

## Sermon for February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

### Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Luke 2:22-40

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR  
LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

For those of you who are of a **certain age** or have been Lutheran for a **number** of years you may remember this **red** hymnal. (Hold up the SBH) It is the *Service Book and Hymnal*. The Lutheran church used it from 1958 until 1978 when the **green** hymnal, the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, came out. **Now** of course, we use the **cranberry** hymnal as we call it—because we have already had a red one. The **cranberry** hymnal came out in 2006. I am giving you a **brief** history of our hymnals because there is something I **remembered** in the red hymnal which came to mind when I read the **gospel** reading for this morning.

When I was a child **every** Sunday morning, **after** we received communion, we would **stand** and **say or sing** what is called the *Nunc Di-mit'-tis* or 'the Song of Simeon'. It goes like this: p. 38 of SBH.

It has been **many** years since I remember using that piece of liturgy in our **worship** service so I looked to see if it is even in our cranberry hymnal and **sure enough** there it is—although it is only included in a **couple** of our 10 settings. The words have changed **rather dramatically**, it has been **shortened** quite a bit, there is **no name given** for it so it might be **easily** overlooked, and now it says the

*assembly may sing the following or another suitable song*'. **Another** suitable song—**hmmmm**— well, nonetheless—it is **still in our hymnal** if you would like to search it out.

You might call me old fashioned but—*another suitable song*—**really?** I suppose but how would we improve upon Simeon's words when he **beheld** the baby Jesus, the **Messiah**—the one he and all of Israel had been waiting for—the one **God had promised**. **He** was the righteous and devout man who was **guided** by the **Holy Spirit** to go to the temple **that** day when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus for his purification. **He** was the man who was looking forward to comfort for the nation of Israel. **He** was the man which the **Holy Spirit** had rested upon and revealed to him that he would **not see death** before he had seen the **Lord's** Messiah. **He** was the man who **took** the baby Jesus in his arms and **praised** God with these words. The man that **now**, because God's promise was fulfilled, was ready to die. *Another suitable song?*

Again, **call** me old fashioned if you wish but when Simeon said, (read what Simeon said from our reading for today). I wonder **how** in our need to 'improve upon' and make our versions 'more contemporary' we could **ever** say anything more beautifully or eloquently than Simeon did.

This morning in our **gospel** reading we are introduced to **two people** for the **first time**-Simeon and Anna. **Both** of these people belonged to a **group** of people

called, *“The Quiet in the Land”*. This was a group who committed themselves to **constant praying** for the coming of the Messiah, ones who **pursued justice** as well as **continued to hope and believe** in the words of the scriptures, and ones who lived a life of **quiet faith and watchfulness** as they **waited patiently** for God to fulfill His promise of bringing **salvation and comfort** to His people.

It is never **specifically** said how **old** Simeon was but it is **commonly** believed that he was a man who was **up in years** and Anna, a **prophet and a widow**, was said to be **84 years old**. They were both **strong** believers as the **Holy Spirit** rested upon Simeon and Anna never left the temple. It is said that she lived in a **side room** off the temple **on** the temple grounds. **Both** of their lives were **devoted** to God and **serving** the Lord as they knew best.

The reason I am stressing **this** portion of the gospel story about their age is that **sometimes** in our American culture we tend to **discount** the blessing of the **wisdom** and the **value** that people of a **certain** age hold for us and **who** they are as a people. The **prevailing** message these days seems to be that younger is better. **Some** of you may have **experienced** this yourself that **many** times when one becomes older you are **overlooked** or looked **down** upon because of age.

I hope that you are **encouraged** by the story of these two faithful people. It demonstrates how God uses **all kinds** of people, at **all ages**, to accomplish the **ministry** at hand. I believe that **common people** such as Simeon and Anna might

encourage **all** of us, **especially** those of you who are **already** retired. Because as is **very** evident here at Eden, retirement might be the **perfect time** of your lives to give your energy to **answering** God's call to serve.

I remember that when I went to seminary, since I was quite a bit older than many of my classmates, I would think, 'if I had only I had answered God's call when I was younger'. But it **took** me a while to come to terms with the **truth** that it was **God's** timing not mine and I was there at the **perfect** time to do what God wanted to **accomplish** in my life.

Like our **own** journeys with God and God's timing being perfect, what I find interesting, is that **before** today we have heard **nothing** about **nor** did we know **anything** about either Simeon or Anna's earlier lives or their later years. We **only** meet them on that **one** day and on that **one** day God had a **special** task for them. They were there to share a prophetic word of what God was doing in the **midst** of His people on **that** day at **that** time.

Simeon and Anna, people who were "*The Quiet of the Land*" who **patiently** waited and **watched** for God's **salvation** to be seen in their lives. Do **you** know anyone who you think might be considered '*the quiet of the land*' today? Ones who are the **patient, faithful, consistent, believers** whose **only** desire is to serve the Lord? We certainly have quite a few of you here at Eden.

We may not be able to recognize God's plan for our lives **clearly every day**, **nor** might we **exactly** understand what God is doing **for us** in our midst, **nor** how God will use **each** of us to further His kingdom, but **never the less** we are asked to continue to be aware of God's action in the world like Simeon, and we are asked to pray continually and not give up hope like Anna. Because **no matter what** God is with us and God is working in our lives even if it takes us a **lifetime** to recognize it. All thanks be to God. AMEN.