



~ AT HOME WORSHIP ~

27th December 2020

Extraordinary Women of the Bible : Anna



PREPARATION

Firstly, may we wish you all a Blessed time during this Christmas period and a Happy New Year and now in a moment of quiet take the time to be still, place yourself in God's hands and listen.

Organ Solo ~ "The Holy Boy" [John Ireland]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHtdUkBf3wA&feature=emb_title

Opening Prayer

Using words from the traditional "Nine Lessons & Carols", ... first let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace and goodwill among all people; for unity and brother-hood within the Church and communities He came to build, and especially here in West Swindon. And because this *of all things* would rejoice his heart, let us *at this time* remember in his name; the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick in body and in mind and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; those, who know not the loving kindness of the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude, which none can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

Lord God, as we gather together in your house, we thank you for your presence, here with us. Thank you, Lord, that each one of us is unique, yet we share a common bond in you. **Amen**

Carol ~ "Infant Holy" [trad. Polish Carol]

Infant holy, Infant lowly, For His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, Little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging Angels singing,
Noels ringing, Tidings bringing, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Flocks were sleeping, Shepherds keeping _ Vigil till the morning new,;
Saw the glory, Heard the story, Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, Free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, Greet the morrow, Christ the Babe was born for you!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laqoeCl_jR0

A Prayer for the Day

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family, and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Saying Sorry

Lord of grace and truth, we confess our unworthiness to stand in your presence as your children.

We have sinned: **forgive and heal us.**

The Virgin Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus. Forgive our disobedience to your will.

We have sinned: **forgive and heal us.**

Your Son our Saviour was born in poverty in a manger. Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

We have sinned: **forgive and heal us.**

The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem. Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.

We have sinned: **forgive and heal us.**

The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the King. Forgive our reluctance to seek you.

We have sinned: **forgive and heal us.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw *us* to himself and cleanse *us* from all *our* sins, that *we* may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

BIBLE READINGS



Luke 2 vv15-21

“The Shepherds at the stable”

When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them.

The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

“Jesus Is Named”

A week later, when the time came for the baby to be circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name which the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

Luke 2 vv36-38

“Focus on Anna”

There was a very old prophet, a widow named Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for only seven years and was now eighty-four years old. She never left the Temple; day and night she worshiped God, fasting and praying.

That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all, who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free.

For the word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us
Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION TIME



Short Reflection by Revd Trevor Day

Children [and adults if they so wish] may choose to use the Activity and Colouring Sheet

Today we are taking a bit of a leaf out of the book of *“Strictly Come Dancing”* or more likely *“a Gaelic Cèilidh”*, with a couple of steps forwards and a step back and maybe a bit of side-to-side, while we’re at it.

We are delving today [*December the 27th*] into what traditionally, we would celebrate on the 2nd of February ... ‘Candlemass’ [*it’s ok ... we’ll flit back to Candlemass in five weeks time*], when we remember Jesus being brought by Mary and Joseph to The Temple, as was their responsibility according to ‘Law of Moses’ ... *“Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”* [Luke 2:23]. More often than not, we simply remember it as that time when an old man Simeon [*“righteous and devout” ... we are told*] went to the temple in expectation of the arrival, there of the recently born Jesus as the Messiah. Now that he had seen Jesus, he was ready to depart in peace. From that encounter, the ‘Song of Simeon’, the ‘Nunc Dimittis’ has traditionally been said or sung at Evening Prayer and Compline in churches throughout the world for hundreds of years to this present time.

But ... or is it Yet, today we are looking [briefly] at Anna, who is described by Luke as:

- a Prophet[ess],
- member of the house of Asher [*one of the tribes of Israel*]
- married for only seven years, then widowed
- now 84 years old
- lived, worshipped God, fasted and prayed in the temple all the time.
- ... ‘Anna’ means ‘Grace’

There ... autobiography done!

We don't hear about Anna anywhere else in the bible and that's basically all that St Luke writes about her; but we can glean much more from what Luke writes and our understanding of life in those times.

Some of this might be conjecture, yet ... she has spent most of her life living and working in the temple ... she has studied Scripture in depth and is fully aware, from prophetic writings, of the expected coming of The Messiah ... is respected by the Temple priests and accepted as a teacher of Scripture.

So, to this very large building [*with typically over a thousand people from many walks of life milling around with their various tasks and responsibilities*], which is the Temple at Jerusalem, Jesus is brought by Mary and Joseph and by chance [*we would recognise this as by the power of the Holy Spirit*] there is Simeon, who has his personal needs satisfied by the presence of Jesus as the Messiah and so he says those words out loud, that we recognise as the 'Nunc Dimittis'. Then, by more "chance" ... Anna, who was always at the Temple and would probably have known Simeon by his regular attendance there, ... Anna, overhears Simeon speaking and immediately is aware of the enormity of the presence of this young child. For Anna, it is not, that she has her wishes satisfied, but that she may now tell the world [*well ... those in the Temple, who would hear her teaching*] about Jesus as the Messiah, who will change the world; not as a mighty warrior but as the teacher of grace and love to and for all people. She would teach how Scripture had been shown to be the truth in the coming of our Lord ... as God's own Son.

In essence, one might say that Anna was the first true Apostle a truly Extraordinary Women in the Bible, for and about whom only a few sentences have been written.

In essence then, what is beautiful about Anna's response is that she didn't keep her joy to herself ... rather, when she saw the Jesus, she spoke about him to all, who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. There is little doubt, that her prophetic words were filled with joy and were also quite authoritative. She would have spoken as one who knew the truth of this Child and as one, who eagerly wanted to tell everyone about Him.

There is a great lesson for each one of us in Anna's encounter with Jesus.

When we encounter our Lord in our journey of faith and prayer, do we then eagerly want to share our faith with others? Perhaps it is by our words, but perhaps it's more often by our actions and thence our witness.

The bottom line is, that the true meaning of Christmas must be shared and proclaimed far and wide so that all will understand the joy of the coming of the Saviour of the World.

As we reflect on Anna the prophet[ess], let us try to imagine the joy in her heart as she spoke of this newborn King and pray, that her joy and prophetic example will inspire us continually to proclaim the Lord to all whom God puts in our path.

Let us pray: Lord, may we always remember the reason for Christmas. May we always keep the joy of Your coming among us at the center of our celebration. You, dear Lord, are the greatest gift ever given. We thank You for Your life and we pray that You will help us to share the Gift of Yourself with others. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen

Family Carol ~ “*Silent Night*” [Trad. German Carol]



Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRZOv31n1sY>

TIME FOR PRAYER

Let us pray to Jesus our Saviour.

Christ, born in a stable, give courage to all who are homeless.

Jesus, Saviour, **hear our prayer**

Christ, for whom the angels sang,
give the song of the kingdom to all who weep.

Jesus, Saviour, **hear our prayer**

Christ, worshipped by the shepherds,
give peace on earth to all who are oppressed.

Jesus, Saviour, **hear our prayer**

Christ, before whom the wise men knelt,
give humility and wisdom to all who govern.

Jesus, Saviour, **hear our prayer**

Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manger,
give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.

Jesus, Saviour, **hear our prayer**

<< allow a time of silent prayer >>

**Jesus, Saviour, child of Mary, you know us and love us,
you share our lives and hear our prayer. Glory to you for ever. Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, And the glory are yours
Now and for ever. Amen

Carol ~ “Ding dong merrily on high” [Trad. English/French]

Ding dong merrily on high,
In heav'n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riv'n with angel singing
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below,
Let steeple bells be swungen,
And "Io, io, io!"
By priest and people sungen
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime
Your matin chime, ye ringers,
May you beautifully rhyme
Your eve'time song, ye singers
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria Hosanna in excelsis!

Hosanna in excelsis!!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J_2tKCwu7Q

Christmas Poem ~ “Bring Your Pipes” [Trad. Austrian]

Bring your pipes and bring your drum,
Call the shepherds all to come;
Hasten quick, no time to lose,
Don't forget your dancing shoes.
Frolic we right merrily:
He will laugh with happy glee,
Yes, and smile, and we will dance,
While He claps His tiny hands.

Dismissal/Blessing

Father of all, you have given us your Son to be the Saviour of the world.
Welcome us, your children, into your kingdom to enjoy your presence for ever.
Amen

Handel's Messaiah ~ "And the Glory of the Lord" [GF Handel]

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together;
for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Isaiah 40:5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4egNeuAf0Bg>

