

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

December 25, 2022

Day 1: Luke 2:25-26

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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

The consolation of Israel was the fulfillment of God's redemptive work. We hear in this phrase the echoes of Isaiah 40:1-2. As in Isaiah, the redemptive work of God leads the people not back to the old days but forward to the Kingdom of God. Because Simeon was devout he knew that redemption would come from God and so he lived in hope. He lived in the hope that he would see Christ.

Question: What do you want to see before your life ends?

Challenge: What signs of hope do you see in your life today?

Scripture: Matthew 24:4-31

Day 2: Luke 2:27-32

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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Simeon spent his time preparing and because of that investment of time he was able to recognize the Messiah even though he was in the form of a baby. I believe that we do not see God today because we are not prepared to recognize divinity. It is our preconceived notions that inhibit us from seeing God. The Temple was the logical place to see God but a baby was not the right image of God for that time. Simeon knew that the Messiah would be for all nations, not just Israel. Simeon is dismissed from his mission to watch for the Messiah but this does not mean his death is coming. He now can move onto other tasks that God has for him.

Question: What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you see a baby?

Challenge: Over this week ask God to help you see where God is in the ordinary things and events of the day.

Scripture: Psalm 18:1-19

Day 3: Luke 2:36

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,

Anna, as a prophet, was one who spoke the word of God. Just as Joseph, Mary and God brought Jesus into the world so now Simeon, Anna and God declare to the world that Jesus is the Messiah. Simeon was devout and Anna was the one to declare to the world that the Christ was born. Anna found meaning in life even though she was not to have a husband or children. She reminds us that God will provide for us, it just may not be as we expect. Anna gave life in her speaking the word of God because the word of God gave hope.

Question: When you were ten what did you want to be when you grew up?

Challenge: Using the Christmas Story write a short message of hope.

Scripture: Psalm 27:1-6

Day 4: Luke 2:37

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.

Anna spent her life in the Temple, but do not think that she was lonely or sad. The Temple was the meeting place of the community. Everybody came to the Temple mount. This was an area many football fields long and wide with a number of buildings on it. People came not only from Jerusalem but from all over the world. She traveled the whole world yet never left the Temple mount. A Chinese saying goes "the sage travels the whole world but never leaves the back yard." God sent people to her so that she could be a blessing to them. God is sending people to us so that we too might be a blessing to them.

Question: Who would you consider to be the oldest and wisest person you know?

Challenge: Think back over the last 5 years and think of who God sent to you so that you could be a blessing to them.

Scripture: Psalm 62:1-7

Day 5: Luke 2:38

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.

Anna now uses her ability (proclaiming the word of God) to tell all of Jerusalem that redemption has come. No doubt the image of an older woman talking about a baby being the hope of the world was something to see. When we have experienced the love of God we are bound to tell others what we have experienced. It is at times hard to describe or explain why God's love feels so good but if we are willing to share God's love, God will help us to find the words or actions to do so.

Question: If you were 80 years old what would you like to be doing?

Challenge: Think of someone that you will tell of your faith to and begin to pray for that person now. Look for the right time to talk to them, God will provide it.

Scripture: Psalm 96:1-13

Day 6: Luke 2:40

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Now that all has been told it is time for the Holy Family to go home and begin their life. Jesus grows up and becomes the man who will proclaim the message of love and hope. God has come to redeem us from our sins and will be with us to the end of the age.

Question: What is your favorite Christmas song and why?

Challenge: How could you help someone see hope at Christmas if they have had tragedy this year?

Scripture: Luke 2:41-52