

What's on your list?

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Luke 2:22-40

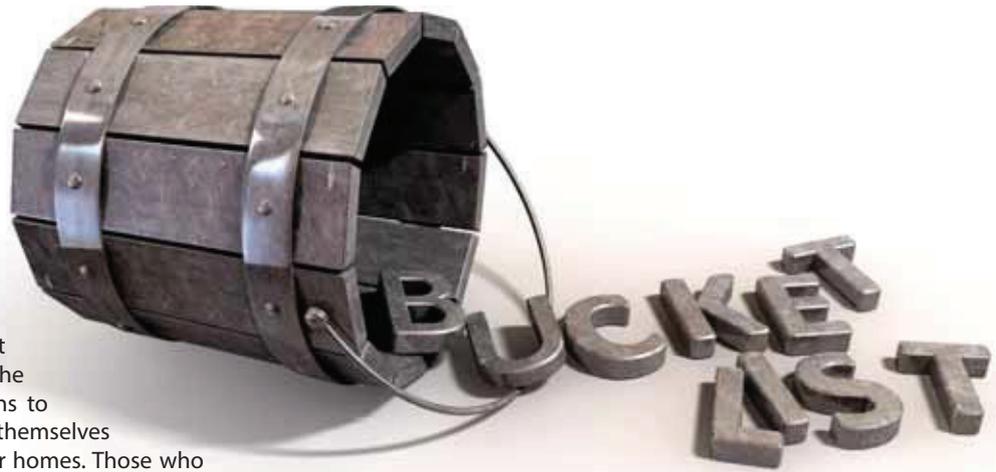
In a poll of "things to do before you die", researchers questioned 2,000 people before compiling a list of the fifty things they considered "essential" for a full life. The list included finding true love, kissing a stranger, experiencing different cultures, losing weight, driving a fast car, paying off debt and getting a degree.

It seems that meeting Christ was not on anybody's list, although to be fair it wasn't that kind of survey. For Simeon, however, whom we meet in today's Gospel reading, it was the only thing to do before he died – the ambition that eclipsed all others.

The bucket list has become quite a thing – or at least it had, before a global pandemic changed the way we live. Suddenly, people who had the means to take exotic holidays or swim with dolphins found themselves spending days, weeks and months confined to their homes. Those who were used to dining in the best restaurants were limited to a takeaway every now and again.

Covid has taken a terrible toll on many people who have lost loved ones, experienced loneliness and anxiety, or suffered the ongoing after-effects of the virus. But if there is a silver lining to this cloud, maybe it is that people have had to recalibrate and re-evaluate their real needs.

We might not be able to meet Jesus in the flesh today, but we can reassess our priorities and goals, simplify our lives and, like Simeon, bump meeting Christ up to the very top of our list. 🍷



Teach us from the example of Simeon, Lord, because we know that you are all we need for true fulfilment. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

"Giving your all" is a phrase that I'd heard before but with my sheep I began to understand it better. When they were first pregnant they were fat and fluffy with lush summer grazing and extra feed. By the time they were shorn in June they had hollow flanks and were frankly pretty scrawny, while their lambs were plump and sleek. Those ewes had spent

themselves bringing to birth, suckling, protecting and nurturing their lambs and their bodies showed the cost. Their mothering was free but cost them a lot. That helped me understand the love of God – again free but costing God everything. And just as the ewes seemed not to count the cost, neither does God, who bears us and feeds us and nurtures us and the whole of creation. That for me is the "mothering of God" and we are invited to share in it with joy. 🍷

“Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small.”

Prayer of an Irish fisherman

The books of the Old Testament – *Joshua*

by Gillian Cooper

Another boundary has been crossed, from the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy), moving into what scholars call "Deuteronomistic History", Joshua to 2 Kings. The outlook of Deuteronomy, with its emphasis on faithful covenant, is now expressed in the form of a story which takes Israel from entry into the land to exile from it.

God's people are on the bank of the Jordan, ready to cross and begin life in a new land. They have a new leader. Moses is dead

and God's chosen successor, Joshua, is in charge. All seems set for a glorious entry into the inheritance for which the Israelites have long prepared.

The book of Joshua has glory in it, but also disappointment. Joshua is not Moses. Canaanite towns are well established and defended, and he hesitates before crossing the Jordan.

Then there is the "battle" of Jericho, a glorious victory, but not a battle; rather, it is a liturgy, with processions and music. The story tells us that the new life is not an invasion but a gift from God, who expects obedience and loyalty in return. 🍷