

People like to say: "Seeing is believing!" But the opposite is true in the Christian faith "Believing is seeing!" First we believe, and then we see! First, by the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, we believe the good news of God's love and mercy poured out on us in Christ, then we see, with spiritual eyes, with eyes of faith, the good things that are ours in Christ. In the Christian faith "Believing is seeing!"

That line reflects well the truth the gospel writer said today. Today we have, in Simeon and Anna, the last of their kind, the last of the *Old Testament* believers. We know they're believers by what they said and how they acted. Belief is *always* accompanied in some way by actions. I read somewhere that there's a "*cat and dog test*" for Christians. It goes something like, "if your father and mother, your sister and brother, if the very cat and dog in the house are not happier for your being a Christian, then there's a question as to whether or not you really are one." The point being that believers act like believers and people around them see that. And that's what both Anna and Simeon displayed. They acted differently and *spoke words* that showed that they were believers in the salvation of Israel that would come from God.

They spoke and witnessed as they did because they believed God and His word. Listen again to what Simeon did and said "***He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."***

Before we move on, did you catch that we sing or say Simeon's words very often at communion? We use these words of Simeon because at Holy Communion, we too 'see' the salvation that God prepared and delivered to us. We 'see' that in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in, with and under the forms of bread and wine. We see this because, like Simeon, we believe *God's* word.

Ok, so, that was Simeon, now listen to what Anna said and did... ***There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.***

Together Simeon and Anna saw the promise of God fulfilled in the infant Jesus Christ and they gave witness to it. They gave testimony to what they saw because they believed and trusted in *God's word*. They knew the scriptures and they had seen others brought to the temple for these rites of purification before. But when Jesus came, brought by His parents, they saw what they *knew* was the fulfillment of the promises of God that they believed from *God's* word.

And they *spoke* their belief. They *witnessed* to what they saw. They believed God and so they saw *God's* salvation delivered to Israel in the baby Jesus. Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing!

And that is what you and I also get to do. *We* are witnesses to God fulfilling His promises. He gives you and I, like He gave Anna and Simeon the sight to see, in the baby Jesus, the fulfillment of God's desire for all people. God wants all people to know Him and to have the perfect righteousness from Christ that allows us to be in *God's* perfect presence.

Jesus is our gift of righteousness and we believe we need that because our sin leaves us no other choice. Each of knows we are far from perfect and we are far from the people we would

like to be. We know that indeed our dogs and cats could probably say things about us that we wouldn't want others, and especially God, to hear or know.

But that's the point of believing that Jesus is God's gift of righteousness to us. We *need* that gift and we know that. We believe that God's righteousness is the gift that comes through the baby Jesus that Anna and Simeon were both blessed to witness to. We see Jesus Christ as our savior *because* we too believe God's word. We don't see Jesus and believe – we believe, by the gift of faith, and so we see Jesus as the Christ, the messiah of God, promised to bring salvation and righteousness.

In Jesus, by His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave, all people are given as a gift, the righteousness of God. All, except those who reject Him. Those who turn away from Christ do not believe God, so they cannot see Jesus for who He is. Yet though He was a baby, because Anna and Simeon trusted in God, they believed and saw Jesus as the redeemer of the world. It wasn't seeing that led them to *believe*, it was God's word that led them to see.

There's an old story that salesmen tell that helps us recognize the truth behind believing is seeing. A shoe company sent a salesman to Africa. After a very short time, he wrote a very discouraging note to his boss: "Bring me back home! No one wears shoes in this part of the world!" So his boss brought him back and sent another salesman. After a very short time, this new salesman shipped back an enormous order for shoes and the very exciting report: "Send as many shoes as you can! Everyone here needs shoes!" The first salesman didn't believe what he had to offer would benefit anyone there and so he couldn't see any point in trying. Whereas the second guy believed what he offered was greatly needed and so he saw an opportunity to meet that need.

We have seen, by faith, that God has come to us in the flesh, in Jesus, to meet our need for restoration, righteousness and redemption. As to what that can mean in our daily lives; let me quote part of Mother Teresa's daily prayer. "*Dearest Lord, may I see You today and every day in the person of (these) Your sick (ones), and (while I) nurse them, may I minister unto You. Though You hid yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize You and say: 'Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve You.'* Lord, give me this seeing faith.

She prayed for 'seeing faith.' She prayed for faith to see *Jesus* in those who were the sick, filthy and unreasonable that she cared for in this life. It was her prayer to 'see' Jesus in these people. And I've no doubt she did see Him in them because she believed His presence was there in them according to His word. Seeing Jesus in those around us, who are in need, is what she witnessed to in her love for Jesus. We serve others in this life and as we do we too serve Jesus. He asks us to serve others in His place. To serve those who need serving, to see Jesus in them is what He asks us to do.

God has granted us faith and so we see Jesus, both infant and man on the cross and resurrected from the dead, as our savior. The extension of that into our lives is that He has asked us to see Him in those around us that need to be served. And so we see Jesus in them also.

That *is* what you and I now get to do. We *get* to serve Jesus as we serve others because we believe *His* word just as Simeon and Anna did. What is it we say around here, "Hearing, Sharing and Living the Gospel"? Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing. In Jesus name, amen.