

“What Are We Looking For?”

Luke 2:25-38

Sermon for December 26, 2021 by Rev. Alex Creager

Luke 2:25-38

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

*29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."*

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Simeon and Anna are two of my favorite people in all of the gospel stories. Maybe it's because they are often forgotten and passed over. They are not included in any nativity set I've ever seen. They're not shepherds or angels or magi from the east. We don't often hear these names at Christmas time. But they are huge part of the story.

These are two people of faith waiting and watching and hoping for a better world. They are not famous. And they have both known grief and loss, loneliness and hard days. They are older. They've lost spouses and loved ones, friends and neighbors. It doesn't seem that most people notice them at first. But they continue to believe. They continue to believe that God is not finished with them or this world. They pray both day and night. They look for salvation, for redemption, for consolation, for peace, for a sign that God still sees them and loves them, and that God still have something to show them that will change everything.

As Mary and Joseph bring Jesus into the Temple to be dedicated to God, most of the people there don't notice. But Simeon and Anna do. They see and recognize Jesus right away. Maybe it's because of their prayer. Maybe it's because of their faith. Maybe it's because they are actively watching, or maybe it's simply because God knows their grief and longing, and God chooses them first to see and hold Jesus. They are some of the first to recognize him and worship him, and sing songs of peace, joy, and prophecy to Christ the newborn king.

And their words speak truth, and hope to not just Jesus, but to all who can hear of how much God loves us and sees us, and how God has broken into our world to bring hope to all weary eyes.

Anna and Simeon are two people who should be remembered. Their words and songs and actions should be remembered. But one thing I especially treasure from them is their ability to look, to seek, to continue to believe and dream of a better world. And in the season of Christmas, of Christ breaking into creation, I believe we are called to do the same.

So I want you to pause for a second. And I want you to reflect on these three questions:

1. What are you longing and hoping to see in our world today? What would you like to see God bring into our weary world?
2. Who are the people like Simeon and Anna, that we often skip over, but that God sees and remembers? Who are those people in our world today?
3. In this past year, where have you seen a sign of God's hope? A sign that God still loves you and loves this world?