

Have You Seen Him? Luke 2: 22-40

All 5 candles are lit on our Advent wreath this morning, signifying the completion of the Advent season and our time of preparation and expectation of the arrival of Christ. When the Christ candle was lit on Christmas Eve, anticipation changed to celebration. We honored and worshipped the Christ child with our voices and our hearts, and thanked God anew for sending His only Begotten Son into the world to save His people from their sins.

We lit candles to remind us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, the One who came to earth so that people everywhere would have no fear of darkness, no fear of evil, and no fear of death. The glow of the candles on Christmas Eve not only provided light and warmth, it gave us eternal hope and security in knowing that Christ is our Savior. We sang Silent Night, and for a few fleeting moments nothing else mattered. Then we extinguished our candles, turned out the lights and left this warm church to find a cold, dark and scary world just outside its doors. What a contrast! When God's people are all inside, the world outside is a very dismal and dark place.

Jesus revealed Himself to us in many ways on Christmas Eve, and He is revealing Himself to us once again this morning. Do you see Him? It is likely that every one of us has wondered what God looks like. We might even begin to believe what we tell young children when they turn to us for answers to their difficult questions; He is here, but you just can't see Him. We should know better than that. **God reveals Himself through people**, the person next to you or the person you see in the mirror. The praise chorus we have been singing proclaims that truth beautifully. "His name is called Emmanuel, God with us, revealed in us. His name is called Emmanuel.

There is no doubt that God wants to reveal Himself to us and has done that countless times already. The shepherds saw Him that first Christmas Eve. The Bible tells us that the glory of the Lord surrounded them as the angel delivered the Good News. There is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. He provided a sign to them, which was the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger in Bethlehem. What was their response? They went to see for themselves, and then they went and told many others the Good News. God had no intention of keeping the birth of His Son a secret.

The Magi of the East saw Him. God did give them some help and provided a sign for them, not a billboard or a flashing light but a great star in the eastern sky. They saw the star, followed it towards Jerusalem where they thought the Messiah might be found. They inquired of Herod and the Jewish Sanhedrin where the Messiah, the Christ was to be born. They were told that the Scriptures said it would not be in Jerusalem, but Bethlehem. They continued on their way, following that star until it led them right to the doorstep of the house where Jesus was at. God had no intention of keeping Jesus a secret. By the way, it was no accident that the Magi happened to stop in Jerusalem first. God in His providence used them to reveal to the Jewish leaders that the Messiah had arrived. But their response was one of unbelief. They chose not to go see for themselves what the Magi had told them about.

Simeon saw Him, one of many opportunities for the Jewish leaders to discover the Messiah. Simeon was no run of the mill Israelite. Historians tell us he was a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the temple leaders. His son was Gamaliel, who taught Christ and Paul. Simeon's response is typical of anyone who has recognized Christ. People who know the Savior have no fear of death. Look at verses 29-32- peace was with him. No matter what else the world would throw at him, Simeon's future was safe and secure in God's hands.

People who see Jesus believe that He keeps His promises. When He tells us that he will never leave or forsake us, or that He will be with us until the end of the ages, or that He will send the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort and enable us we can trust that it will happen. The promise of salvation is offered to all God's people. Christ came to be a light to both Jew and Gentile alike.

In case you thought God only revealed Himself to men in Biblical times, think again. Anna saw God. We see in verse 39 that she demonstrated another characteristic of people who recognize Christ. She spoke of Him to all those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. **People who see Jesus want to tell others the Good News that God is with us and is revealed in us.**

God didn't want to keep Jesus a secret and He never will. He is asking and relying upon people like you and me to tell others of His grace, goodness, and love. Have you seen Jesus this Christmas season? If you haven't, it is likely because you have looked in the wrong place or you didn't recognize Him when he made Himself known. Once you know where to find Him and what He looks like, your life will never be the same.

From, all indications, we are headed for more difficult and challenging times ahead. Outside of these church doors lies darkness of the worst kind. Poverty, despair, selfishness, greed, illness, terrorism and hatred abound. We might as well add COVID to the list. The good news is that none of those things will prevent us from seeing Christ. The truth is that they will help us to see Him. For some, that will be nothing new. Many have already trusted and relied on the Lord to provide. For others, it will be a test of faith.

Amid that darkness, the love and the light of Christ shines, and it shines through people like you and the person sitting next to you. Have you seen it? God reveals Himself to the world through people like you and me. When Christ departed for heaven, He left us in His place to fill in for Him until He returns. If people are having a hard time seeing Christ, perhaps it is because we are all in here, wherever here is. **People who see Jesus want to be out there, so others can see Him.** I pray that we will have the faith and courage to go and be that light. God is counting on us! Amen