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## **“No More Waiting”**

**Luke 2:22-40**

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**December 27, 2020**

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When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup>“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup>The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

<sup>36</sup>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, <sup>37</sup>and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup>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.

<sup>39</sup>When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Much of our lives is spent in waiting, and it’s probably a lot more than we think. When we were young, we waited for our next birthday. We waited to enter the next grade of school. Waiting of course, is done throughout the course of our lives, but probably in our 20s is where a concentration of waiting is done. We’re waiting to graduate from school. We’re waiting to get our first ‘real’ job. We’re waiting to get married. We’re waiting to get pregnant and start a family. We’re waiting until we’ve saved enough to buy our own place.

Then there are some things for which we wait a very long time. The healing and relief a chronic illness. Getting married. The growing up and releasing of our children. The restoration of a broken relationship. The salvation of someone we dearly love. What are you waiting for these days?

**What does all of our waiting reveal?** What does all this waiting tell us about ourselves, about life? First, I think waiting reveals that life has purpose. We're usually waiting for something that has value or importance. All those things I mentioned just a minute ago are important things; they are things that matter to us. When we wait at a coffee shop for our blind date to arrive, it's because it's important. Why do we consider that important? Because this person might just be the one—the one with whom I'll spend the rest of my life. My life, my future, my happiness is at stake. Isn't that what we think? Even when we wait in line for two hours for the next gadget or game release, it's because we believe it's important that we have those things.

I think waiting also reveals what we value. We'll wait for the things we think are important to us. If getting an advanced degree is important to you, then you may work and wait for many years to achieve that degree. If that one-minute roller coaster ride is important to you then what's two hours in line? Waiting shows us what's important to us.

Waiting also reveals that we live in a world that's broken. Waiting usually implies that we hope that life will be better. Surely if we all ride out this pandemic, if we just wait it out, we believe that there's light at the end of the tunnel, that things will be better, but in that waiting, we realize that this is not how it should be. It tells us that there is a normal and there's an abnormal. We know that children shouldn't get cancer. We know that parents shouldn't be childless. We know that wars shouldn't continue without an end in sight. We know there should be peace. We're waiting for a time when waiting will be no more, a time when whatever we've been waiting for have finally come. That's what today's message is about.

In today's story, we encounter two elderly people, one man and one woman, who were both waiting a very long time and finally their waiting had come to an end. One was named Simeon and the other was named Anna. The text states explicitly that Anna was very old, 84 years to be exact. We assume that Simeon was also very old because it seems that he knew he didn't have much time left before he died. Simeon was not a priest like Zechariah, the father of John. He was just a regular person with no religious title or position. What is told about him is that he is a righteous and devout person, a description that is not used of many people in the Bible.

What about Anna? She was very old. She had lived as a widow for most of her life. Like Simeon, she too was very devout. Of her it's said, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Unlike Simeon, who had no title, Anna was a prophet. So, both of these elderly people were very devout in their faith and both of them were waiting for God to do something among their people.

What exactly were they waiting for? Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel and Anna was waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. They're similar ideas. What does consolation mean? Literally, it means comfort or encouragement. This comfort and encouragement were to be achieved through a deliverance and this deliverance is to be brought about by a deliverer. God's chosen servant, his chosen instrument, God's Messiah was going to be the means by which consolation was going to come. Simeon was longing for this day to come.

Ana was waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the religious and political center of all of Jewish life. This was home base for the temple and for the king. So, if Jerusalem is redeemed, the nation is redeemed. Now, redemption implies a payment, a ransom. A price needs to be paid to set someone free. Redemption in the Bible, is often specifically applied to the penalty of sin. A payment must be paid for the penalty of sin. Anna was praying and fasting and worshiping at the temple, waiting for the payment to be made for our sins. Both Simeon and Ana were long awaiting for God to come and perform some mighty act of deliverance, an act of salvation among their people.

Something to notice from these two elderly saints is that their waiting is seen as an aspect of their godliness. They were old and for their whole lives they were waiting for this one thing. It was a good waiting, a proper waiting. That they were waiting is highlighted in this story. Their waiting is a highlight of their righteousness. Now, this really shouldn't be foreign to us because waiting is a theme that's found throughout the Bible. However, we tend not to look at waiting as a sign of godliness, but rather we look at the negative side of waiting, that what we long for, what we want, hasn't yet come.

The Bible seems to highlight two kinds of waiting:

The first waiting is for the fulfillment of God's promise. Perhaps the best example is that of Abraham and Sarah. God visits this old couple, who are beyond the age of having children, and he promises them that nations will come from them, meaning that descendants, children and grandchildren, and hundreds and thousands of generations of people will come from them. And little did they know that not merely biological descendants, but spiritual descendants would come. Since the receiving of that promise, Abraham actively waited for God's promise to be fulfilled.

The second kind of waiting is for the relief from suffering. There's one book that emphasizes the cry of the heart when we wait for this relief. The book of Psalms. At least seven times in the Psalter, we'll find this phrase, "How long, Lord?" Listen to a few of them:

**Psalm 6:3** My soul is in deep anguish.  
**How long, LORD, how long?**

**Psalm 13:1** **How long, LORD?** Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?

**Psalm 35:17** **How long, Lord, will you look on?**  
Rescue me from their ravages,  
my precious life from these lions.

**Psalm 79:5** **How long, LORD?** Will you be angry forever?  
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?

**Psalm 80:4** **How long, LORD** God Almighty,  
will your anger smolder  
against the prayers of your people?

**Psalm 89:46** **How long, LORD?** Will you hide yourself forever?  
How long will your wrath burn like fire?

**Psalm 94:3** How long, LORD, will the wicked,  
how long will the wicked be jubilant?

These laments, these cries for deliverance, are directed toward God, the one who saves, delivers, and redeems. In these prayers, the psalmist knows that in some cases, wicked people have oppressed him, and in other cases he knows that God is punishing him. However, whichever the reason, he knows only God can deliver him, so he prays, “How long, O Lord.”

How about for us? Does this describe our waiting? Do we cry out, “Lord, fulfill your promises to me, to us.” And do we cry out in our anguish, “How long, Lord; how long? I think we do both. We read of God’s many promises in the Bible, and believing his word is true, and with our mustard-seed faith, we patiently wait for his promise to be fulfilled. And when we are suffering or going through persecution, don’t we also pray, “How long, Lord” or “How much longer Lord?” Of course, we do. This is all a part of our growing and maturing as Christian people.

As I said earlier, the Bible makes much of waiting. In the case of Simeon and Ana, they were waiting for consolation, for redemption, and they knew that those things were going to be fulfilled in a person. How do we know that? Well, we look at their response when Joseph and Mary, carrying the 8-day old baby Jesus, enter the temple. Here’s Simeon’s response: (**Luke 2**)

- <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:  
<sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.  
<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:  
<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people Israel.”

And here’s Anna’s response:

- <sup>38</sup> 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.

Finally, what Simeon has been waiting for his entire life, has come. The Saviour has been born. God’s promised Messiah is here. The one who will bring Israel’s consolation, he now sees with his own eyes. He says, “My eyes have seen your salvation, not only for Israel, but for all nations. That means that Jesus is not merely a Jewish Messiah, though he is that for sure. He is also a Gentile Messiah, for black, brown, yellow and white. He’s the Messiah for the rich and the poor, the smart and the dumb, the educated and the uneducated, for urban dwellers and rural dwellers, for those who’ve heard his name since the day they were born and for those who are hearing his name for the first time. He is the Messiah, the Saviour for all peoples, in all time. This too is what we’ve been waiting for.

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Now, let me finish with three applications:

**First**, Practice godly waiting. What does it mean to be godly? Of course, there are many things the Bible says about that, but one thing we probably don't give much attention to, is that godliness is seen in our waiting and specifically what it is we are waiting for. For Christians living today, we don't wait for the birth of Jesus, since that event has already occurred. What we wait for is the next coming of Jesus, the final coming of Jesus. This specific act of waiting is commended throughout the New Testament. Let me give you some verses.

**(1 Thessalonians 3:13)** May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

**(Colossians 3:1)** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**(Philippians 3:20)** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

**(Romans 8:23)** Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

**(1 Corinthians 1:7)** Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

**Philippians 1:23** I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

**(1 Peter 1:7)** These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**(1 John 3:2)** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will **be** has not yet **been** made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

You see, part of healthy, mature Christianity is longing for Jesus to return. It's loving his return more than we love this world. It's loving heaven more than earth. It's loving the imperishable treasures stored up there, rather than the perishable treasures we have here.

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We long for his return for several reasons:

1. Sin will be no more. Our struggle with sin. And the world's plague of sin will be eradicated once and for all.
2. Satan and all God's enemies will be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire.
3. We will be re-embodied with glorious imperishable bodies.
4. Christ will reign forever and ever.
5. And the greatest blessing of all, we will see Jesus face to face. The wounded and scarred Saviour, the one who went to the cross, whose hands, feet and side were pierced, that Saviour, we will see his face.

Don't make light of your groaning now, for "Groaning Christians are Growing Christians."

**Second** application. Make sure, no matter what else, you can die in peace. All of us will die. Without exception, every single person will die. The question is not if you will die, it's how will you die? Not in terms of will you die of cancer or in a car accident, but will you die in peace or without peace. Peace with God, that is, as a friend of God; or without peace, that is, as an enemy of God? How will you die? Receiving forgiveness and living in a perfect heaven forever—that's what peace is. Or being judged by a holy and just God and found wanting, and sent to hell forever. That's the utter absence of peace. Here's how Simeon says it,

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,

Listen to how the songwriter, Michael Card wrote this peace. He writes,

*Now that I've held in my arms,  
My life can now come to an end.  
Let Your servant now depart in peace  
Cause I've seen your salvation  
He's the Light of the Gentiles  
And the glory of His people Israel*

There's only one way to die in peace, and that's to see Jesus. Not with our physical eyes, but with our spiritual eyes. That kind of sight comes from the help of God's Holy Spirit. Don't you want to see the one who came to redeem you? Don't you want to see the one who came to console you? Don't you want to see the one who came to save you and bring you peace? You can, but only with eyes of faith—meaning, you need the help of God. Ask him. Ask to reveal Jesus to you, and he will. Ask him to forgive your sins through Jesus, and he will. That's the only way you can die in peace.

Here's a **third** and final application. Tell others about this child. Look at what Anna did upon seeing the child.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

Anna spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Friends this too is our mission. As a Christian, you have already seen the Messiah and Saviour of the world. It's now your mission to speak about Him to others. Let's start locally. Who is in your circle of influence? Who do you have unique access to? To whom might you be the only Christian witness? In our day and age, isn't that possible? Isn't it very possible that you might be the only Christian that they know? Why do you think that is? What do you think God's purpose behind that is? I'm so glad that many of you stopped by the church office in the past couple of weeks to pick up the "This is Christmas" booklet to share with your friends. There are a few more left. Come and take them and share them. In the 2021 CoaH Challenge one of the eleven categories is evangelism and, in that category, the pastors came up with 12 different things you could do.

- Start a gospel conversation with a non-believer
- Pray for the conversion of your loved one every day for a month\*\*
- Frequent the same business (restaurant, gas station, etc.) at least five times and build a relationship (name, family, faith, etc.) for the purpose of evangelism
- Go through "[Two Ways to Live](#)" twice and share the link with a friend
- Invite someone to Christianity Explored
- Cook a meal for CE (pending in-person meetings resume)
- Watch a Christian movie or documentary with a non-believer (See Note Below) (ex. American Gospel, I Can Only Imagine, Unbroken, Amazing Grace, Narnia series, etc.)
- Gift a Bible to a non-believer
- Gift one of these Christian books to a non-believer: (See Note Below)
- Share [COAH online service](#) to a non-believer
- Do a prayer walk around your campus, praying for the salvation of staff and students (Poima)
- Learn about the state of Christianity in 10 countries Visit [operationworld.org](#) and pray for those countries

That's locally, but what about globally? Do you believe Jesus is the Messiah of the Gentiles? Do you believe he came for all nations? If you do, then you must believe in missions, and you must pray for missions, and you must support the missionary enterprise, and you must help missionaries enter the mission field, and you yourself must at least consider being a missionary and going to live among those for whom Jesus came.

Like Ana, we too, must tell people about Jesus.

Let's pray.