

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
January 8, 2023
Scripture: Luke 2: 21-40

Sermon: Waiting!

Have you ever heard of the old saying, “Good things come to those who wait?” Today we are looking at the scripture lesson from Luke 2:21-40 where we see that there was waiting involved to see the Messiah by two older people. Simeon and Anna waited for years to see the face of the Messiah.

In Luke 2, Jesus is brought to the Temple to be presented to the Lord after his birth in fulfilling the Law. The faith of Mary and Joseph are an example to us all. Then in the scripture the focus turns to include Simeon and Anna, who are older and have been waiting patiently to see the Messiah. They were still praying for God to console and rescue his people. They were still trusting that God would send his long-awaited Messiah.

Simeon had been taught the prophecies about God’s coming King; the One who would come to help Israel be freed from their captivity and given peace by God. Simeon had been promised that he would see the Messiah before he died. As the years passed by and Simeon got older, the anticipation and the excitement of being able to see God’s Son in the flesh never wavered and he waited patiently, trusting that God would fulfill his promise to him. There was only one thing on Simeon’s “bucket list,” and that was to see the Redeemer of Israel. Simeon had the Holy Spirit upon him and the Holy Spirit guided and directed his life. The scripture says, “That day the Spirit led him to the Temple.” That was the day he met the Messiah. We see a man with a heart for the truth of God.

Anna was an eighty-four-year-old widow and prophetess, who lived in the temple and served God through fasting and praying. Anna’s name means “grace, favored, or beautiful.” In return for her faithfulness, God blessed Anna by allowing her to see the Savior of the world as a tiny, newborn baby. Anna was married for just seven years

before her husband died. She was left as a young widow and decided to stay single. Anna spent her whole life trusting in her God to provide for her needs. She wanted to devote her life to God and be able to meet her Redeemer.

Simeon responds to the fulfillment of God's promise by taking Jesus into his arms and praising God for his faithfulness. Simeon said, "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

Simeon recognized that Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, was not just for God's people; Jesus had come to save the world. Jesus was the Light of the World. Simeon knew that the birth of Jesus would fulfill the promise given to Abraham that, through Abraham's offspring, all nations of the world would be blessed.

Simeon was now at peace. His life was complete. He had seen what he was waiting for. He was ready to depart. Out of all the babies there at the temple, Simeon knew this was the Messiah who had come to save people from their sins. Simeon gave a blessing to Joseph and Mary and told them about what was in store for the child, even preparing Mary herself for what was ahead. "And a sword will pierce your very soul." (Verse 35)

The reason Simeon and Anna saw Jesus is because they were waiting for Jesus and the fulfillment of the promise. When Anna saw Jesus that day in the temple she began praising God and then she began talking about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Simeon and Anna shared this same acknowledgement that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. For years they were faithfully and devoutly waiting for God to direct them to the Messiah, and in the meantime, they got to know God more fully, so when Jesus came, they were able to recognize him, worship him, and tell others the Good News. Simeon and Anna continued to work for the Lord by telling others who they met in the Temple.

This is a great time of year. We just celebrated Advent for four weeks. We celebrated Christmas and we celebrated Epiphany, which is the twelve days after Christmas Day and the coming of the Magi. It is a great time of year to talk about Jesus and why he was born. There are many people who are waiting to meet the Messiah and they don't even realize it and need to hear the story.

What about you? Does your life tell people about Jesus? Do your actions and your words direct them to meet the Savior? Do you recognize Jesus? Do you see him around you? Do you recognize Jesus? Do you look into his face and feel his love for you?

We are never too young or too old to make a difference. Our attitude and behavior will make a difference for Jesus. Like Simeon and Anna, we are also heirs of a promise. We also need to look into the face of Jesus, repent and serve him. It is worth it to hold onto the promises of God and to wait upon the Lord and be faithful only to God and we will receive heavenly rewards.

Are you ready for Christ's second Advent? The Lord rewards those who are actively waiting for his return.

Like Simeon and Anna, we must be watchful and waiting for his return. We are called to be obedient and faithful and worship only him. Like Anna and Simeon—tell others the story of the Messiah and why he came as a baby in a humble manger and why he died and rose again for us.

We are standing on the other side of Christmas. Jesus has been born and we are standing on the other side of Easter; Jesus saved us from our sins, rose from the grave and granted us eternal life with him.

Like Simeon and Anna we are called to receive him as our Redeemer knowing he will come again.

Simeon and Anna give us a great example of what it means to wait on the Lord, to trust in His promises and to serve Him and His people. Wait on the Lord. Work for the Lord. Worship the Lord.

When we receive the bread and cup during Holy Communion today, let us also look upon the face of Jesus our Savior who was born to set us free from our sins and give us eternal life with him. His body

was broken for us, and his blood shed for us on the cross. Let us all know the peace of Christ as we await his Second Coming.

Christ is Born, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.

The school system in a city had a program to help children keep up with their schoolwork during their stays in the hospitals. One day a teacher was assigned to visit a child. She talked with the child's class teacher to prepare to see him. The teacher told her, "We are studying nouns and adverbs, and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them, so he doesn't fall too far behind."

The teacher went to see the boy that afternoon, but no one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. She stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left, she felt she had not accomplished much.

The next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live."

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher came. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

He saw hope when the teacher came. We have hope because Jesus came.

Ultimately that's our calling—to proclaim the salvation of God in Jesus Christ, to see that the hopeless find hope, the broken come to Christ for healing, and those in darkness find the Light of the World.

May Jesus Christ inspire us as he once inspired Simeon and Anna and so many others who were in search of a word of hope. Amen.