺是很不一樣的。還有更多簡單的方式來告訴別人神愛他們。關鍵是你要有順服的心供神使用。

2. Divide Many 分水線

Jesus was the Divine One God sent to save us. That is the greatest news for you and me. However, the reality is that not everyone welcomes Jesus. After Simeon praised God, he then revealed that Jesus' coming would divide many. Let us read **verses 34-35**: 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Some people would accept Jesus, while many would reject Him. Why is that so? It is because we as humans only get what we think we need. Imagine you are inside Costco and some vendors are passing out free samples. You may not want those items just because they are free. A guy will not take any feminine hygiene products. A single person may not fight for free diapers. Here is the key issue: to accept

Jesus people must first confess that they are sinners. “I am a law-abiding citizen. What sins do I have?” they argue. Such response happened to the religious leaders in Jesus’ time. It will also happen to the people you want to invite to church. Brothers and sisters, do not give up yet. Keep praying for them. We try to convince people with our lips. But only God can convict people in their hearts. The Bible uses a vivid analogy to describe how Jesus will divide many into believers and non-believers. **1 Peter 2:7-8** read: 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” 8 and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message - which is also what they were destined for. Peter described Jesus as a rock. Those who embrace Jesus will cherish Him like a precious capstone. Back then people used a capstone (or called a cornerstone) as a point of reference when they built a house. However, those who reject Jesus look at Him as a stumbling block. The fact is that those who do not want to hear the good news may not stay neutral to Christianity. They try every way to silence the truth. Some businesses do not allow their employees to say “Merry Christmas” to customers. Instead, they change it to: “Happy Holidays.” A few years back there was a lawsuit to remove any use of red and green decorations in a school because those colors symbolize Christmas. Nativity scene is banned. But displays of Santa Claus, reindeers and snowmen are permitted. The funny part is, everyone still wants a break from work to go partying. The apostle Paul explained in the book of 1 Corinthians that those who despised the gospel considered the message plain foolish. They could not imagine that God would become a man and died on our behalf. They stumble by their little human wisdom. The gospel of Jesus Christ is like a magnet – some people are attracted to this good news; others are repelled by it. You say: “Nah, I don’t believe in this western religion.” Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem of Israel, which is in the Middle East. You say: “This shedding blood on the cross is too gruesome.” The penalty of sin is death. If God has a different way to save us, then He would not have sent Jesus. You say: “The idea of denying oneself and following Jesus is too much.” Indeed, that is why we call Jesus our Lord. We do not use Jesus to serve us like the reason why some people worship idols. Rather, Jesus uses us to serve Him and accomplish His will.

耶穌是神差遣來拯救我們的至聖者。這對你我都是最棒的消息。但事實是，並非所有人都歡迎耶穌。西面讚美神之後，他隨後透露耶穌的到來將成為一條分水線。讓我們讀第 34-35 節：**西面給他們祝福，又對孩子的母親馬利亞說：「這孩子被立，是要叫以色列中許多人跌倒，許多人興起；又要作毀謗的話柄，叫許多人心裡的意念顯露出來；你自己的心也要被刀刺透。」**有些人會接受耶穌，然而有許多人會拒絕耶穌。為什麼？這是因為一般人只想得到我們認為需要的東西。假設你在好市多 (Costco) 店子裡面，一些供應商正在分發免費樣品。你會因為東西是免費的就去拿嗎？一個男人不會去拿任何女性衛生用品。一個單身漢也不會去搶免費尿布的。關鍵的問題是：接受耶穌的人們必須首先承認他們是罪人。他們會辯稱：「我是守法公民，何罪之有？」耶穌時期的宗教領袖就是這樣回應的。你想要邀請來教會的人可能也會這樣回應。弟兄姐妹們，不要氣餒。繼續為他們禱告。我們試圖用嘴巴說服別人。但是唯有神才能使人心知罪。聖經用生動的比喻來描述耶穌如何將人分為信徒和非信徒。彼得前書 2:7-8 說：**7 所以，他在你們信的人就為寶貴，在那不信的人有話說：匠人所棄的石頭已作了房角的頭塊石頭。8 又說：作了絆腳的石頭，跌人的磐石。他們既不順從，就在道理上絆跌；他們這樣絆跌也是預定的。彼得形容耶穌是一塊石頭。那些接納耶穌的人會視祂為一塊重要的基石。當時的人蓋房子時以**

基石（或稱為房角石）作為整個建築物的根據。但是，那些拒絕耶穌的人將耶穌看為絆腳石。事實是，那些不想聽到福音的人可能不會對基督信仰保持中立。他們竭盡全力把真理滅聲。一些企業不允許員工向顧客說「聖誕快樂」。取而代之的是，他們改說：「節日快樂」。幾年前，有人提起訴訟，要求一所學校拿掉任何紅色和綠色的裝飾，因為這些顏色代表聖誕節。耶穌誕生的場景被禁止。但是展示聖誕老人、鹿和雪人卻沒有問題。有趣的是，每個人仍然希望放假休息去參加派對。使徒保羅在哥林多前書中解釋說，那些鄙視福音的人認為福音是個愚拙的道理。他們無法想像神會成為一個人並為我們而死。他們被自己的小聰明絆倒了。耶穌基督的福音就像磁鐵一樣 – 有些人被這個好消息所吸引；其他人對此表示排斥。你說：「不，我才不相信這種洋教。」耶穌實際上出生於中東以色列的伯利恆。你說：「在十字架上流血這種信息太嚇人了。」罪的刑罰就是死。如果神可以用另一種方式拯救我們，那麼祂就不用差遣耶穌來了。你說：「要捨棄自己和跟隨耶穌的要求我辦不到。」的確，這就是為什麼我們稱耶穌為我們的主。我們不像一些崇拜偶像的人那樣使用耶穌為我們服務。相反，是耶穌使用我們來完成祂的旨意。

CONCLUSION 結論

Our response to the Christmas Child reflects our spiritual status. Simeon's last hope was to see the Savior. His last hope turned out to be a lasting hope of the world. Dear friends: Jesus is the center of the Christmas story. He came into the womb of a virgin girl and born into our world to identify with us. He humbled Himself and was nailed to the cross for our sins. But Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. This most valuable and hidden treasure from God came as an ordinary baby. In October of this year, a lot of people were surprised by another hidden treasure. A homeless lady by the name Emily Zamourka became a famous opera singer. One night, Officer Frazier of the Los Angeles Police Department heard a beautiful voice in a subway station. He pulled his phone out and recorded a video. Later, he shared the footings over the social media. That action began to change the life of Emily. Many people love her voice. Emily came to U.S. from Russia when she was younger. She never receives any vocal training. She used to make a living by playing violin and teaching people to play the instrument. Unfortunately, her violin was stolen a few years ago. Then she had some health issues. Eventually, she became homeless when she could not afford the rent. Because of the kindness of one policeman, people uncovered a talent in Emily. A music producer even offered a recording contract to Emily. Officer Frazier later commented: "Sometimes you just have to stop and listen to one, to hear something beautiful." Dear friends: when you stop and listen to the gospel, you will hear the most beautiful news God has prepared for you. Are you willing to receive this precious gift from God? Come to Jesus. Humble yourself before Him. Becoming a Christian is as simple as ABC. A stands for admit. You must admit that you are a sinner and you cannot remove your sins by yourself. B refers to believe. You believe that Jesus Christ is the only God. You believe that Jesus died on the cross for you. C means commit. By faith, you receive Jesus into your heart as your Savior and you commit yourself to Him and make Him the Master of your life.

我們對聖誕嬰孩的回應反映出我們的屬靈狀況。西面的最後心願是希望見到救主。他的最後心願變成了人類的永恆盼望。親愛的朋友們：耶穌是聖誕故事的中心。祂來到一個童女的腹中，出生在我們的世界來與我們認同。祂謙卑自己，為我們的罪被釘在十字架上。但

是耶穌在三天後從死裡復活。神所隱藏最寶貴的禮物來自一個普通的嬰兒。今年 10 月，許多人對另一個隱藏的寶貝感到驚訝。一個名叫艾米麗·扎穆卡（Emily Zamourka）無家可歸的女士成為了著名的歌劇歌手。一天晚上，洛杉磯警察局的費莎警官在地鐵站裡聽到了優美的歌聲。他拿出手機並錄製了視頻。後來，他在社交媒體上分享了這段錄像。他的行動開始改變了艾米麗的人生。許多人喜歡她的聲音。艾米莉年輕時從俄羅斯來到美國。她從來沒有接受任何聲樂的訓練。她以前靠拉小提琴和教人們拉琴來謀生。不幸的是，幾年前，她的小提琴被偷走了。然後她的健康出現了問題。最終，當她負擔不起房租，唯有到處流浪。由於一位警察的善意，人們發現了艾米麗的才華。一位音樂製作人甚至向艾米麗提供了唱片合同。費莎警官後來評論說：「有時你只需要停下來聽一聽，就會聽到美妙的歌聲。」親愛的朋友們：當你停下來聽福音時，你就會聽到神為你準備最美好的消息。你願意接受神為你預備的這份寶貴禮物嗎？來到耶穌前。在祂面前謙卑自己。成為基督徒就像 ABC 一樣簡單。A 代表承認。你必須承認自己是一個罪人，無法靠自己的努力把罪洗掉。B 是指相信。你相信耶穌基督是唯一的真神。你相信耶穌為你死在十字架上。C 表示委身。憑著信心，你接受耶穌進入你的心中成為你的救主，並讓祂成為你生命的主宰。