

## Gospel - Luke 2: 22-40

Presentation of the Lord

Sermon 2.2.20

**Patti Case**



### **I'm revising my bucket list.**

I'm 62 years old, I'm reasonably healthy, I'm looking forward to retirement in the not-too-distant future, and I'm already revising my bucket list. That may seem a bit pessimistic, but I've been thinking a lot about that bucket list. Many of the things on it are things Dick and I have dreamed about doing, and in his present state of health, I have to be realistic. Some of those things aren't to be.

My guess is that some of you have been in that situation, yourselves. Stuff happens, somewhere between those teenage dreams and the realities of adulthood, and our dreams are adjusted, over and over again.

That's how Jesus Christ works in our lives.

Anna was a devout woman. She was old, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage and 84 years after he died. Few women live that long even in our day. So clearly God had something in mind for her as she came to the temple, day after day after year after year, fasting and worshiping. Likely few of the temple-goers even noticed Anna, a shriveled old woman shrunken into her shawl so that a passerby probably couldn't or wouldn't look her in the eye. But, having seen Jesus, she came to life, praising God and speaking "about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." It was Anna's moment. She's been on earth somewhere in the vicinity of 104 years, but this day, she saw the Lord. She didn't have a star to guide her or angels to wake her up, but she saw Jesus. She recognized the Messiah and shared her joy with others.

Likewise Simeon. He, too, was a man of God. Maybe he had a bucket list like me. Maybe he wanted to fish one more time in the Sea of Galilee before he passed away. Maybe he dreamed of playing with his grandchildren, who had moved far away. God's plan for him, though, was that he would see the Messiah before he died.

What an interesting perspective that would have provided. Where was he going to find Jesus? In line at the market? On his way to the market? He must have looked into hundreds of faces, wondering: Is this the One who will console Israel, who will bring peace to the Jewish people.

Instead, Simeon gets much more than he asked for. The Spirit guided him not to the market or the well that day, but to the temple, where he sees a couple with a child. There are likely dozens of couples with newborns there are the temple, fulfilling the law of the Torah, yet he is guided to this little family. He sees a baby, not a superhero or a macho man wearing a crown. A baby! And in that moment he is moved to sing out, likely startling Joseph and Mary, and all those around:

"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."

That song has been sung through the ages, to countless tunes and in countless languages. It's a song of beautiful hope and it's probably no coincidence that such a song comes to us in the liturgy after a solid month of rain. Simeon holds a baby in his arms and sings to the glory of God.

There is a kernel in his song that tells us so much about what is to come. The setting is the temple, the occasion is the rite of purification that the Torah requires, the sacrifice of a lamb or two turtledoves, depending on the wealth of the family. The players are all devout Jews. Yet Simeon reveals this Messiah will save Gentiles as well as Jews. All peoples, he sings. In the midst of piousness and rule-following, Simeon sees the rest of the story.

All peoples.

So I am revising my bucket list. I have an advantage over Simeon and Anna – I was born after 2000 years of Christianity. 2000 years of knowing that He is our Savior. And of course, I know that the Messiah is here among us.

I saw the Messiah last week when I was in Alabama. Tulips were blooming, herons and pelicans were winging along the shores of Mobile Bay. Eagles were mating. And let me tell you, if that isn't on your bucket list, maybe it should be!

I saw the Messiah on Facebook. My daughter in law posted a video of our baby granddaughter tottering along, finally tipping onto her well-padded bottom as she tired of running after her brothers.

I saw the Messiah yesterday when I came to do the flowers. Our camellia is blooming, the snowdrops are peeking through the fallow soil. I saw the Messiah in a maple leaf that defied gravity, tumbling through the air as it crossed my path. A maple leaf that was dry enough to fly, after all the rain we've had? Now that's a true sign of hope!

All these signs have a common theme. They're happy. They're rainbows and unicorns. And eagles.

I told you I'm revising my bucket list. Dick and I may never be able to travel across Canada and the US in our fifth wheel and we may never be able to kayak the entire length of the Columbia River. My bucket list may need to be a little closer to home. But first on my bucket list is to see the Messiah more. Not just in the joyous things I witness, but in the challenging moments of life.

I am a critical person. My mother used to say, "Patti, don't be so critical!" And I used to say, "I come by it honestly, Mom." So yeah, a little critical.

I want to see the Messiah – more. I want to see the Messiah in the guy who won't give up his seat on the airport train to an old man who's clearly exhausted. I want to see the Messiah in the truck driver who veered into my lane in the Atlanta traffic. I want to see the Messiah in tragedy as well as joy, in weakness as well as strength, in pain as well as in healing. I want to see the Messiah in all my neighbors and friends – and in my enemies. Rather than jumping immediately to my usual, critical mind machinations, I want to see the Messiah in these critical moments. Because it's not in the easy times when Jesus is truly a savior, is it? It's in the tough, tough times when Jesus guides us to the light.

As Simeon said, my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.

God intends this salvation for all peoples. Our first response might be that God is gracious to offer salvation to people who are not like us—but it should be that God is gracious enough to offer salvation to us. We are, after all, sinners—all of us, and every time my critical self rears her critical little head I prove that point! Yet the Messiah is there, even when I'm too blind to look for him. And he is, indeed, as Simeon sang, as Simeon sang:

a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.

So go in peace. Sing like Simeon, babble like Anna. See the Messiah. Share the good news.

Fill your bucket again, and again. And again.

Amen.