

**- Saint John's Pulpit (Dec 27, Fifth Sunday After Christmas Day)
- "Your Wait Will Be Rewarded" Luke 2:22-28a, 36-38**

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now 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. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided 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, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.

³⁶There 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, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At 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.

Waiting

Finally, we meet the last Sunday morning for the year of 2020. How do you feel now? What thoughts do you have now? Through this year, there is one common thing which all people have done or had to do. I would like to say that it was waiting. It is no exaggeration to say that we all had to test our patience. Waiting for what?

Vaccines and treatment. More information about the virus. A moment to begin in-person services at church and in-person classes at schools. Updates from the Governor or President. A moment to begin business and job. PPP loans. Stimulus checks. A long line at grocery shops or COVID-19 Test places. Plus, a mask-free day! We wait for all again and again.

I do not want to disappoint you, but I believe that we all need to wait more for the moment when we go back to a normal. Even if we do that, we might need more time with patience. We just pray that the Lord will guide us.

In that sense, the text today deals with a heavy theme in Christian life. It is waiting. Two senior characters are shown as the best role model as they could meet Jesus after their long waiting with patience.

One is Simeon, and the other is Anna. Simply speaking, they are champions specializing in patience and waiting. If so, don't you think that there is something to learn from these two characters now as we live in the world requiring patience and waiting?

A careful reading this story makes you know three perspectives on 'waiting' – what, how, and where. What did they wait for? How did they do it? And where did they wait? Hope we all find some good ideas from the story today.

Question 1. What

What did Simeon and Anna wait for through their whole life? The story today tells that their mission was completed when they met the baby Jesus. In other words, they spent their whole life to wait for Jesus. Please look at the verse 26 to see what Simeon waited for in his life.

²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Luke 2:26 NRSV

From this verse, we come to know our ultimate goal in our life. It is to see Jesus. In other words, it is a journey to Sanctification. If others would see Jesus through us, it would be great. Certainly, our goal is not to see what to entertain us in this world. It is to see Jesus and to entertain Him the Lord. However, like Simeon, it requires our ongoing patience and waiting process.

Question 2. How

If we need to wait for Jesus in our life, how should that waiting be? Just by our mind? Thought? Or image-making? When you read the story today, you easily see how these two people waited for the baby Jesus. The verse 25 tells how Simeon waited for the Lord:

²⁵Now 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. Luke 2:25 NRSV

We cannot make our good goals without good practice. If your goal is to lose weight, you need to exercise and do a good diet. Likewise, if we want to see Jesus, we need to do spiritual practice. Simeon is the best example. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. Plus, he was a man of the Holy Spirit.

What about Anna? We get some ideas from the verse 37-38:

She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At 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. Luke 2:37b-38 NRSV

Here is a simple deal. Anna did her best to keep her relationship with God and share Jesus with people, which means she was outstanding in personal piety and relationship. To see Jesus, she spent her whole life to be more faithful in the eyes of God and people. Could we take this 'Christian Waiting 101'?

Question 3. Where

To see Jesus, the last question we ask is this. Where do we wait for Jesus?

In the story today, there is the only one place where all these people were. It was temple! For Simeon,

²⁷Guided 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, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God. Luke 2:27-28a NRSV

For Anna,

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. Luke 2:37 NRSV

As we can see from these verses, the wonderful meeting between these two seniors and Jesus was done at the temple. Simeon and Anna stayed there in their whole life. However, don't get me wrong! I am asking you to move to a church neighborhood. What I am telling is that we need to make our place the place where we feel the presence of God. Even we are out of the sanctuary, we are responsible for making our place another sanctuary!

Indeed, this is what we have done this year. Due to Covid-19, we were limited to meet at the church, however, we've made our place – living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, study rooms, back yards and tea tables... another beautiful sanctuary to watch on-line services and pray.

Before resuming in-person service, a few people met together to record on-line services. St. John's choirs made such a wonderful harmony through zoom recording. Our children meet together every Sunday at 11:45 am virtually and they are experiencing Children ministry through music, story time, and crafts with lots of fun. Children's summer virtual camp was a big success too!

Yes, we St. John's successfully have waited for Jesus by our efforts and prayers to come closer to God. Thank you all so much for all you do this year. You are another Simeon and Anna. That is the reason why I am deeply grateful for you all. At the same time, this is the reason I am so blessed to be your pastor here at St. John's. As long as we are together, our long waiting never be stressful!

⁹ So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. Galatians 6:9-10 NRSV