

Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 27 December



We do hope that Christmas has been good for you. Of course, it's been different this year. Very challenging for many people. Many planned visits and events will have been postponed until a later time. Today's bible reading and message is about waiting. There will be in-person worship at chapel at 11am today 27th.

PRAYER

In today's Gospel we will read how Mary and Joseph brought Baby Jesus to the Temple to present Him to the Lord. Let us remember this as we come to God in prayer.

Gracious God, Mary and Joseph came to the Temple with the child Jesus, thanking You for Him and asking for a blessing. We, too, come to worship today in our homes, to offer You

our praise and worship.

Like them, we thank You for the precious gift of Jesus, first as a child at Christmas, but with us always through the Holy Spirit.

In this time of worship, help us to remember that He is with us; and as we worship, may we treasure His presence as did Mary and Joseph so long ago.

Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

READING FOR TODAY Luke 2:22-40 (NIV)

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 ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord'[□]), ²⁴ 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'.[□]²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹ 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,

you may now dismiss[□] your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

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

³⁶ 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, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.[□] She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him

REFLECTION

The Jewish people had been waiting for a long time for the arrival of the Messiah. The prophets some 500 years before had talked about this figure and so many Jews had lived in hope, but never seen their hope fulfilled.

Simeon and Anna, as Jews, would also have had this hope. We are told that Simeon was righteous and devout and was waiting for the Messiah to come. But there is more, he also had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Lord's Messiah before he died. We are told that this day the Spirit prompted him to go into the Temple Courts.

We can be sure that Anna had been waiting a long time. Probably married young and then widowed in her early 20s, she was now 84 and spent as much time as she could in the temple. She, too, was looking forward to the child who was going to give Jerusalem its freedom. These people had been waiting for something for a very long time, much longer than most of us have waited for anything.

The amazing thing in this story is that when the special moment came they recognised it. The general understanding of the Messiah was that when he came he would be a strong and powerful figure, probably born to an important family. Yet here was an ordinary everyday family coming to the Temple to consecrate their first born son. This must have been a scene repeated over and over again every single day and yet these two saw something special about this child.

They were aware enough to recognise what it was they were seeing even though it was not in any way what they expected. Simeon took the little one in his arms and praised God. Anna thanked God and spoke about her experience to like minded people.

Their joy at seeing what they had waited years to see must have been immense. All that time waiting had been rewarded.

It feels that today we expect instant gratification. If we want something we want it now. Internet companies are getting better and better at delivering quickly. Some can now get you the item on the same day, or if it is a book, music or film it can be downloaded in seconds.

Even so today there are plenty of things that take time to develop. Plants in the garden, a new baby, learning, musical skills, wisdom and spirituality, all can take months, years, even a lifetime to develop. Maybe these, too, are still the really valuable things that will really bring us happiness and joy - just as it did to Simeon and Anna. How remarkable were those two special people in the Temple.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

In our prayers for others we shall think of those who need to show patience.

We pray for Your church everywhere. The world is such a busy place, that it is easy for the church to think that it should always be busy too. May those who follow You, listen to Your voice.

We pray for the sick, whether at home or in hospital. We think of those whose illness means that they have to be patient. We pray for those who are waiting for results; for those who are waiting for hospital appointments; for those who are waiting whilst an injury heals. Be with them in this time of waiting.

We pray for children and young people, waiting for exams, holidays, and all kinds of other events. Help them not to wish time away, but to value it as Your gift. Lord, You know the right time for everything.

We pray now for ourselves. Lord, You know all about our lives; the experiences that surround us; the things that we dread or long for.

Be with us in the waiting, and help us to know that our lives are safe in Your keeping.

Lord, You know the right time for everything.

Help us to listen to You. Amen.

HYMN H&P 238, StF 350

I cannot tell why He Whom angels worship,
Should set His love upon the sons of men,
Or why, as Shepherd, He should seek the
wanderers,
To bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that He was born of Mary
When Bethlehem's manger was His only home,
And that He lived at Nazareth and laboured,
And so the Saviour, Saviour of the world is come.

I cannot tell how silently He suffered,
As with His peace He graced this place of tears,
Or how His heart upon the cross was broken,
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, He heals the brokenhearted,
And stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
And lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
For yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world is here.

THE GRACE The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more. **Amen**