

I've Seen Enough

Life moves along. Calendar pages turn. No one really celebrates Christmas for twelve days.

Not even Mary and Joseph. How long before they had to check out of the Inn's stable and make the trek back home from Bethlehem, loading up the donkey, trying to get their suitcases and Mary and now Jesus all on the back of that one little donkey, Joseph leading the way home?

Do you think they were sad that life was moving on? Or do you think they were actually more relieved than sad, having held Jesus body, now able move on. Perhaps they were happy to see the darkness of waiting disappear and the light of the future hope appear.

That is something we all could relate to this year, right?

(Calendar slide)

I was trying to think of things that I am not going to miss about 2020. Phrases we pray will disappear from our vocabularies: "We will get through this together"; "New Normal"; 'We'll meet by Zoom'.

And then there are these things we can stop pretending are true: "I like being alone and having nothing to do all weekend"; "This pandemic has really

brought us closer together” (meaning: can we add on a room!); ‘livestream worship is just as good as the in-person experience’.

So, how do we make the move from 2020 to 2021, both individually and as a church? I think it starts with the phrase, “I’ve seen enough!” That is gospel truth. But that only gets us past 2020. How do we move forward? I think it is the same phrase but said with a whole different tone and attitude and meaning, “I’ve seen enough! Praise God!”

How do we get there? Well, consider Simeon and Anna.

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.” Luke 2:25-26

Forty days after the excitement of Christmas Eve it was time for Momma and Daddy to take their baby to the temple. Mary and Joseph park their donkey, shake the dust off their sandals, uncover Baby Jesus’ face, and walk into the temple.

But then an old, doddering man, Simeon, greets them with all the excitement he can generate. Simeon was ready to die, but not before he saw the Messiah. God had promised the faithful Simeon he would see the Messiah. I

wonder if he knew the Messiah would appear as a 6 weeks-old baby? Did his whole life re-center as he took that baby in his arms, did it re-center his universe?

You know the feeling perhaps, when you hold a new baby for the first time your entire focus moves toward that little face. Priorities get re-ordered very quickly for first-time parents and grandparents. The world looks different.

As John Stendahl remarks about seeing his grandchildren for the first time, “It is around this present future, this vulnerable and miraculous little one, that my universe bends.”

Simeon’s universe bent from waiting in darkness to hoping in the light. He wouldn’t see the end of the story of this baby’s life, but he saw the future in those baby’s eyes and that was enough.

“I’ve seen enough. Seeing this Messiah, I have seen that God fulfilled his promises and now the future is present in my arms.”

“There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.” Luke 2:36-37

And then Anna, a female prophet of God, sees the Messiah. She is 84 years old. Anna was a dedicated worshipper. The church needs “Annas” who worship

God daily, and it needs “Annas” who give thanks to God and tell others about the child.

Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Lk. 2:38



How did Anna know that this was the long-expected Messiah, born to set his people free? Because they knew who they were looking for and they were in constant prayerful expectation and belief that God would show them the redemption of God’s people.

If you want a resolution for 2021, this might be one: learn who this Jesus is and how you will recognize him.

We have plenty of our own Simeons and Annas. I was trying to think of who I could give you as Hope Church’s Simeon and Anna. Of the many examples with whom I have had the pleasure to wait for Jesus in this church, I came up with these two names.

I think Simeon and I see Ron Bimmel. Ron was my first mentor, and my first funeral. Ron was a spiritual pillar of the church. Ron loved Jesus and Christ’s Church, and just the mention of these words would cause tears to well up in his eyes.

I hear Anna and I see Mildred Wieberdink. A single woman, dedicated to Jesus and Christ's Church, I see her unique knowing smile as we sat thinking about the future of the church and our lives, confident that in Jesus her dreams would be realized.

That might be another 2021 goal for all of us. Let's commit to spending time together in the church, as we will again soon, helping each other see the future hope that God is creating.

Calendar slide

2020 has been a bust by almost all standards. Still, here we are on the last Sunday of the year, together, looking for how we can better worship and serve Jesus. Look at all of the discipleship efforts that have happened, seemingly against all odds. Look at the support you have provided in your generous tithes and offerings, in your prayer support, in your attending Zoom meetings for consistory and our annual meeting.

So, my dear friends, I declare to you, I've seen enough! I've seen enough to know that God is still in the house, that God is still the God of this city, that God is still in control.

I've seen enough of Jesus in 2020 to say that, while I will this year sing "Auld Lang Syne", whatever that means, like I have never sung it before. I have seen enough to know that God and God's people are winning the battle.



SLIDE

Still though, in a sense, we are all waiting like Simeon and Anna, aren't we? We all wait to see Jesus, not as a baby, but as a grown Savior on his throne when we get to see Jesus face to face. So, in 2021, and as long as it takes for Jesus to return, we will be Simeon and Anna, spending time in the church doing the things that need to be done to keep Hope alive, literally and figuratively, longing for that day when our faith will be made sight, when we will hold onto Jesus, not in hope but in reality.

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel." Luke 2:29-32

Simeon's song asks God to let him depart in peace, a peace made possible because he has seen, held, hugged the Jesus Messiah. He's seen enough to depart now in peace, letting go of the time of waiting, confident that he will be held by Jesus again when his work is done.

Theologian Dale Bruner writes about David Peterson, former pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, who told about a time when he was preparing his sermon. His little daughter came in and said, "Daddy, can we play?"

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He answered, "I'm awfully sorry, Sweetheart, but I'm right in the middle of preparing this sermon. In about an hour I can play."

She said, "Okay, when you're finished, Daddy, I am going to give you a great big hug."

He said, "Thank you very much." She went to the door and (these are his words) "Then she did a U-turn and came back and gave me a chiropractic, bone-breaking hug." David said to her, "Darling, you said you were *going* to give me a hug *after* I finished."

She answered, "Daddy, I just wanted you to know what you have to look forward to!"

Prayer

God, we have seen enough, enough of this year; we are happy to see it go. But, Lord, we are thankful for the visions of Jesus you have given us, even in this dark year. We have seen enough to know that Jesus is our future hope, and that one day when our waiting is done, God, you will allow us to depart in peace, through the portals of joy, and enter into our rest in the arms of Jesus; and when the months of air hugs by virtual arms finally end, we will be able to hold each other again, to feel the bear hugs of Jesus.

Amen.

