

“Those Who Dream Will Not Keep Silent”
Luke 2: 22-40

One meme I saw recently was about being old enough to remember the days we would go a whole day without taking a picture of anything! Now with the ease of technology and taking pictures, we share so much of our daily experiences with our friends. The motivation is often to share our experiences with others. When we experience something good, we feel compelled to share about it with our family and friends. If you read a good book, see a good movie, enjoy a restaurant, experience a beautiful sunset, you want to tell the people of your life about it. Today, I want to invite us to expand on this natural gift that God has planted in our hearts to share our experiences of the love of God with others. We need to do this kind of sharing to help each other to grow in our awareness of the sacred.

In his book, *Seeing God*, Rabbi David Aaron writes that, "We have all been taught that we cannot see God, but the truth is not only that we can see God but that we have actually been looking at God the whole time. We just didn't see Who we were looking at. If you wear corrective lens, I am sure you can remember the time you got a new prescription and walked out onto the street. All of a sudden you saw a new world. It was actually the same old world but with new clarity and intensity. All this brilliant detail was before your very eyes all along, you just needed the right glasses to see. God is right before your eyes - the eyes of your soul - and all you need are the right lenses through which to look." That is why our sharing with each other is so important. It changes everything because we are often blocked as Rabbi Aaron puts it, "Our filing cabinet of labels and preconceptions." That is why we need spiritual companions who can walk with us and help us learn to see the sacred in everyday life. Rabbi Aaron talks about the role of the spiritual companion or teacher as that of an optometrist. "In addition to being a gourmet cook, a spiritual teacher has to be an optometrist. Most human beings are born with perfect vision, but after a certain number of years, most people commonly develop problems in seeing. So you go to the optometrist, and you sit in the special seat, and the optometrist puts lenses of various strengths in front of you, trying different ones until you can see the chart clearly. By giving you the right lenses, the optometrist enables you to see what is. One of the lenses is the lens of wonder. When you put on the lens of wonder, suddenly you can see Hashem (God), Who was there all along. So my job as a spiritual teacher is to put some wonder into your way of seeing."

This is what happened with two biblical characters who were important enough for the Gospel of Luke to mention them to us. In Luke 2 we hear about Simeon and Anna, two holy people, who were able to see in the small child who was brought to the temple, the mystery of God's presence and fulfillment of promises. And then they shared about this child and his gift to the world. There were plenty of holy people around when Jesus was taken to the temple for the required rituals of presentation, circumcision, and purification. There were the priests who performed the rituals. There were Mary and Joseph. There must have been some other family members present as well. But only two people recognized what was truly present among them. Only two people had the spiritual vision to see that the Messiah was born and that great things were going to happen among them

because of the birth of this child. Everyone else was too busy with their duties and preoccupations to pay any attention or to see beyond what was on the surface to be seen. The priests in the temple were busy performing religious rituals. They were fulfilling the requirements of the law as dictated in Leviticus 12. What they were able to see was just another child being presented in the temple, just like all the other children who come all the time. What made it even harder to see that Jesus was the one they had all been waiting for was that his parents were poor. What they presented in the temple on that day was the minimum a family can present. A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons is what Leviticus 12:8 presents as the "bargain" price for a poor family. On the surface, there was nothing special about Jesus and his family. They were poor people from the backwater region of Galilee. Certainly nothing about them pointed to their son as the one to bring transformation to the people of Israel. Surely the Messiah would come from a better social class than that of the peasantry who hardly knew how to read and write. Even the name that the parents gave to the child was nothing special, Jesus was a common name in Jewish culture in those days.

But all was not lost in the temple! There were two faithful people who had the eyes to behold the presence of God in their midst.

Simeon and Anna were prophets who spoke the word of God. They shared with others what they experienced. Simeon had the Holy Spirit resting on him. He was a man who waited faithfully until his old age the consolation of Israel. He had a sense about him that God's promises were going to be fulfilled in his lifetime. Anna was a prophet. She was a widow who was married for only seven years and then lived most of her life in the temple praying and prophesying. One of the most important functions of a prophet in the time and culture was to speak God's vision and will to the people. A prophet was to see reality through the eyes of God and then they were to share that vision with others. They were the spiritual optometrists of that time. Anna was a person who knew God intimately and developed the ability to see what others could not see. Both Simeon and Anna were people of the Spirit. They had years of experience in being able to see what others could not see. They were the ones who could see the sacred in the most ordinary events and places of life. They had developed their soul vision to the point that when they saw Jesus, they knew and could tell that he was the Messiah, the promised one to bring the transformation of Israel. The people around them must have paid attention. And the Holy Family, Mary and Joseph and all the relatives who were with them heard these words, memorized them, and proclaimed them until they became a reality in the life and ministry of Jesus when he became an adult.

I want to invite you as this year comes to an end to reflect on God's hopes for you in 2022. How will you grow in seeing God in the world and sharing those experiences with others? I am so grateful for our ministry intern Whitney Scoville for her willingness to share with us her own story of when her eyes were opened to the power and presence of God in her life. Here is her witness (Video).

Whitney and her family blessed us also today by sharing a song, a variation on the old Christmas carol, "Go Tell it on the Mountain." It will be our sending us blessing for 2022.

The Christmas carol that, in my estimation, best captures this idea of seeing the sacred and sharing the sacred in all of life, that those who dream will not keep silent is “Go Tell It On the Mountain.” Even in the worst of circumstances, those who dream God’s dream can see:

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere!
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!

I want you to imagine with me the setting from which that hopeful, ecstatic song was born. One may think that it must have been some happy place. It must have been some kind of utopia where a song that joyful emanated, right? Yet, “Go Tell It On the Mountain” was born on the American Plantation. It germinated in the context of a brutal, and oppressive system. It grew among enslaved people who had no reason to hope, no reason to rejoice, and certainly no reason to dream. Yet their faith in this babe born in Bethlehem gave them reason to hope, reason to rejoice, reason to dream and to see into God’s vision for the world. Because they could dream, they could sing! It’s hard not to sing along, because those who dream will not keep silent! Go with the blessing of this song from the Scoville family. Go tell it on the mountain! Amen.