



Heacham Parish Church

Candlemas - The presentation of Christ in the temple
30th January 2022

The Lord of glory be with you
And also with you

God is good **All the time.**
All the time **God is good.**

Hymn : **Come now with awe (MP98)**

Come now with awe, earth's ancient vigil keeping:
cold under starlight lies the stony way.
Down from the hillside see the shepherds creeping,
hear in our hearts the whispered news they say:
 'Laid in a manger lies an infant sleeping,
 Christ our Redeemer, born for us today.

Come now with joy to worship and adore Him;
hushed in the stillness, wonder and behold,
Christ in the stable where His mother bore Him,
Christ whom the prophets faithfully foretold:
 High King of ages, low we kneel before Him,
 starlight for silver, lantern-light for gold.

Come now with faith, the age-long secret guessing,
hearts rapt in wonder, soul and spirit stirred;
see in our likeness love beyond expressing,
All God has spoken, all the prophets heard;
 Born for us sinners, bearer of all blessing,
 Flesh of our flesh, behold the eternal Word!

Come now with love: beyond our comprehending
Love in its fulness lies in mortal span!
How should we love, whom Love is so befriending?
Love rich in mercy since our race began
 now stoops to save us, sighs and sorrows ending,
 Jesus our Saviour, Son of God made man.

Dear friends, forty days ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we recall the day on which he was presented in the Temple, when he was offered to the Father and shown to his people. As a sign of his coming among us, his mother was purified, as we now come to him for cleansing. In their old age Simeon and Anna recognised him as their Lord, as we today sing of his glory. In this Eucharist, we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming days of his passion.

The Collect

Let us pray that we may know and share the light of Christ.

Silence is kept.

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty,
whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple,
in substance of our flesh:

grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

Prayers of Penitence

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.

**All: 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.
All: Amen.

Bible Reading Luke 2: 21-40 read by Terry

Sermon by Veronica

I want us to think about Simeon and Anna... and how they were in the right place at the right time to recognise Jesus and to be God's messengers, they proclaimed their message far and wide...and then think about how we can be the same here in Heacham, or if you are watching this online wherever you are based.

Simeon-

The bible tells us very little about Simeon, all that Luke tells us, was that he was righteous and devout, he lived in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit rested on him and drove him to the temple at the right time to meet Jesus. We think of him as an old man, most works of art portray him as a very old man indeed, but the bible does not tell us that, we tend to take the details from Anna and apply them to Simeon. So, we don't know whether he is old or young or somewhere in between, one question for us to ponder, is whether anything changes in how we view the story if Simeon was not an old man, what if he was young or middle aged?!

So, Simeon is brought to the temple by the Holy spirit, and when there he did not just notice Jesus, but he took him in his arms. Simeon not only recognised salvation in the shape of a tiny baby, but was ready in body, mind, and spirit to receive him. Simeon then sings his beautiful song of praise which we know as the Nunc Dimittis (on the wall in church). It's made up of 3 simple couplets: the 1st about Simeon's departure in peace; the second about the salvation he has seen; the third about the light that Jesus has brought.

Simeon was in the right place at the right time, he was open to recognise Jesus in the most unexpected form (We forget, I think, how unexpected the birth of Jesus was, they did not expect the messiah to come as a baby, and Jesus was only 40 days old, 2000 years ago news, even life changing, earth shattering news did not travel fast, there was no Facebook post or twitter feed saying the messiah had come!). Simeon recognised that salvation had come, he received that salvation and spoke out, have we recognised salvation through Jesus, have we opened our arms to receive it, and have we spoken out?

Anna-

The bible tells us that she is one who is very old (either 84, or a widow for 84 years), she is the prophet, she is the one who was in the temple fasting and praying. Unlike Simeon, she did not live locally and was not prompted by the spirit to come to the temple. She was from the north and was living in the temple permanently as part of her vocation as prophet. She was, the bible implies, a powerful, dedicated, and faithful woman.

Unlike Simeon it seems she did not greet Jesus personally but instead she began to proclaim who he was to those who were listening. She recognised that he was the messiah.

Anna too was in the right place, at the right time, she was open to recognise Jesus in the most unexpected form, she recognised that salvation had come and proclaimed this to anyone who would listen...

So, another question to ponder, why is it that some people recognised who Jesus was and others did not? Anna and Simeon offer 2 models of people who were and are able to see Jesus for who he really was/is. One on whom the spirit descends and the other a faithful servant of God whose lengthy preparation prepared her to recognise God in an unexpected form.

The question I have been asking myself this week is, would I have recognised Jesus for who he was? Would I be able to recognise God in the most unexpected guise or would I be so caught up by busyness, expectation, and stuff that I might go on my way without even noticing God's presence in our midst?! (a real challenge for me)

So, as we come to the end of our Christmas celebrations, as we remember Simeon and Anna, as we learn from them, as we strive to be the right people in the right place, to recognise God in our midst and to proclaim him to those we live, play, and work among. Let's remember that God will always surprise us and appear in a manner we least expect. Our task is to be like Anna, so attuned to the things of God that no matter how unexpected God's appearance is, we are able to see, perceive, and proclaim it or to be like Simeon, open to the spirit prompting that we too are in the right place at the right time to receive God's salvation and proclaim it to others.

Musical offering: Joy has dawned - sung and played by Judith, Sue, Richard, and Alison

Joy has dawned upon the world,
Promised from creation:
God's salvation now unfurled,
Hope for every nation.
Not with fanfares from above,
Not with scenes of glory.
But a humble gift of love:
Jesus born of Mary.

Sounds of wonder fill the sky
With the songs of angels,
As the mighty Prince of Life
Shelters in a stable.
Hands that set each star in place,
Shaped the earth in darkness,
Cling now to a mother's breast,
Vulnerable and helpless.

Shepherds bow before the Lamb,
Gazing at the glory;
Gifts of men from distant lands
Prophecy the story.
Gold, a King is born today,
Incense, God is with us,
Myrrh, His death will make a way,
And by His blood He'll win us.

Son of Adam, Son of heaven,
Given as a ransom,
Reconciling God and man,
Christ our mighty Champion.
What a Saviour, what a Friend,
What a glorious mystery:
Once a babe in Bethlehem,
Now the Lord of history.

Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.

**All: We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession - led by Sue B

Our Loving Heavenly Father, we bring you our prayers in the hope that you will redeem us, heal, and restore us through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

At this time of Candlemas, we think of Anna in the temple who devoted herself to constant worship and prayer, it was she who recognised the infant King and told others about him. We pray that the whole church might be dedicated, pure and holy, quick to recognise Christ in the world and proclaim him in words of hope and deeds of love.

Lord in Your Mercy.....

Through Simeon we pray for the world, Simeon prophesied that you, Christ, came to reveal truth, to challenge assumptions and set ways. We pray for the breaking down of the barriers that divide us and for an end to violent conflicts causing untold suffering and death. Simeon recognised you, Lord, as the light, our troubled world can often not acknowledge you yet cries out for your light. Lead us Lord, turn the hearts of those with the power, towards those in such desperate need.

Lord in Your Mercy.....

We pray for our Queen and her government, for the renewal of the church in Faith, Love and Service, Our Bishop, our own Veronica and her family, our Lay Readers, and for the life of this parish. We give thanks for the gift of your word and the fellowship of its people.

Lord in Your Mercy.....

Lord Jesus, you were present in the temple, taking your place within human life. We thank you for becoming like us. Having known suffering, you walk with us when the way is hard. We hold to you all whose way is very hard at this time, especially those without shelter.

Lord in Your Mercy.....

Through Mary and Joseph, we pray for all humanity. They went to the temple to present their son to the Lord's service. We pray for parents, families, and all human relationships. We give thanks for Mary's motherhood to us all and for the costly love she gave, the sword that would pierce her soul.

When Simeon had seen the baby Jesus, he knew that the work of his life was done. We pray for all those who mourn the loss of friends and loved ones. With Simeon we pray: Now, Lord let your servants go in peace.
Amen

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

Amen

Concluding with:

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

All: Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Hymn: **Faithful vigil ended** (MP 125)

Faithful vigil ended,
watching, waiting cease:
Master, grant Your servant
his discharge in peace.

All the Spirit promised,
all the Father willed,
now these eyes behold it
perfectly fulfilled.

This Your great deliverance
sets Your people free;
Christ their light uplifted
all the nations see.

Christ, Your people's glory!
Watching, doubting cease:
grant to us Your servants
our discharge in peace.

Candles lit

Final Responsory

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
King of the universe.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Your light shines on us
and all peoples shall see your glory.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

You gave us Jesus to be the light of the world;
he makes our darkness to be light.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Through the Holy Spirit your love burns within us,
bearing witness to your truth.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

As we bear your light,
may our lips never cease to sing your praise.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Father, we have sung your praise with shepherds and angels:
may Christ be born in our hearts today.

All **Praise to Christ our light.**

We have shared in the joy of Simeon and Anna;
help us, like them, to trust your word.

All **Praise to Christ our light.**

We have greeted Jesus, the light of the world;
may we be filled with the light of your love.

All **Praise to Christ our light.**

The Conclusion

We stand near the place of new birth.

All: **Let us shine with the light of your love.**

We turn from the crib to the cross.

All: **Let us shine with the light of your love.**

We go to carry his light.

All: **Let us shine with the light of your love.**

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: **We'll walk the land** (MP 743)

We'll walk the land
with our hearts on fire;
and every step will be a prayer.
Hope is rising, new day dawning;
sound of singing fills the air.

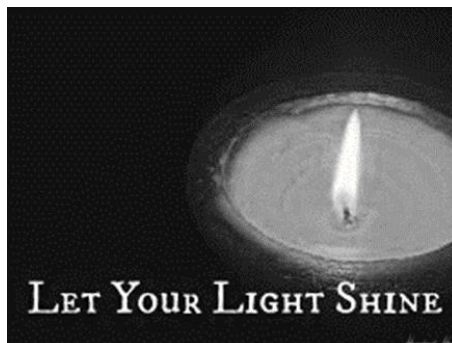
Two thousand years, and still the flame
is burning bright across the land.
Hearts are waiting, longing, aching,
for awakening once again.

*Let the flame burn brighter
in the heart of the darkness,
turning night to glorious day.
Let the song grow louder,
as our love grows stronger;
let it shine! let it shine!*

We'll walk for the truth, speak out for love;
in Jesus' name we shall be strong,
to lift the fallen, to save the children,
to fill the nation with Your song.

Let the flame....

Go in the light and peace of Christ.
All **Thanks be to God.**



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