

A sermon preached Almaden Valley United Church of Christ
San Jose, CA
Date: February 7, 2010
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Luke 2:22-40 (Malachi 3:1-20)

The Wisdom of Simeon and Anna

It seems like we have been waiting for the Messiah for a very long time! I mean, just think about it. Even if we only count the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—we have been waiting for about four thousand years. That’s a long long time. It seems that down throughout history there have been countless people waiting for someone to come and rescue them from their current tribulations and strife and conflict and oppression and poverty and sickness. Wouldn’t you think after this many years that someone would ask “is there really a Messiah that is coming? Is there really one person who is one day going to come down and rescue the believers from this world? ”

Now, we Christians, of course have a little different spin on the coming of the Messiah because one of the basic tenets of the Christian faith is that the Messiah has already come in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah we say. But like most church people we just couldn’t be satisfied with Jesus coming once, we believe he is coming again! We followers of Jesus just can’t get enough of this waiting and hoping business! It appears we cannot be satisfied that Jesus, our Messiah, was already here once. Nope we immediately turn around after the death of Jesus and start looking forward to Jesus coming again! Can’t we be satisfied that Jesus has already come? We have foisted on ourselves the pain of waiting a few more thousand years?

Some might say that good old Simeon of the temple in Jerusalem was the luckiest man on earth. He believed, after all, that God has promised him that he wouldn’t die until he had seen the Messiah, the “consolation of Israel.” Simeon is so sure that he sings out loud in the temple probably at the top of his lungs in front of Mary and Joseph and all the priests that “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation,³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32) Good old devout and pious Simeon who spent his life in the temple recognized what he was seeing before his eyes and heart and pronounced his satisfaction that he was in the company of

the long awaited Messiah. Simeon pronounced fulfillment and was satisfied. No more waiting for Simeon, or for the widow Anna either who recognized that here Messiah was already present.

Christians are different than our brothers and sisters in the Jewish and Muslim faiths, too. You see they don't spend so much of their religious energy on anticipating a Messiah. And we all well know that there are some segments of the Christian faith whose greatest focus is not on what is happening right now, but what will happen at the end of days, or end of the world, when the Messiah will come and send some people to hell and take other with him (and they do believe it will be a male of the species). In fact these Christians' main message is that you better believe what we believe or you will never see the Messiah and get your final reward.

My friends, I'll be frank with you. I feel sorry for that branch of our Christian faith. They are missing so much richness of knowing that Jesus is here right now; that Jesus has already come; that the work of the Messiah is already happening right now through the love, compassion, and justice work of good people of every faith. They are so focused on some final battle or apocalyptic time and their reward in heaven that they lose sight of the battle we need to wage today against bigotry, poverty, and injustice. The comfort and consolation of Jesus is available to us right now. And, what is truly sad is all the claims they make about people just because other people don't worship in the way they do. Take Pat Robertson for instance who after the earthquake in Haiti said it happened because Haitians had made a deal with the devil or those Christians who blamed 9/11 on the fictitious so-called "gay agenda" in this country. For a large portion of our Christian brothers and sisters their faith is more about their own, not God's, judgment and they use fear tactics like telling people they won't go to heaven or see the Messiah if they don't believe as they do.

I think all of us would be better off in our living with each other if we took lessons from Simeon and Anna and realized that the Messiah is present in our lives right now. And if the Messiah is present right now what is Jesus calling us to do with our faith? Let all of us children of God grow and become strong in wisdom and if we do I believe the favor of God will be upon us just like it was upon the young child Jesus. In fact, even if we don't grow and always act with wisdom, God's favor and love will still be upon us. Amen.

