



## **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent**

### **The Nunc Dimittis – Luke 2 v 28-32 – The song of Simeon**

Today we focus on the Nunc Dimittis, the song of Simeon, which is a section of the Christmas story that is often overlooked, yet marks another important step in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Interestingly this event is only recorded in Luke's Gospel.

For those of us who have children, can you remember the excitement of your 1<sup>st</sup> child arriving and then being able to show your new arrival to your family and friends and how proud you felt. Maybe after a few weeks or months, you asked for your child to be dedicated or baptised depending on which church you went to or had connections with. Do you remember how proud you felt when you handed your child over to the officiant so that they could be blessed with water or other symbols. A very special day and one that hopefully made you feel proud.

These sorts of special feelings that as parents we experienced, are probably very similar to those that Mary and Joseph were feeling this day. Eight days after the birth of Jesus according to the Jewish custom, the firstborn should be consecrated to God. This goes back to the instruction that God gave Moses while the Israelites were wandering around in the wilderness after their escape from the Egyptians. In Exodus chapter 13 verses 1&2 we read 'The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The firstborn offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal."

Mary and Joseph are devoted Jews and followed the teachings, so they head to the temple in Jerusalem to present baby Jesus to God and do all that is required by law and tradition. A young couple that had travelled the short distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, with their precious new baby. They walk into the temple courtyard and start to make their way to the temple worship area and as they walk across they are met by an older gentleman, who asks to see the baby. Nothing special about this so far, just a young couple with a new baby and a gentleman who asks to look at the child. Yet there is something very special going on here.

Simeon, a gentleman that is close to the end of his earthly life, is at the temple. Not much is known about Simeon, some scholars suggest that he may have been a priest at the temple, or come from a priestly family, but in truth, no one is sure of the background of Simeon. This as far as I am aware is the only time that Simeon appears in the Bible, but what a wonderful part it is. Simeon has been promised by God that he will not depart earth until he has seen the promised Messiah. He has been waiting, we have no idea how long, for God to prompt him that this was the couple with the baby he needed to see.

Simeon will have seen many young couples come and go, bringing their child to be presented to God and probably each time he would be thinking is this the one. Today



is the right time when Mary and Joseph arrive with Jesus. Simeon comes to them and asks to take the baby in his arms. I think Mary and Joseph would have just stood there as proud parents thinking that maybe this gentleman would say a short prayer or words of blessing on Jesus. No instead Simeon praises God out loud, saying thank you Lord, you have kept your promise, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. He then goes on to say that this baby, baby Jesus, will bring light to the entire world.

We are not told how Mary and Joseph react to this extra special blessing, I think that their emotions and feelings are all over the place, after all they had been told by an angel that this was the promised child. Just after Jesus was born in the stable, shepherds come to visit the child saying they have been told by angels. Now in the temple they have another confirmation that baby Jesus was the promised Messiah, the very special baby. Simeon once he hands back Jesus to Mary and Joseph, goes away a very happy man, praising God.

What does Simeon's song say for us today? Simeon had been waiting for this special moment, at Christmas time some people wait for a very special present, or a special visit from a friend; maybe some people are awaiting the birth of a new child.

Throughout all this waiting and anticipation, do we praise God?

As we enter the final week of preparation for the birth of the promised Messiah, let each one of us make time to praise God daily for all the blessings that he gives us.

**AMEN**