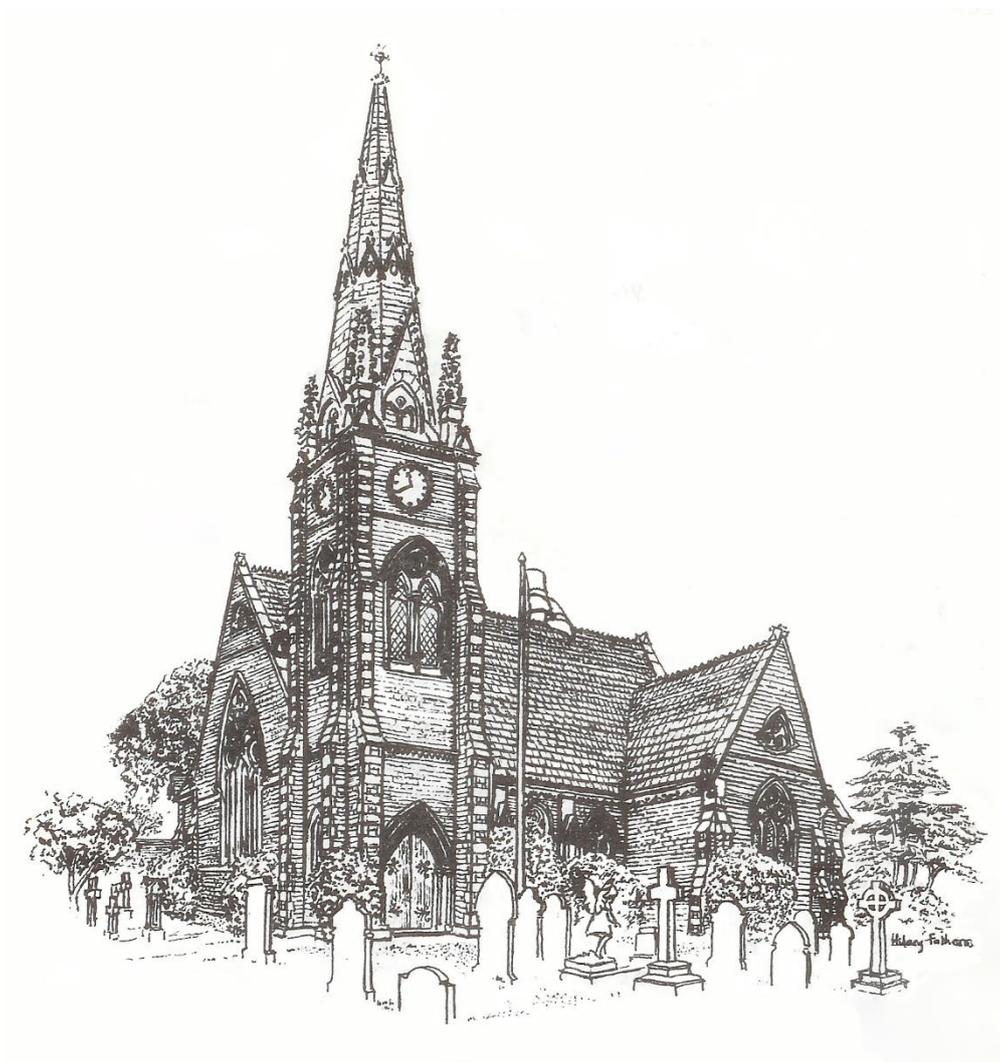


All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



Morning Prayer

Candlemas

From Crib to Cross

[Fourth Sunday after The Epiphany]

Sunday 31st January 2021

Online (from 10:30am)

The Greeting

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

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 recognized him as their Lord, as we today sing of his glory. We join with them in celebrating both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming day of his passion.

Hymn: Light of the world

Light of the world,
you stepped down into darkness
opened my eyes, let me see
beauty that made this heart adore you
hope of a life spent with you.

So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days
so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came
to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.
So here I am to worship...

Tim Hughes

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The Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
light of the nations and glory of Israel:
make your home among us,
and present us pure and holy
to your heavenly Father,
your God, and our God.
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.

May your loving mercy come to me, O Lord,
and your salvation according to your word:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

O let your mercy come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God,
who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,
bring you his pardon and peace, now and for ever.

Amen.

Readings

Hebrews 2:14-18

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the

Lord'), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons'.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.'

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Reflection: Moving on?

Journeying is a key image of the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany. We journey to the crib in company with Mary and Joseph; the anxious, excited, chaotic journey of the expectant parents. We come with the shepherds, drawn from the hillside in response to the song of the angels. We travel with the Magi, with their sense of anticipation and stateliness, following the star to rest at the feet of the infant Jesus and propelled home, rejoicing.

After the rush of these journeys, we go with Mary and Joseph as they make their way to the Temple, obediently presenting their firstborn son. In this part of

the journey, there are no angel voices carolling overhead, and no foreign travellers with mysterious gifts. The earthy ordinariness of the scene is striking. Mary is completing her ritual of purification forty days after giving birth, as all Jewish women would do. The couple are too poor to afford a lamb as the redemption sacrifice for their firstborn son, and come with two pigeons instead; the best that they could manage. It is a humble scene of life which countless couples would have experienced.

The elderly people who Mary and Joseph encounter as they come to the Temple would, in one way, be just part of the mixed crowd of folk who always gathered there, praying for a time when the prophecies for the coming Messiah would be fulfilled, devoting their lives to God. You can imagine that they would have looked longingly at each young male infant whose parents came to the Temple in the hope that this might be him.

Yet this is not simply another day, another gathering of people at the Temple, another ritual. Yet again, we see the things of earth being woven with the things of heaven. Simeon's own destiny as a mortal being is suffused with the joy of knowing that "my eyes have seen your salvation"; God's promise has been fulfilled in the coming of this child, a promise which will be both for the Gentiles and for Jews alike. Jesus is the promise of both light and glory. The eighty-four year-old prophetess Anna had been a constant presence in the Temple for decades, and now her prophecy moves from foretelling to forth-telling the news of the Messiah: "she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."

Their own lives are moving to a new stage, where they can leave their earthly lives knowing that what they have been longing for has come to pass. Jesus, the Messiah, the promise of salvation to all nations, has been fulfilled.

We can only imagine how the baby boy's parents might have felt as they heard these two wise, godly people's words and seen the joy written on their faces as they embraced Jesus. If they had had any doubts that this child really was the Son of God, Anna and Simeon's responses would have cast them away. What new things await? What a journey to come!

Yet the journey is not one of unalloyed joy and jubilation. Simeon's blessing comes with a word to Mary which shows that the way ahead is one of pain: "And a sword will pierce your own soul too." The revelation of the Son's glory, which was seen by the shepherds and the wise men as they worshipped at the baby's manger-crib, moves to a revelation of suffering: the shadow of the cross moving across the face of the child as he grows up, the pain of a mother losing her first-born son.

This time of Candlemas reminds us that we are called to follow this journey from the crib to the cross. We are at a fresh point of departure as we begin to look towards the forty days of Lent. We are reminded that our life of faith is not always easy; there is pain and suffering along the way. But we believe in the resurrection promises of Jesus, knowing that he has shared our humanity, “fully human in every way”, and has broken the power of death. He is our light, our hope and our help. He is with us every step of the way.

The Creed

We affirm our faith in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

***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

Let us pray to the Father through Christ who is our light and life.

Father, your Son Jesus Christ is the glory of Israel and a light to the Gentiles.

We pray that people of all nations would seek your light and follow you.

Give unity to our Church across the world. We pray for those of all nations in the Holy Land; for peace and reconciliation which knows no bounds or borders.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Father, your Son turned over the tables in the Temple, bringing judgement and justice. Be with all those working for justice and peace in our unjust world. We pray for the work of the World Health Organisation at this time, and for those countries whose suffering is unbearable at this time, where the horrors of war, adverse weather and the Coronavirus collide.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Father, as Mary and Joseph presented your Son in the Temple, they could only afford two doves for their offering. Look mercifully on those who are poor and needy; for those in our own country who are struggling to put food on the table and stay warm, and those in places further afield. May we be generous in deed as well as thought, and thankful for your goodness.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Father, your servant Simeon found peace as he welcomed your Son. Look in mercy on those who have died, and comfort their loved ones who mourn.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Father, the prophetess Anna went out telling everyone she met the good news of the Christ-child whom she had seen. We pray for those who are involved in missionary work across the world. We pray for the work of CMS, training Pioneer Ministers in the UK and involved in outreach projects in many continents. Help us to also be part of sharing your Gospel with courage and joy to all those we meet.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Father, as we share the joy of the revelation of your Son as Saviour of the World, we also know that this meant that he went the way of the cross. Be present with those who are suffering today, whether in body, mind or spirit; with those who feel rejected, disempowered or alone.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord God, you kept faith with Simeon and Anna,
and showed them the infant King.

Give us grace to put all our trust in your promises,
and the patience to wait for their fulfilment;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We conclude with The Lord's Prayer together:

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.

Nunc Dimittis

Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation: which thou hast prepared before the
face of all people.

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Final Responory

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

Praise to Christ our light.

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

Praise to Christ our light.

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

Praise to Christ our light.

We stand near the place of new birth.

Let us shine with the light of your love.

We turn from the crib to the cross.

Let us shine with the light of your love.

We go to carry his light.

Let us shine with the light of your love.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: God moves in a mysterious way

- 1 God moves in a mysterious way
his wonders to perform;
he plants his footsteps in the sea,
and rides upon the storm.
- 2 Deep in unfathomable mines
of never-failing skill
he treasures up his bright designs,
and works his sovereign will.
- 3 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
the clouds ye so much dread
are big with mercy, and shall break
in blessings on your head.

6 Blind unbelief is sure to err,
and scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
and he will make it plain.

William Cowper (1731–1800)

Blessing

Bless to us your light in our darkness;
bless to us your hope in our hearts;
bless to us your peace in our homes.

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

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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