



Parish of
St Peter Woking
St Peter's · St Mark's · All Souls'



Sunday 31st January 2021

The Presentation of Christ (Candlemas)

Welcome

A candle is lit

Leader Blessed are you, Lord our God,
King of the universe.
Your light shines on us
and all peoples shall see your glory.
You gave us Jesus to be the light of the world;
he makes our darkness to be light.
Through the Holy Spirit your love burns within us,
bearing witness to your truth.
As we bear your light,
may our lips never cease to sing your praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**



Hymn **Bless the Lord, O my soul (10,000 reasons)**

*Bless the Lord, O my soul;
O my soul, worship His holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul.
I'll worship Your holy name.*

The sun comes up, it's a new day
dawning;
it's time to sing Your song again.
Whatever may pass and whatever
lies before me,
let me be singing when the evening
comes.

Bless the Lord, O my soul . . .

You're rich in love and You're slow
to anger,
Your name is great, and Your heart

is kind.
For all Your goodness, I will keep
on singing;
ten thousand reasons for my heart
to find.

Bless the Lord, O my soul . . .

And on that day when my strength
is failing,
the end draws near and my time
has come,
still my soul will sing Your praise
unending:
ten thousand years and then for
evermore!

Bless the Lord, O my soul . . .

Opening activity – *Presenting children for baptism*

Confession

Leader 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.**

Absolution *(we are reminded that God forgives all who repent)*

Leader 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.**

Collect *(Prayer for the day)*

Leader 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 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**

Wednesday Evening Connect Group

Hymn **My Lighthouse**

In my wrestling and in my doubts
In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
(x2)

In the silence, You won't let go
In the questions,
Your truth will hold
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
(x2)

*My lighthouse, my lighthouse
shining in the darkness.
I will follow You
My lighthouse, my lighthouse*

*I will trust the promise.
You will carry me safe to shore.
Safe to shore (x3)*

I won't fear what tomorrow brings
With each morning I'll rise and sing
My God's love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
(x2)

My lighthouse . . .

Fire before us, you're the brightest,
You will lead us through the storms
(x4)

My lighthouse . . .

Words and Music: Rend Collective
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Bible readings

Luke 2:22-40 – Lyz Waako

²²When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now 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 upon him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷Moved 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, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴Then 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, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸Coming 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.

³⁹When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Hebrews 2:14-end – Sarah Thomas

¹⁴Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil-- ¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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. ¹⁸Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Sermon – Steve Green, placement student

Before I start just a word of thanks for making me feel so welcome at St Peter's St Mark's and All Souls'. I actually preached at St Mark's in April 2013 and at St Peter's in December 2013. A preacher always knows when they have had an impact because I was never invited back after that. Seriously though, it is a pleasure to be able to share with you this morning on the topic of "The Presentation of Christ' and based on our Bible reading, Luke 2 verses 22 to 40.

Let me pray: Loving God: open our mind and hearts that we may hear from you. Teach us what you want us to know about this passage of the Presentation of Jesus, for we ask this in His name. AMEN.

Just as a background to this passage, there were three ancient ceremonies which every Jewish boy had to undergo. Firstly, he would be circumcised on the **8th day after his birth (verse 21)**– even if it was a Sabbath, so important was this ceremony. Secondly, every boy had to be bought from God by their parents – this is based on **Exodus 13 and Numbers 18** and called the redemption of the firstborn. Thirdly, the mother had to be purified after childbirth. For the birth of a boy the mother was unclean

and unable to enter the Temple for 40 days. After that time a sacrifice had to be brought to the Temple of a lamb and a pigeon. Or if the family was poor, two pigeons Mary and Joseph brought **two pigeons (verse 24)** indicating that they were from a humble background with limited means. Now, at that time in the Temple there were two devout, God fearing and humble Jews Simeon (or Simon) and Anna. Anna was probably from an influential family because her father is mentioned. She is in her 80s – perhaps older. We don't know about Simeon but it is likely that he is also a very good age. These two had a revelation from the Holy Spirit that this baby would be a **Saviour (verse 30), redeem Jerusalem (verse 38)** and be a **light for revelation to the Gentiles (verse 32)**.

But what does this passage of the Presentation of Jesus mean for us today. Why is it included in Luke's Gospel for us? I think that there are at least three things that we can take from this passage. Firstly, the obedience of Jesus' parents in observing the practices of worship; secondly the indication of conflict that Jesus would bring and thirdly the perseverance of Simeon and Anna.

Firstly, the obedience of Jesus' parents. They followed all the laws required of them with regard to worship. They took the baby to Jerusalem to observe what the Law of Moses required. Indeed, Mary and Joseph frequently went to the Temple. **Ch 2 Verse 41 says "Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover** – they may have gone for other worship festivals. Certainly, Jesus frequently visited the Temple in John's Gospel and in **Luke's Gospel ch 4 vs 16 we read "Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day AS WAS HIS CUSTOM.** What about us? Do we regularly attend worship? What about during lockdown? Obviously it is VIRTUAL WORSHIP but still worship. And again we shouldn't attend out of duty or ritual but out of love because God wants to meet us in worship. **"Wherever two or three are gathered in my name (even if it is virtual) there am I with them" promises the Lord (Matt 18 verse 20).** Worship during lockdown or any other time is a blessing. It is tempting not to go online or see the service on YouTube afterwards and then fast forward through the prayers of confession and absolution and fast forward through the songs we don't like. Perhaps people are thinking of fast forwarding this message as I speak. When going through tough times like now let's be more intentional about worship just like Jesus' parents were.

Secondly, this passage speaks of the conflict surrounding Jesus. In verse 34 **"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against"** The prophecy of Simeon inspired by the Holy Spirit was the Jesus' life would be one of conflict. Of course we now know this to be true as Jesus was harangued by the

religious authorities before suffering the most ignominious death imaginable, crucifixion at the hands of the Romans – a pagan Gentile power. The same can be said for all his disciples with almost every single one of them dying a martyr's death. Wherever the name of Jesus is preached there is conflict and opposition. And it is no different today. This opposition is often spiritual and not physical. What about us? If we never experience obstacles in our Christian lives maybe we are not doing anything that the devil wants to stop. I remember back in September last year at work members of staff were invited to give a lunchtime lecture and I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me saying you should do one on faith. Then the devil whispered in my other ear no, you are too busy, people will think you are weird, your boss might not like it, your work colleagues might think you are strange. There is often a tension in our lives. What should we do? Put Jesus first so I did give the lecture and by God's grace it was well attended and many of my colleagues were present and it went as well as I would have hoped. Why? Because God was there but that is not to say that it all happened without some early spiritual battle or conflict. I think that would also be the testimony of everyone going through the process of ordination. There will be testing times. Is that just coincidence? Of course not. That is part of the Christian life for all of us who follow Jesus.

Third and finally, this passage teaches us about perseverance. Simeon and Anna had perseverance. Simeon must have asked thousands of mums and dads in the Temple about their son. We read about Anna these words **“She never left the Temple but worshipped night and day fasting and praying” (Verse 37)**. She was in her eighties she might have been doing that for many decades. This was the moment when she saw God. What about us? We expect answers to prayer the next day or at least within a week but 80 years?? Persistence in our faith in our worship and in our prayer can be a great spiritual blessing as we draw closer to God. The famous evangelist Dwight L Moody was said to have a prayer list by which he prayed for 100 people every day throughout his life that they would come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When he died 95 out of those 100 had come to faith and at his funeral service the remaining 5 did as well.

To sum up, Joseph and Mary were obedient and regularly worshipped, so should we be if we want to grow as Christians. Secondly the Holy Spirit used Simeon to explain that Jesus would bring conflict and He still does today we need to be aware of the devil's devices and counter them with prayer and scripture. Finally, Anna and Simeon demonstrated great perseverance in waiting for God. Let us be persistent in our faith, never

wavering but always pushing on towards the goal of our lives – fulness of life now and into eternity with our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let me pray: Loving God we pray that we may grow in our faith through worship. Help us to come through the conflicts that we face by resisting the devil and help us persevere to the end in following Jesus. AMEN.

Hymn **269 I do not know what lies ahead**

I do not know what lies ahead,
the way I cannot see;
yet one stands near to be my guide,
He'll show the way to me:

*I know who holds the future,
and He'll guide me with His hand;
with God things don't just happen,
everything by Him is planned.
So as I face tomorrow,
with its problems large and small,
I'll trust the God of miracles,
give to Him my all.*

I do not know how many days
of life are mine to spend;
but one who knows and cares for
me

will keep me to the end:
I know who holds . . .

I do not know the course ahead,
what joys and griefs are there;
but one is near who fully knows,
I'll trust His loving care:

I know who holds . . .

Words and music by Alfred B Smith
Words and music by Eugene Clarke

Creed *(We stand to declare our faith)*

**All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

Prayers ~ Rachel Johnson

As Mary and Joseph came to the temple in obedience to God's command so we come to Jesus today in response to his promise: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."



Lord, hear our prayer:

And reveal your glory

Lord Jesus, Simeon said that proclaiming your name would bring conflict and opposition. We pray today for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith, who lack the freedoms we take for granted and risk imprisonment and death for proclaiming you are Lord. Today we pray especially for Christians in North Korea, many of whom are imprisoned and tortured for their beliefs. Lord, may their faith remain strong in your mighty power. May they be a shining light to other prisoners. May the prison guards and authorities committing such atrocities fall before the Prince of Peace, asking, "What must I do to be saved?"

Lord, hear our prayer:

And reveal your glory

Lord Jesus, our world sees so much conflict, between Muslim and Jew, black and white, Democrat and Republican, north and south, rich and poor. We pray today for those in positions of power and influence internationally, nationally and locally. We pray that they will put aside self-interest, that they will hear the cries of the poor and vulnerable, and that they will seek peace and reconciliation in their lands.

Lord, hear our prayer:

And reveal your glory

Lord Jesus, Anna waited for many years to see your face. We pray today for each of us as we wait to be able to hug our loved ones and laugh with friends, we pray for NHS staff and teachers and funeral directors as they wait for their workloads to ease, we pray for those whose livelihoods have been affected by lockdown as they wait for new opportunities to earn a living, we pray for parents who are waiting for schools and playgroups to reopen. We pray that you will give us the patience and resilience to endure this time of waiting one day at a time. May we be your hands and feet and voice to support and encourage those who are struggling at this time.

Lord, hear our prayer:

And reveal your glory

Lord Jesus, you were born to be a light to the world. We pray today for those who are living in the darkness of illness. We especially pray today for Eileen & Peter Bliss, Patrick Chapman, Enid Hardman, John Hunter, Lynda Kirk, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park, Malcolm Pritchard, Joy Storkey and Barbara Thirst. We pray too for all who are mourning for Alison Brazil, Rik Crook and Peter and Pat Mason. May you comfort them in their grief and loss. Lord, as we live in the incomprehensible shadow of over 100,000 covid deaths we thank you that each of those people was known and loved by you. May our hearts never grow numb to such tragedy but turn to you, the one who turns darkness to light and sorrow to joy.

Lord, hear our prayer:
And reveal your glory

Loving Lord, as we have laid our burdens before you, may your peace reign in our hearts today. **Amen**

The Lord's prayer

Leader Trusting in the promises of God,
as our saviour taught us so we pray:

**All 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.**

Notices – *see Notes and News*

Hymn 428 **Lord for the years**

Lord, for the years
Your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us,
cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us,
pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years,
we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word,
the word of life which fires us,

speaks to our hearts
and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us
and inspires us:
Lord of the word,
receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land
in this our generation,
spirits oppressed
by pleasure, wealth and care:

for young and old,
for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land,
be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world
where men disown and doubt You,
loveless in strength,
and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless,
lost indeed without You:
Lord of the world,

we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves;
in living power remake us –
self on the cross
and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us,
for the future take us:
Lord of our lives,
to live for Christ alone.

Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith
Music by Michael Baughen
Music arranged by David Iliff

Closing responses

Leader We stand near the place of new birth.

All Let us shine with the light of your love.

Leader We turn from the crib to the cross.

All Let us shine with the light of your love.

Leader We go to carry his light.

**All Let us shine with the light of your love.
Thanks be to God.**

Blessing

Leader Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
fill you with radiance and scatter the darkness from your path.
Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,
gladden your eyes and warm your heart.
Christ, the Dayspring from on high,
draw near to guide your feet into the way of peace.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen

Nunc Dimittis – *sung*

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

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

