

# Coming Home: Going Home Again

Presented By Pastor Scott Walters on 12/29/19

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

Throughout Advent and now into the Christmas season, we have heard God's constant invitation to come home, home to God's presence, home to God's grace, home to God's gift of salvation.

Today we hear once more God's invitation to come home, not to a specific location, but home to a relationship with God, through faith in Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us, our Savior and our Lord.

To most observers at the Temple on that day, Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus were no different than any other ordinary faithful poor Jewish family coming to fulfill the law of Moses.

I am certain Joseph and Mary expected that trip to the temple to be ordinary like every other ritual observance. Yet, once again, Mary and Joseph were reminded that their family is now anything but ordinary and that their family life will be anything but normal with God's Son as their child.

The two elderly Jews at the center of today's Scripture were both extremely faithful Jews who spent their time in prayer and pious living.

Simeon was an elderly man who eagerly prepared for and prayed for the coming of God's Messiah, an occurrence promised to him before his death. Often Simeon would be guided by the Holy Spirit as he lived a devout and just-filled life patterned after the ways of God.

Anna had been a praying widow since her husband had died seven years after their marriage, and she was now eighty-four years old, a very old woman according to that day's standards. Anna spent her widowed life worshipping at the temple in prayer and fasting.

Both Simeon and Anna lived their lives waiting, preparing, and anticipating the arrival of God's Messiah, looking forward to the day when God would be in their midst.

Unlike many of that time who were looking for a military-style conquering-hero messiah to save Israel from Rome and Herod and poverty, these two devout Jewish elderly saints were open to receiving and recognizing God's salvation in whatever form God chose to send himself in. I often wonder what they were really looking for. Were they looking for a couple of power and position? Were they surprised when Jesus showed up with poor peasant parents?

What would I have been looking for? If I had been in Bethlehem on that holy night, or in the temple on this day, or residing in Galilee 33 years later, what would I have seen in this infant?

Thankfully, both Simeon and Anna were looking in the ordinary temple routine for the salvation of humanity, seeking to see the Christ among us.

When they saw Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus Simeon and Anna did not see any miracles, signs or wonders. They did not see a big billboard from God with an arrow pointing the way to the Son of God. They did not hear an audible from God or even a whisper that this baby was different.

Led by the Holy Spirit, Simeon and Ann just knew. They recognized the Christ child in the face of an ordinary tiny baby. They saw God in the midst of an ordinary poor couple faithfully fulfilling the Law of Moses.

When they looked upon Mary's child both Simeon and Anna knew then that it was time to praise. It was time to rejoice. Simeon could now face death at peace that he had seen the fulfillment of God's promises. Anna could now cease her fasting for the joy of Israel was in her presence. Simeon and Anna knew in that moment, in that day, that they were in the presence of God incarnate, and they both responded with loud praise.

The Gospel of Luke records the words of wonder spoken by Simeon:

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*“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.” (Luke 2:29-32)*

God was now in their midst. “The Word had become flesh and had made his home among us.” Simeon and Anna worshipped, and witnessed, and gave thanks for the fulfillment of God’s promises. They had no need to see God’s promise come to fruition in Jesus’ ministry and death and resurrection. They knew it would come to pass.

They worshipped, and trusted, and believed, simply thankful to see with their own eyes the one who would bring about God’s redemption in our world, the one who would offer salvation to all people—old and young, rich and poor, male and female, those on the margins as well as those in power.

Simeon and Anna remind us today that Jesus’ birth was only the beginning of the story. The baby in the manger would grow in strength and wisdom and favor with God until the time his ministry would begin. And his ministry, his death and his resurrection—they all proclaim once again God’s saving grace offered to all people in all generations in all nations.

This is the good news we gather once again to proclaim in our worship today—Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, for every moment of every day.

And through faith in Jesus, God once again invites us home, home to God’s forgiving love, hope, peace and joy.

- Are you ready in the New Year to go home again, home to God’s love and grace?
- Are you ready in the New Year to go home again, home to an abiding relationship with Jesus?
- Are you ready in the New Year to go home again, home to a life of faith and faithfulness, living as Christ’s followers at home, at work, at school, at play?

My prayer is that we will all seek to be ready to renew our faith as the calendar declares a new year in a few days.

If you have not yet allowed God to make a home with you, are you ready to open your heart to that possibility?

My prayer is that a new year will bring many a new commitment of faith from all who do not yet have an abiding relationship with Jesus.

Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus is good news for all people in all nations in all generations. Jesus is our Savior, the one who has forgiven us of our sins, and our Lord, the one who will lead us into new ways of living by God’s grace, hope and love.

As we move into a new year, may we grow in wisdom and grace, in faith and hope, in love and favor with God.

May it be so. Let us pray.