

First Sunday of Christmas (B) – Luke 2:22-40

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Peace-filled*

Focus Question: *How does being a disciple bring peace?*

word of life

“Now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word.”

Luke 2:29 (NRSV)

Read Luke 2:22-40

The context for this reading from Luke’s Gospel is the Temple in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph are upholding the religious laws by observing the ritual act of purification after the birth of a child (See Leviticus 12), and the required consecration of the first-born son to the Lord (Exodus 13:2). They travel to Jerusalem in obedience to the law of Moses. By their actions, it is clear that Mary and Joseph are devout people. It is also clear they are poor; they offer a sacrifice prescribed for those who could not afford to offer a lamb — turtledoves and pigeons. (Luke 2: 24)

It is in this holy place, in the act of holy ritual, that the reader is introduced to Simeon and Anna. Both are near the end of their earthly life. Both are identified as godly people. Simeon is described as being “righteous and devout” (Luke 2:25 NRSV), and Anna “never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day” (Luke 2:37 NRSV). Both lived a life of expectation. Simeon is “looking forward to the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25 NRSV), and Anna speaks about child Jesus as the promised Messiah who will bring the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

1. *What are Simeon and Anna waiting for in their lifetime?*
2. *What is it like to have your waiting fulfilled?*

The theme of “seeing” permeates the story. As Jesus is brought to the Temple by his parents, both Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises, right before their own eyes. Anna tells of the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem; Simeon proclaims that his eyes have seen God’s salvation – a light for revelation to the whole world.

3. *What does “God’s salvation” mean?*

Simeon also “sees” the path of suffering and opposition Jesus will face (Luke 2:34-35). Jesus will be in the Temple again as an adult, challenging the religious leaders. A sacrifice will again be offered – the sacrifice of Jesus’ life.

4. *How might Mary have felt after hearing all of Simeon’s words?*

As Simeon realizes the fulfillment of the hoped-for Messiah, his words reflect a sense of completion: “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word” (Luke 2:29 NRSV). Expectation leads to fulfillment, and fulfillment brings peace.

5. *How did Simeon have an attitude of peace?*
6. *What brings you peace?*

Simeon’s words may sound familiar to you. They are sometimes sung as the canticle following Holy Communion in the liturgy. (See *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Page 113, Hymns 200-203) As disciples in worship receive the very real presence of Christ in the meal, we, along with Simeon, know the fulfillment of God’s promises – personally, intimately, right before our eyes. We can go forth in peace to serve the Lord.

word *among us*

She had served as the organist in the small country church for over half a century. Her father had been one of the early settlers of the community. His skills as a carpenter are still evident in the sturdy beams of the wood-framed church building he helped to shape.

She was a devout woman – faithful in her actions and words. In her later years, her hands – once nimble and sure on the keyboard – were gnarled with arthritis, making it impossible for her to play. Yet even though her hands were stilled, her voice still sang the hymns of faith she had known since childhood.

She spent the last years of her life in a nursing home. Many of those days were spent bed-ridden, waiting. She waited for the promises to come to fulfillment — promises made to her when she was but an infant, promises taught to her in her childhood, promises studied and affirmed as an adult. She waited to be taken home.

When the end finally came, her family and friends gathered in the church she so loved to hear the promises yet again. The same organ she had played for those many decades sang out glorious proclamations of a sure and certain hope, of promises fulfilled. And the same words she so ably assisted the congregation to sing were now offered as a prayer for her: “Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, for your word has been fulfilled.”

Her waiting was over. The promises were fulfilled. God’s faithful servant was at rest. And even though there was grief expressed, somehow all was well. Somehow, there was completion. Somehow, there was peace.

1. *Whom do you know who is waiting?*
2. *What will does it mean at the end of life “to go in peace”?*
3. *What helps us to wait?*

And what of us? And our waiting? Let us join the prayers of the faithful of ages past as we pray, “Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, for your word has been fulfilled.”

4. *What do you wait for at this time in your life?*
5. *How do God’s promises give you peace?*
6. *What disrupts your attitude of peace?*
7. *Does peace necessarily mean passivity? Explain.*
8. *What is the lesson from this passage?*

Prayer

Christ Jesus, Prince of Peace, our longed-for Savior, come to us. Grant us peace. Amen

Dig Deeper

Ephesians 2:13-15



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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last word

Each day this week,
pray for peace.