

Chapter Three

“What Does Hope Look Like?”

Texts: 1 Peter 1:3, 22-25 and Luke 2:25-38

Hope looks like Simeon. **He is a righteous and devout man¹ who is eagerly looking forward** to the coming of the Messiah. Luke writes the **consolation of Israel**; this being a name for the Messiah. We are told three things about this man: he is righteous, devout and that the Holy Spirit rested upon him.

...Zechariah 3:7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here. 8'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you-- indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. 9'For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. (ESV)

And hope also looks like Anna, the 84—103 plus (if she married at age 12) year old prophetess, **who belonged to the tribe of Asher . . . she never left the temple area but worshipped God day and night with fasting and prayer.** She was a preacher; she **began to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.** (v. 38) Both Simeon and Anna were persons of anticipation, praise and neither of them were ignorant of the promises of scripture: Simeon knew about the “branch” and about the promises of God for those who **walk in God’s ways and serve the Lord** which include authority to rule in the Lord’s house (the temple?) and **free access among the angels** (before God, in heavenly places). Hence the **righteous and devout** designation for Simeon and presence, worshipping, fasting and praying of Anna who, in all likelihood, was a fixture—almost a fixture in the temple area at the time. Her membership in the tribe of Asher, in an age when most tribal distinctions were functionally obsolete speaks of long, continuity (uninterrupted engagement in the temple cult being a sign of that) signifies that God had not in the four hundred, roughly, years past been entirely absent.

¹ 25. just—upright in his moral character.

devout—of a religious frame of spirit.

waiting for the consolation of Israel—a beautiful title of the coming Messiah, here intended.

the Holy Ghost was—supernaturally.

upon him—Thus was the Spirit, after a dreary absence of nearly four hundred years, returning to the Church, to quicken expectation, and prepare for coming events.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, Bible Commentary

These two were in the same class as Zechariah (not the same as the prophet) and Elizabeth, his wife. They also **were righteous before God and blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations.** ((Luke 1:6) *They were good, faithful Jews and it is significant that Luke's opening remarks to Theophilus were framed in terms such as these.* All four were hopeful; that is to say their lives represent a lively, or living hope in the dark days of Israel's occupation by the pagan Roman empire. The light had not gone entirely out; the future therefore was not entirely bleak. Three of the four are elderly. Zechariah and Elizabeth were married and childless—Anna was a widow—and we are not told anything about Simeon's family situation.

However, there is one other unifying piece besides this matter of faithful observance: the activity of the Holy Spirit. This is quietly mentioned about Simeon (**it rested upon him-2:25**) and the Holy Spirit both revealed to him **that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.** (v.27) and **Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area** (v.27) where he would encounter Anna for a divine appointment with Jesus and both of his parents. Joseph and Mary were obeying **the customary law!** (v.27). Just like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna. They all shared the same sacred space (the temple grounds) and the same religious allegiance (all active, practicing and believing Jews). Spirit-fed, and spirit-led. This cadre of Jews was caught up in the renewed activity of the Holy Spirit. The parents of John the Baptist were first on the scene, some two years² before Jesus' presentation in the temple! Mary wanted to know the truth of what was going on.

John's conception was actually the first of two miraculous conceptions—both contrary to the norms, or contours of ordinary human reproduction. The word “exceptional” is apt. God chose to get people's attention through the experience of Zechariah and Elizabeth. It was with them that we learn of angels reappearing (actually Gabriel does both tours of duty mentioned in Luke 1), of the impending fulfillment of God's promises (remember, Simeon and Anna were both versed in these, anticipating that fulfillment), visions and spiritual consequences (Elizabeth gets pregnant, Zechariah is struck mute for disbelief initially and then, later, people start prophecy-ing)! In other words, there is an air of excitement—a sense of strangeness, of things shifting and of change—at the very least in the hearts of these folks as well as, most probably, among their friends and neighbors.

² There is an indefinite period of time from Zechariah's completion of his lottery driven priestly service and Elizabeth's impregnation. There a six months of pregnancy before the angel appears to her younger, betrothed cousin, Mary. Then, nine more months, in all likelihood from that point in time to the time of presentation eight days after birth. Luke 1:39 records that Mary, the Ethiopic manuscript has **in the day** (meaning right after the annunciation) arose and went to a city in the hill country, to Heron, most likely, a priestly city, or destination (according to the Talmud) in the vicinity of Emmaus—or, the king's mountain. Joshua 20:7 & 21:11 where the descendants of Aaron dwelt. 70 miles distant from Nazareth.

So, there we have it: continuity and change. Faithful Jews, doing the same old, same old, while a faithful God up to something radically new! That brings us to 1 Peter 1:3, 22-25.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ³! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope (Regeneration is a work of God.) *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . to obtain an inheritance⁴ which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God*

A **living hope** looks like Simeon, like Anna. The question is does your life look like either of theirs? Are you abiding in a hope that shapes who you are, determines where you are and help direct your path. Your hope is an even better one than theirs. They waited for the Messiah to come—you are privileged to wait for His return. Are you devout, prayerful, righteous, spirit-filled and spirit-led?

³ Peter echoes the doxology of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 1:3 Ephesians 1:3). St. Peter refers our regeneration back to the great fact of the resurrection of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the First-begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5); we are "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). The Church, "which is his body" (Ephesians 1:23), died with him in his death, rose with him in his resurrection. Christians individually are baptized into his death, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The resurrection of Christ was in a real sense the birth of the Church. (Pulpit Commentary)

⁴ It is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which makes the Christian's **hope living and strong**. The heavenly inheritance is the ultimate end of our regeneration; the hope of that inheritance is the present joy of the Christian life. St. Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that when they were without Christ they had no hope (Ephesians 2:12); but God according to his great mercy begat us again into a new life, and one important aspect of that **new life is hope, the hope of ever-deepening fellowship with God now, of everlasting life with God in heaven**. That hope is living; it is "pervaded with life, carrying with it in undying power the certainty of fulfillment (Romans 5:5), and making the heart joyful and happy." (Huther); "it has life in itself, and gives life, and has life as its object" (De Wette). And it liveth, it doth not perish like the hopes of this world, but it lives on in ever fuller joy till it reaches its consummation in heaven; even there "hope abideth," forever in heaven there will be, it seems, a continual progress from glory to glory, nearer and nearer to the throne. St. Peter is the apostle of hope. "He loves," says Bengel, "the epithet living, and the mention of hope." (from "Pulpit Commentary")

And what about joyful anticipation? A present joyful, living hope positions us for His glorious return—when it happens. our hearts are ready and our lives reveal that.

Amen