

Cornerstone Community Church
Cole McDaniel
12/20/2020

Good morning, I'm Cole McDaniel, an elder at Cornerstone, Pastor John Marc and Paula are visiting their son JP on the east coast so I have the opportunity to open God's Word with you this morning. As we prepare for Christmas in just a few days it's a blessing to come together to celebrate the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When most of us think of Christmas we probably have thoughts of the first coming of Jesus as a baby in a manger. After all we are celebrating Advent, which stems from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning coming or arrival; this is a time to celebrate Jesus' 1st coming but I hope we will see this morning that it is also a time to anticipate His 2nd coming. Please turn with me to Luke Chapter 2:21-38, most of us are familiar with the first 20 verses, particularly at this time of the year, from Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem to Jesus being born in a manger to the angels announcing "Good News of great joy" to the Shepherds.

Read Luke 2:21-38

We don't often think of Simeon and Anna when it comes to the Christmas story. Both Simeon and Anna were looking forward to the coming Messiah with great anticipation and serve as additional eyewitnesses of the long awaited Messiah.

My hope and prayer is that you are encouraged this morning by Simeon and Anna's focus on Jesus' 1st coming which energized them to serve God faithfully for years, to give thanks and praise God, and to share the Good News of Jesus' coming. But I also pray you are inspired to grow in your anticipation of Jesus' 2nd coming.

Those are the two main points this morning: I. First, we will look at how Simeon and Anna anticipated Christ's 1st coming. II. Then we will consider how we should live in anticipation of Christ's 2nd coming.

I. Simeon and Anna were anticipating Jesus' 1st coming

Simeon was said to be "looking for the consolation of Israel" in verse 25 and Anna spoke to "all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" in verse 38. With both of them so focused on the coming Messiah what Old Testament texts could have pointed Simeon and Anna to this hope?

A) Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' coming

Isaiah chapter 9 comes to mind

¹But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish. In earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He will make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

²The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them...

⁶For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel.

Micah 5:2-3 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His times of coming forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.

³Therefore He will give them *up* until the time
When she who is in labor has given birth.

These are just a few of the many Old Testament scriptures pointing Simeon and Anna to expectantly await the coming of the Messiah for many years. We aren't sure of Simeon's exact age but he was old enough to be told by God in verse 26 that he wouldn't die before seeing Jesus. Anna was at least 84 years old according to verse 37. Let's look at the effects of this focused expectation of the coming Messiah for Simeon and Anna.

b) Effects of anticipation

1) Ferently served the Lord for many years

Simeon is described as devout in verse 25 and Anna we are told in verse 37 never left the temple.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to see the faithful service of so many of you over the years at Cornerstone, when I read about Anna one particular servant comes to mind, Vernetta Semon, our dear sister in Christ who has gone home to the Lord, she served on our deacon board into her 90's, she served with a smile and joy independent of her circumstances, she loved serving the Lord. I can just imagine Vernetta praising God in heaven right now!

When we have something to look forward to we are willing to devote ourselves in remarkable ways, Simeon and Anna served God diligently based on their expectation of the coming Messiah.

The 2nd effect of this focused expectation for Simeon and Anna was that they were filled with praise and thanksgiving to God.

2) Filled with praise and thanksgiving to God:

Verse 28 says Simeon blessed God and verse 38 says Anna began giving thanks to God.

Thanksgiving is the mark of a believer. These days thanksgiving is in short supply with all that has transpired the past year, but as a Christian there is always reason for thanksgiving from the smallest provision to the most valuable, our salvation. You may have heard me share in a previous sermon that our youngest daughter Ellie used to give thanks to God for towels and our older two daughters would laugh, I

Cornerstone Community Church
Cole McDaniel
12/20/2020

told my older daughters that if they think thanking God for towels is so funny that they can try their next shower without a towel to dry off with, as you might expect the laughing quickly stopped. When we go without something that we take for granted we realize that even the smallest provisions deserve thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 is my favorite passage on thanksgiving, it states “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Earlier in 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5 it speaks of the day of the Lord and calls us to “encourage one another and build one another up”. Giving thanks is a great way to encourage and build one another up.

Thanksgiving is key to taking our focus off our circumstances and focusing on the lovingkindnesses of the Lord that indeed never cease. As we give thanks to the Lord we need to remember that our thankfulness should also be a yearning thankfulness looking forward to a future in God’s presence.

3) Shared the Good News

Both Simeon and Anna shared the Good News of the Messiah’s arrival. Verses 27-33 state Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

²⁹ “Now, Lord, You are letting Your bond-servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all the peoples:

³² A light for revelation for the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

³³ And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

The temple was filled with people, as it says in verse 27 the Holy Spirit led Simeon to Mary and Joseph in the midst of the crowd. Anna must have been led by the Lord as well to come up at that very moment and over hear Simeon bless God. Anna’s response was to also share the news of Jesus’ coming in verse 38:

And at that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke included the eyewitness testimony of both Simeon and Anna to encourage us by their devout service to the Lord, their thanksgiving to and blessing of God and their joyful sharing of the Good News of Jesus’ coming.

C) Stark differences in the 1st and 2nd coming

Simeon and Anna were the rare exception of those who were ready for Jesus’ 1st coming, very few people recognized Jesus as the Messiah at His first coming. But the next time Jesus comes the whole world will know, Revelation 1:7 states “Behold He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him”, in fact, “every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” as it says in Philippians 2:10-11

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

and also in Revelation 5:13 that states “And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever”.

The 1st time Jesus came as a baby, the 2nd time He will come as the unmistakable King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The 1st time there wasn't anywhere for Mary and Joseph to stay in Bethlehem and deliver Jesus, the 2nd time Jesus will sit on the throne and His glory will fill the entire earth.

Jesus originally came to serve; Jesus will be served at His 2nd coming.

The 1st time He came Jesus was mocked, verses such as John 1:46 come to mind when one of His disciples asked “can anything good come out of Nazareth?” or in John 8:48 when the Jews asked “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and that you have a demon?” or in Matthew 27:39-42 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God come down from that cross’. In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself? He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God, let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him’.

Wow, the patience of God was on full display here!

No one will doubt or question who Jesus is when He returns again. Jesus will be fully unveiled at His 2nd coming as it says in Revelation 1:12-17 “I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like the son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him I fell at His feet like a dead man!” And this is John, known as the disciple whom Jesus loved, falling at the feet of Jesus!

What a difference between the 1st coming and the 2nd coming of Jesus! From rejection by the world to the whole world bowing down before Him.

II. Eagerly awaiting Jesus' 2nd coming

Simeon and Anna eagerly awaited the Messiah's 1st coming, they had based their hope on the promises of God in the Old Testament. Interestingly enough the same scriptures that pointed Simeon and Anna to Jesus' first coming also point us to Jesus return.

A) Scripture pointing to Jesus' return

Isaiah 9:6-7

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

⁶ For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of armies will accomplish this.

Micah 5:4-5

⁴ And He will arise and shepherd *His flock*
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.
And they will remain,
Because at that time He will be great
To the ends of the earth.
⁵ This One will be *our* peace.

These passages speak of Jesus' kingdom and peace over all the earth. Clearly this won't happen until Jesus returns.

There are also numerous New Testament passages that command us to look forward to this return of Jesus. Let's take a look at a few of the passages:

Acts 1:9-11 ⁹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, then behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, ¹¹ and they said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

1 Corinthians 1:4-8

⁴ I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶ just as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:28

so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

For they themselves report about us as to the kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is*, Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Titus 2:11-13

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

1 Peter 1:13

¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation opens and closes focused on Jesus's return, Revelation 1:4-7

Grace to you and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— ⁶ and He made us *into* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

The last prayer in the Bible is a prayer for Jesus to come:

Revelation 22:12-13,20

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to reward each one as his work deserves. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

These are just a few of the New Testament passages concerning Jesus' return, why does God remind us so many times to look forward to Jesus' return? Because we so easily forget! It's the same reason the most repeated command in the Bible, stated over 365 times, more than once for every day of the year, is Do not fear! Do not be afraid! Why does God tell us do not fear so many times? Because we are prone to fear and therefore be anxious, worry, doubt, be discontent and stressed. God knows what is good for us, what is best for us so He continually reminds us what we should avoid and continually reminds us what we should pursue. Remember, God does not want us to be moderate anticipators, thinking of Jesus' return

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

occasionally, with half-anticipating hearts, God wants us to fix our hope completely on the grace that is to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus.

We need reminders to make a habit of anticipating Jesus' return and Christmas is a great time to begin, after all many of the carols we sing this time of year are focused not only on Jesus' 1st coming but on His 2nd coming as well. Consider the lyrics to Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

This speaks to Jesus' first coming, but the next few verses look forward to a future reality inspired by Psalm 98 which states "O sing to the Lord a new song... for He is coming to judge the earth with righteousness."

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love.

Other Christmas carols also point to Jesus' return such as It Came upon a Midnight Clear

For lo the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing

What will peace over all the earth look like? Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

We all desire to focus on the 2nd coming of Jesus as we have been commanded, practically how do we keep our focus on Jesus' return? Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon on focusing on heaven that ended with a few points that can be applied to focusing on Jesus' return:

B) Keys to keeping our focus on Jesus' return

1) Do not focus on the things of this world, fix your eyes on Jesus

This can refer to avoiding worldly pursuits but it can also be applied to why we do the everyday things, from working to provide for your family, to taking care of your home and family, to studying at school, to serving your neighbor, to cleaning the church, in all things we are called to work heartily as unto the Lord.

This is particularly applicable this time of the year when we are pulled in so many directions, this can certainly be the busiest time of the year and can wear us out and take our focus off of celebrating Jesus, this reminds me of Mary and Martha who had the blessing of being close friends with Jesus, Luke 10:38-42 says

Now as they were traveling along, Jesus entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord's feet, and was listening to His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴² but *only* one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Martha's service was important, Jesus needed a place to stay and a meal to eat, but her focus was on all her preparations, Jesus tells her she was "worried and distracted by many things" rather than focusing on who she was preparing for, Jesus. Sound familiar? No matter what it is that we are doing, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus. This often begins with coming to Jesus and repenting of our sin of anxiety, doubt, discontent, stress... so that we can focus on Him.

Hebrews 12:2 says Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.

Peter was able to walk on water when he was focused on Jesus, but when the wind and the waves distracted him he began to sink. When we focus on the worries of this world we also begin to sink, when we focus on Christ and His amazing love for us we have a foundation to not grow weary or lose heart. Thankfully Jesus is always ready to welcome us as our Great Shepherd and the Holy Spirit is always ready as our Great Helper, God continually provides all that we need to completely focus on Him.

2) Think of Jesus' return often. When we anticipate an event we think about it all the time, a vacation, a family member or friend visiting, a trip to the beach or mountains. But as you have probably found,

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

focusing on Jesus' 2nd coming won't come naturally, if it did God wouldn't remind us so many times in the New Testament to be anticipating Jesus' return.

I encourage you to memorize a verse that you can bring to remembrance throughout the day such as:

Titus 2:11-13

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, ¹²instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner in the present age, ¹³looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Or Revelation 22:12-13,20

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to reward each one as his work deserves. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation begins with a blessing to everyone who reads, hears and heeds these words.

One of those blessings is comfort during trials.

3) Remember Jesus' return for comfort during trials

God uses suffering to conform us into the image of Christ, He also comforts us during suffering by pointing us to Jesus' return.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I have been poured out as a drink offering...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Romans 8:17-18 Indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Looking forward to the appearing of Jesus helps us keep our perspective on God during challenging times. I know that many of you have gone through difficult circumstances this past year or are currently in the midst of difficult circumstances, focusing on the return of Jesus will give you hope in the midst of these challenges. Job is the example we often think of with trials, did you know that in chapter 19 Job cries out in the middle of his suffering, My Redeemer lives! This was in the middle of his trial, not at the end when God restores Job. When we face trials we need to remind ourselves that our Redeemer lives and will return one day!

4) Share the Good News

Similar to God's command for us to eagerly await Jesus' return, we need to be reminded of God's command for us to share the gospel. Romans 10:13 says "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him in

Cornerstone Community Church

Cole McDaniel

12/20/2020

whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 says "He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God." Imagine a silent ambassador, that doesn't make sense, in the same way we shouldn't be silent. The most loving thing we can do for people is to share the Good News of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. What would you do if you knew Jesus was returning today? We say to ourselves we'll talk with people when the time is right, but before we know it a whole year can slip by. If we knew for certain that Jesus was returning today we would immediately call or visit friends, family, co-workers, neighbors today who do not know the Lord.

We talk about what we are focused on, when we focus on Jesus' return, we will be encouraged to tell others about His 1st and 2nd coming.

When our missionary to Madagascar David Ellingson spoke last Sunday of reaching out to the over 5000 villages that have never heard the name of Jesus I began thinking of the people you and I know who have heard of the name of Jesus but have never heard the gospel clearly presented. We need to have a plan so that next year at this time we are not in the same position as we are now, pray daily for opportunities to share with specific people, pray for boldness, ask other believers to pray as well.

I hope that you are inspired this morning by Simeon and Anna's focus on Jesus' 1st coming which energized them to serve God faithfully for years, to give thanks and praise to God, and to share the Good News of Jesus' coming. I also hope you are inspired to grow in your anticipation of Jesus' 2nd coming, the best part is that Christmas is a great time to start obeying God's command to eagerly await Jesus' return.

Let's start by taking our focus off of the things of this world and keeping our focus on Jesus throughout the day, remember the words of Jesus to Martha, "you are worried and distracted by many things, but only one thing is necessary". Let's prayerfully seek to grow daily in anticipating the return on Jesus, one of our greatest comforts particularly during trials, remember Job's cry of "My Redeemer lives" in the midst of trials. Let's encourage one another to share the Good News of the gospel with our unsaved friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, strangers at the store... as we fix our hope completely on the grace that is to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus.

Please join me in prayer.

Cornerstone Community Church
Cole McDaniel
12/20/2020