

Sunday December 27, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and Luke 2:22-40
“Enjoying the Company”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants share what was most memorable in 2020.

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Context: The book of Isaiah falls into two main sections. The first (chapters 1-39) records the oracles and prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem, whose ministry spans the second half of the 8th century BC (roughly 742-690). Starting with chapter 40 the text reflects the ministry of an anonymous servant who suffered and was killed in the closing days of the Exile in Babylon (around 539 BC), including an "epilogue" of sorts in chapters 54-66 that describe the struggles of the suffering servant's followers as they return to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild. This week's reading is at the center of this last section and overlaps with the reading for the third Sunday in Advent (December 13), amplifying the prophet's calling: his proclamation of the good news to those who suffer on God's behalf will not be a one-time event, but rather an ongoing ministry until the goal is achieved and Zion's glory is seen and acknowledged by all peoples and nations.

Luke 2:22-40 Context: Luke's account of Jesus' birth concludes with this week's reading. According to Jewish custom, a woman was ritually unclean and underwent purification for a period of 40 days following the birth of a boy. After this time, she made sacrifice at the Temple. Mary's sacrifice is modest, indicating the family's poor status. Luke's story emphasizes the piety of Jesus' parents and the pious reactions of Simeon and Anna who recognized in Jesus the fulfillment of God's promises of redemption and salvation.

Read Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and Luke 2:22-40

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and Luke 2:22-40 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- What does it tell us about Jesus that his parents brought him to Jerusalem for the ritual of purification and for what was customary under the law?

- What does the Scripture mean that Simeon was looking for the “consolation” of Israel? [He was looking for the long-promised time when God would decisively act in Israel’s history so that justice and righteousness would become commonplace.]
- Why might have Simeon’s words in verse 32 have been surprising to some?
- How would you have felt about Simeon’s words if you were Joseph or Mary? How do you think Mary felt after Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul too?
- How is the story of Anna similar to the story of Simeon?
- What do we learn about the ministry of Jesus from these stories?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Faithful God, thank you for faithful men and women like Simeon and Anna who are intentional about seeking the reconciliation of the world. Help us to be hospitable to all those we encounter, listening to hear their hurts and hopes. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.