

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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### **Role Models of “Waiting”**

Luke 2:25-38

#### **Introduction**

Our Bibles are full of interesting characters, many whom we only meet briefly. Two examples: Jabez in the Old Testament teaches us about prayer.<sup>1</sup> Eutychus in the New Testament is an example of how hazardous it can be to fall asleep during a sermon.<sup>2</sup>

Two other briefly mentioned characters to whom we were introduced last week by Pastor Dave are Simeon and Anna in Luke’s narrative of our Lord’s presentation at the Temple when He was eight days old.

As I’ve considered these two Jewish believers, I believe there are lessons we can learn from their anticipation of Christ’s First Advent as we anticipate our Lord’s Second Advent. Simeon and Anna are role models of waiting for the Lord’s Coming.

[Prayer]

At the Bible college Chris and I attended; some Bible verses were heard repeatedly encouraging us in our walk with the Lord. Here are two of those verses applicable to today’s message.

#### **2 Chronicles 16:9**

***For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.***

#### **1 Corinthians 4:2**

***Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.***

Loyalty, faithfulness to Him . . . that is what God our Father desires from His people. Keep that in mind as we explore Simeon and Anna’s stories.

If you remember nothing else from this message, remember this: living by faith puts a smile on God’s face every time.

Simeon and Anna represent Jewish believers at that time who were anticipating the arrival of Messiah. In other words, Simeon and Anna were not alone in their hope for God’s provision of “the Consolation of Israel.”

Yet God singled out Simeon and Anna, this faithful woman and man, to experience this divine opportunity to interact with the eight-day old Christ-child just as He invited the Bethlehem shepherds to visit the newborn babe in the manger housed in a stable stall which continues the theme of Jesus’ humble first advent.

So, let’s see how Simeon and Anna are role models of waiting for us. Our text is Luke 2 where Dr. Luke introduces us to Simeon and Anna.

#### **We Meet Simeon**

##### **Luke 2:25-26**

***And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.***

Luke wants us to know several things about Simeon before describing to us what Simeon experienced. First, Simeon a resident in Jerusalem who was known for being “just and devout.”

The word “devout” speaks of Simeon’s walk with God while the word “just” speaks of the way he related to other people. He loved God and one way he expressed that love was by doing good to others. **Simeon was faithful.**

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Bruce Wilkinson’s book, *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life*, Multnomah Press. 2000.

explores how this prayer can be applied to a believer’s life today.  
<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:7-12.

Like many others in Israel, Simeon was waiting – waiting for Messiah to come. The word “consolation” reflects the general longing Israelites had for Messiah to bring comfort and relief from their trials, hardships, and oppression.<sup>3</sup> Yet as we will soon see, Simeon knew the Messiah’s Advent was not only for Israel but for the whole world.

How did he know?

In being devout, Simeon would have certainly studied Scripture to know God’s design for life. In studying those Scriptures, keep in mind we are talking about the Old Testament, Simeon would have discovered, from Genesis to Malachi, over 300 Messianic prophecies related to God’s promise of a Redeemer.

There were prophecies related to genealogy, birthplace and more. One of those prophecies even provided a timeline of events related to Messiah.<sup>4</sup> And then, there was the Holy Spirit’s divine revelation to Simeon that he would not die until after Messiah was born and Simeon would be privileged to see Him. That’s how he knew.

It is this sense of waiting we will explore later, but for now, Simeon’s sense of expectation, his waiting, characterized this man in Jerusalem.

One more thing here that characterized Simeon. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon.

My understanding of the Holy Spirit’s ministry prior to Pentecost is just what we read here. It was an “upon him” ministry, that might come and go as God sovereignly determined, rather than an “in you” permanent indwelling ministry true of believers since Pentecost.<sup>5</sup>

Due to Simeon’s faithfulness, the Holy Spirit’s presence upon Simeon characterized him and one result was Simeon was

promised, that before he died, he would see the One for Whom he had been waiting.

### **Simeon’s Praise for God’s Promise Fulfilled**

#### **Luke 2:27-32**

***So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”***

Pastor Dave just provided a marvelous Christmas Eve drama providing us a sense of what Simeon experienced that day.

Simeon’s praise expresses his gratitude to God for fulfilling His word. My thought is that this gratitude is twofold: first, God fulfilled His promise to Simeon that he would see Messiah before he died. Second, and more importantly, God is fulfilling His promise of providing redemption through His Messiah. Much of what Simeon expresses comes from Isaiah 49.

But don’t miss this, Simeon affirms this important truth for us who are waiting now – **God keeps His word!**

### **Simeon’s Blessing of Joseph and Mary**

#### **Luke 2:33**

***And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”***

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 40:1ff

<sup>4</sup> Daniel 9:20-27

<sup>5</sup> John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

I picture Simeon still holding eight-day-old Jesus and glancing back and forth from the baby to the parents. Then he speaks directly to Mary, simply echoing Messianic prophecy about the future of this Child he holds in his arms.

In what he says to Mary, Simeon is faithful to Scripture. His words are not meant to discourage but to affirm what the angels told Mary – and Joseph. Their child is the Christ, the Messiah, Jesus and all that will be true of Him “...to save His people from their sins!”<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after Simeon uttered those words to Mary, we are introduced by Luke to the prophetess, Anna.

### **We Meet Anna**

#### **Luke 2:36-37**

***Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.***

Luke tells us Anna was a prophetess. In the general biblical sense, this simply designated a woman uniquely devoted to declaring the Word of God.

Anna may have been a teacher of the Old Testament to other women. Or she may have simply had a private ministry there in the temple offering words of encouragement and instruction from the Scriptures to other women who came to worship.

It would appear from what Luke writes that after she became a widow<sup>7</sup>, Anna spent probably 60 years or more in residence on the temple grounds where she “*served God with fastings and prayers.*”

Because of the context, one request she fervently prayed about was for the very same thing Simeon was so eager for: “*the Consolation of Israel.*” Perhaps she even prayed she might still be alive when in the fulness of time, God the Father would send His Son, the Messiah to redeem those who were under the Law.<sup>8</sup>

Like Simeon, Anna’s devotion to God’s word would have made her aware that Messiah’s advent was at hand because of prophetic Scripture, especially Daniel 9. But would she be allowed the privilege to see the Promised One?

God was about to give her an answer to her prayers in the most dramatic fashion. Again, Simeon has just blessed Joseph and Mary and spoke prophetically to Mary about eight-day old Jesus when Anna . . .

### **Anna’s Gratitude and Response**

#### **Luke 2:38**

***...coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.***

Suddenly that for which Anna had been praying and fasting was right there in front of her, wrapped in a little bundle in Simeon’s arms.

My understanding of the text is that she arrived just in time to hear Simeon’s blessing and message to Mary. By faith, she knew the infant in Simeon’s arms was Messiah. God had answered her prayers! Her immediate response was to praise God. Her prayers turned to praise and then, her praise turned to pronouncement.

Like the shepherds who made “widely known” their experience on that first Christmas night<sup>9</sup>, Anna began finding other Jewish believers who had been longing for Messiah and told them what just took place at the Temple.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>7</sup> Based on what Luke writes, it would appear Anna was also childless.

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 4:4-5

<sup>9</sup> Luke 1:17-18, 20

The Messiah is here! She could not keep this good news to herself. It's not a stretch to think that from those who heard this joyous news, it spread to others, the doubters, the agnostics, those who had lost hope in God's promise.

**God keeps His promises** and Anna models for you and me how we should respond!

Simeon and Anna model for us at least four lessons about how we are to wait for Christ's Second Advent.

### **First Lesson – Informed Faith**

Simeon's and Anna's faith was an informed faith – they were students of God's Word. There is no substitute for spending personal time directly in Scripture.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, reminds us that...

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

From Scripture, regarding our Lord's return, we can be assured that just as Christ's first advent was certain, so is His second advent. He is coming again!

Jesus Himself promises He will return.

#### **John 14:1-3**

***“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”***

The angels at Christ's Ascension promise He will return.

#### **Acts 1:9-11**

***Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”***

The Church affirms Christ's Second Advent whenever we observe Communion, just as we will today.

#### **1 Corinthians 11:26**

***For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.<sup>10</sup>***

First lesson, the study of God's inspired Word affirms that just as Christ came to earth the first time, He is coming back again.

### **Second Lesson – “Timing” Is Important**

You might have noticed my repeated reference to Daniel 9. Daniel's prophecy provides a timeline related to God's redemptive plan that I believe informed both Simeon and Anna, giving them confidence, along with the Spirit's promise to Simeon, that the “fulness of time” for Messiah's first advent had arrived.

As I've studied Scripture as it relates to our Lord's second advent, there is a timing mechanism as well. But we must be cautious about setting dates. Even our Lord told us that, more than once.

Here is one of His warnings.

#### **Acts 1:6-7**

***Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>11</sup>***

<sup>10</sup> cf Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18

<sup>11</sup> cf Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32

Without going into a full-blown eschatological explanation, I will briefly share with you my own understanding of our Lord's return.

First, it occurs in two stages. The first stage, the Rapture, was revealed after Pentecost because it involved the Church rather than Israel. The Rapture is described by Paul as believers being, "... caught up together...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."<sup>12</sup>

This occurs at the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which does involve Israel and leads to the second stage which is when King Jesus returns to the earth establish His kingdom for one thousand years.

The first stage, the Rapture, I believe is a sign-less event. It involves the at-any-moment, imminent, "in the twinkling of an eye"<sup>13</sup> return of Jesus for His Church. That is why throughout the New Testament you will read that 1<sup>st</sup> Century believers eagerly waited for the Lord to return.

***Philippians 3:20***  
***For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...***<sup>14</sup>

However, the second stage, has multiple signs leading up to Christ's return to earth the second time to judge, to rule, to reign over the nations. Based on Daniel 9, there is also a specific time period involved although the specific day or hour is only known to God the Father.<sup>15</sup>

My point is this – as members of the Body of Christ, unlike Simeon and Anna, we only know this – Christ will return first for His church, and it could be at any moment – even NOW!

But since it didn't happen just then and it hasn't happened for two thousand years, then what? Like Simeon and Anna, be faithful no matter what!

### **Third Lesson – Be Faithful**

As you and I wait for the Lord to return, we are to be faithful.

#### **Titus 2:11-13**

***For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...***

#### **1 John 3:2-3**

***Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.***<sup>16</sup>

As believers today, the moment you put your trust in Christ alone to receive His gift of eternal life, you were sealed, baptized, gifted, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit wants to empower and encourage you as you walk by faith. What a gift we have from our Lord – another Comforter to guide us into all truth.<sup>17</sup>

"Waiting" by Simeon and Anna was neither passive nor unproductive. They both engaged in activity that demonstrated their love for God and for others guided by God's word and Spirit.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:17

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52

<sup>14</sup> cf. Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:7 (Just a sampling of verses indicating early church believers anticipated Christ's return as imminent.)

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 24:36

<sup>16</sup> 2 Peter 3 (entire chapter) along with many other New Testament verses

<sup>17</sup> John 16:13-14

Rather than think about waiting as something you do at a doctor's office or the checkout line at Costco or Sams the day before a major holiday, think about waiting in terms of a restaurant waiter.

A good waiter is there to serve you and respond to your requests. That's what waiting on the Lord's return is about . . . serving others in Jesus' name.

#### **Fourth Lesson – Tell Others**

Final lesson on waiting from Simeon and Anna . . . although Luke doesn't tell us this, I'm thinking that Simeon responded to what happened that day in the Temple in much the same way Anna did. He and she could not keep from telling others what just happened.

And what was it they said? The Redeemer is here! There was a sense of urgency to let others know.

What's the good news we can tell? The Redeemer has come and He came specifically to take the penalty for our sin on Himself and to offer His righteousness in exchange. Anyone who believes that God loved them so much that He gave His only begotten Son for them, they will not perish but will have everlasting life.

That is great news which our Lord has entrusted to us as we wait for His Second Advent.

Let me take you back one more time to Acts 1. I believe this is so instructive. Right after our resurrected Lord reminded His disciples that the timing of His return was His Father's responsibility, He reminded them what their responsibility was.

#### **Acts 1:8**

***"...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

If you are not certain you have eternal life, you can be. Trust Jesus as Savior today.

Jesus said it this way,

***"...he who believes in Me has everlasting life."*** [John 6:47]

As those who have believed in Jesus for eternal life, we now live our life, waiting for our Lord's return – we live by faith, loving God and loving others guided by His Word and empowered by His Spirit following examples like Simeon and Anna.

[Prayer]