

**Hope in the Darkness**

**Journey Through the Dark**

Luke 2:25-26, 36-38

**EXPLORING THE SERMON**

- \* What did you hear?
- \* What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- \* What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

**EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURE**

*25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

**REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

Throughout this first week of Advent, we focus on the theme of HOPE. The characters of note are Simeon and Anna, two of the rarer Christmas characters, yet significant when thinking about hope. Only mentioned in the book of Luke, they have the sacred opportunity to meet the Christ child as an infant of eight days old. After finding hopes and dreams unmet year after year, Simeon and Anna each manage to live with a spiritual vitality deeply rooted in Christ as they continue to wait. **Can you relate to one, or both of them? How can we encourage one another to move through these days with hopeful expectation as Simeon and Anna did?**

Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist Victor Frankl explores the meaning of hope in his book, "Man's Search for Meaning:"

*The prisoner who had lost faith in the future – his future – was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay. Usually this happened quite suddenly, in the form of a crisis, the symptoms of which were familiar to the experienced camp inmate...Usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or to go out on the parade grounds. No entreaties, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there, hardly moving. If this crisis was brought about by an illness, he refused to be taken to the sickbay or to do anything to help himself. He simply gave up.*

**Frankl noted that having hope increased prisoners' chances of survival even more so than good health. What has your hopefulness looked like this year? How are the things that you hope for now different from your hopes before the pandemic?**

Advent begins in the dark, but it does not end there. The darkness helps us to learn to live with unanswered questions, embrace mystery, and trust in God's abiding presence. **What have you learned in the dark that you could have never learned in the light? What helps you hold on to hope and stay on the path as we move from the darkness to light?**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope that you give us in your son Jesus Christ. Help us to focus on what we can learn from this time of darkness that we would otherwise not learn in the light. Strengthen us to walk alongside others with hopeful expectation. Amen.*