



**Sunday 30th January – Morning Worship
for the Presentation of Christ at the Temple**

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

Gathering and Greeting

The Lord of glory be with you.

The Lord bless you.

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly Kind
almighty God and Father,**

**we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

Lords Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen



Hymn – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord

Be still for the presence of the Lord,

The Holy One is here

Come bow before Him now,

With reverence and fear

In Him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord,
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire,
With splendor He is crowned
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord,
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord,
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister His grace
No work too hard for Him
In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
Amen

Candlemas – a poem by Rev Malcolm Guite

They came, as called, according to the Law.
Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,
For God was coming with them to His temple.
Amidst the outer court's commercial bustle
They'd waited hours, enduring shouts and shoves,
Buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,
Had made a killing on the two young doves.
They come at last with us to Candlemas
And keep the day the prophecies came true
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,

The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.

Confession

Hear the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ:
'I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness
but shall have the light of life.'
Let us therefore bring our sins into his light
and confess them in penitence and faith.

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love,
and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Readings by David Mackenzie

Hebrews 2.14 - 18

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.

¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Luke 2.22 - 40

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Reflection by Rural Dean, Rev Priscilla Slusar

Today we celebrate Candlemas or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The title of this special feast day in the church is revealing. It's called Candlemas because it's a feast of light; a reminder that Jesus came into the world to bring light and hope to a world of darkness. The promise of God's love and the hope of eternal life stands alongside the dark reality of the world. The alternative title for today tells us about the event that we are remembering – the presentation of Christ in the Temple. It's significant that the name Christ is used rather than Jesus. The name Christ tells us that this is the Saviour, the Messiah, long awaited by the Jews. Jesus is the Saviour is for all people not just the Jews.

A couple of years ago I read an article in the Church Times about the medieval customs practised at the feast of Candlemas. There would have been an elaborate procession to represent the journey of Mary and Joseph to the Temple in Jerusalem. Every person would carry a candle and offer it to the priest with a penny. The candles were

blessed and left in the church to burn throughout the night. The parishioners also brought other candles to the church to be blessed. These were taken home and lit in the house when there was a thunderstorm or when someone was ill. The candle represented hope and blessing in times of darkness or fear. These shades of light and darkness are reflected in the gospel story.

It's a family story; Jesus' parents taking him to the Temple in accordance with the religious laws – the joyful parents bringing their new child to the Temple to give thanks to God for a safe birth. Simeon and Anna, two elderly people who serve in the Temple, join in with the prayers and celebration; like doting grandparents.

The Jews had waited for so long for their Saviour that Luke was bound to write about it as a great celebration; a time of joyful praise. Simeon is an old man. He has received a promise from God that he would see the Messiah before he dies. He has waited and waited; he has become elderly and frail; he has practically given up hope. Then Mary and Joseph bring their baby son into the Temple, a very ordinary occurrence. A family giving thanks for their son. Simeon sees the wonder of God reflected in this baby; he recognises Jesus as the Messiah. We would expect him to give a great shout of thanks and praise to God! He prays beautiful words to God, acknowledging that it is now time for him to die because God has fulfilled his promise to him. "Now, Lord, you let your servant depart in peace, according to your word" – the canticle that we refer to as the Nunc Dimittis

But the story of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is not just a cosy family story or just a celebration of praise. There is also a reminder of harsh reality. It is a bitter-sweet event. The joy is tinged with foreboding. Simeon foretells the difficulties that lie ahead. He tells Mary and Joseph that Jesus will face opposition; he indicates that there will be suffering and death – and suffering for Mary as well. The wonder of the presence of God's only son in the Temple is tempered by the harsh reality of the world.

Then the story moves again from darkness to light; from sorrow to joy. Simeon reminds us that Jesus will bring salvation to all nations not

just to the people of Israel. The light of Jesus will spread throughout the world.

And this is where the prophetess Anna plays a role. She is also an elderly person who has waited patiently for news of the saviour. She spends her days in the temple in prayer and service. When she arrives on the scene she also recognises Jesus as the Messiah and she spreads the good news of his birth to everyone she meets. She becomes one of the first evangelists, spreading the gospel throughout the city.

What message can we take from this story for our present day lives? Simeon recognised the wonder of God's presence. He saw God in a baby boy. Do we recognise the wonder of God's presence in our ordinary lives? Are we alert to the wonder of God's creation? Are we aware of God in our encounters with other people, in our daily relationships with our family and friends? Are we open to the wonder of God's presence in the hymns and prayers of our worship? It's too easy to take things for granted and miss the wonder of God in our ordinary lives.

There is another serious message for us from today's gospel. Gospel means good news – and Simeon reminds us that God is with us even when life is dark. This is the good news of the gospel. When God became a human being he accepted that role of sharing our suffering. Jesus knew the pain of torture and death; Mary and Joseph understood the pain of suffering. Even when we face suffering, depression, illness or bereavement, God is with us – standing by us, sharing our suffering. The pain is still there, the suffering is still present – that is the harsh reality of our lives – but we know that God is sharing that suffering and supports us with his presence.

The feast of Candlemas is a reminder that Jesus brought the light of hope into a dark world. Candlemas teaches us that the wonder of God is present in our lives and that the light of God's presence gives us hope in a dark world. As we light candles today we pray that all who see that outward and visible light would remember and be blessed by the inner light of Christ 'who lightens everyone who comes into the world.'

I'm going to finish with a prayer for the blessing of the candles:

“Lord God, the springing source of everlasting light, pour into the hearts of your faithful people the brilliance of your eternal splendour, that we, who by the kindling of these flames light up this temple to your glory, may have the darkness of our souls dispelled, and so be counted worthy to stand before you in that eternal city where you live and reign, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”
Amen

Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,**

who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession prepared by Deborah Spencer

Faithful God, we thank you for the example of Simeon and Anna, and their faithful service and witness, for their patience in waiting for Christ to be revealed. Help us to serve you faithfully and patiently, watching for you to be revealed in our own lives.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Holy God, as we remember the older and retired people in our churches, we give you thanks for all that they do in our Sunday worship, in our church fellowship and in our communities. Send your Holy Spirit to inspire them to use and share their life experiences with wisdom, humility and gladness.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Lord God, we pray for all who work for peace and unity, and for all world leaders that they will continue to seek for an end to the suffering caused by war and violence, injustice and inequality, disease and prejudice, poverty and hopelessness and bring healing to the world. We pray especially for those fighting terrorism throughout the world and for peace in the Holy Land.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Father God, we pray for our home groups and church communities, that each of us might make use of our individual talents enabling each church group to flourish as a witness to the "One Body" of the church. Help us to spread the warmth of Your love to everyone we meet.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Gracious God, we pray for the work and service of all care homes and day centres for elderly and sick people, and for the charity organisations and shops who raise money to help. We pray for all finding their life painful, lonely or uncertain, especially those who are ill or vulnerable. Help them to sense your comfort in times of need and bless their families and carers.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Merciful Lord, your love reaches beyond the grave. At the end of our days on earth be with us and with those we love. May those who have gone before us rest in your eternal peace. We remember before you those who have died and we pray for all whose life is saddened by the death of a loved one, be with them in their loneliness

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Everlasting God, we pray for ourselves; as we go from our worship today to start the week ahead, we ask that in all we do, we may we walk more closely with you at our side safe in the knowledge that your fatherly love and care knows no bounds.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple,
and acclaimed the glory of Israel
and the light of the nations:
grant that in him we may be presented to you
and in the world may reflect his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Believing the promises of God, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**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.
And 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.**

Hymn – Like a Candle Flame

- 1 Like a candle flame,
flick'ring small in our darkness.
Uncreated light
shines through infant eyes.
God is with us, alleluia,
[God is with us, alleluia,]
come to save us, alleluia,
[come to save us,]
alleluia!

- 2 Stars and angels sing,
yet the earth sleeps in shadows;
can this tiny spark
set a world on fire?
Chorus

3 Yet his light shall shine
from our lives, Spirit blazing,
as we touch the flame
of his holy fire.

Chorus

Graham Kendrick (born 1950)

© 1998 Make Way Music, PO Box 263, Croydon, Surrey, CR9 5AP, UK. info@makewaymusic.com.
International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Used by permission. (CCLI 30392)

Conclusion

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
fill us with radiance and scatter the darkness from our path.

Amen.

Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,
gladden our eyes and warm our hearts.

Amen.

Christ, the Dayspring from on high,
draw near to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen.

The Dismissal

Go in the light and peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.