

Resources on the Sunday Readings

Candlemas: The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

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Picture Reflection

Presentation of Christ in the Temple
Luke: 2: 22-40 – reading printed on page 2

At a presentation we may receive or give something...A 'present' may be a gift
or we may be 'present' when we are with others....

- Reflect on the word 'presentation'....what does it mean in this story?
- Spend a few minutes with this picture of the Presentation of Christ after we have heard this well known story.....
- Notice how the Temple that day was a busy place...
- What is shown by the appearance, the gestures and the facial expressions of Simeon and Anna?
- What do we notice about Joseph and Mary?
- What is special about Jesus in this picture?
- Imagine that you are one of the bystanders in this picture on that day... What feelings do you have?
- What does the Presentation of Christ mean for us today?



Bible Reading:

Luke 2:22-40 The Good News Translation

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: "Every first-born male is to be dedicated to the Lord." They also went to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons, as required by the law of the Lord.

At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah. Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required, Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

"Now, Lord, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel."

The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother,

"This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

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.

Bible Study hints and questions.

READING Luke 2:22-40 The Good News Translation [see p2]

Mary and Joseph were a Jewish family and so following Jewish customs, they took their 40 day old baby boy to the great Temple in Jerusalem. This was so Mary could be purified after child birth and she offers a sacrifice as an act of cleansing. She offers two pigeons which was the offering that poorer women would make. The other ritual that Luke includes here is the dedication of the child to God. The Temple was a huge complex of building and was a busy place with people coming and going, the animals that were sold for the sacrifices and the money changers. You had to change roman coins for temple money in order to buy an animal for your sacrificial offering. In this busyness two elderly folk, the righteous and devout Simeon and the widow and prophet Anna, recognise the baby in Mary's arms is the saviour that God had long promised. The Holy Spirit and their deep faith enables them to see and understand who this child is and Simeon speaks the words we call the Benedictus and speaks of the child as a light for the nations.

- 'I have seen your salvation' Simeon proclaims. This is a gift he receives. He doesn't have to do anything to earn it. It is just given but Simeon has to be able to recognise it. What enables Simeon to recognise the significance of this child do you think? What clues are in the text about this? Have you recognised God at work in unexpected places?
- Luke is the only gospel that includes this story which shows Mary and Joseph following the customs of their Jewish faith. Why do you think Luke includes this story? How important is Jesus' Jewish heritage to the Christian faith?
- This story includes three generations. The text tells us the elderly Simeon and Anna were people of deep faith who had faithfully served God for a long time. It's this experience and wisdom that perhaps enables them to see who Jesus is. How is the wisdom and experience of the older generation cherished and shared at St James and in the wider church?
- Simeon and Anna have been waiting a long time to see God's salvation. And with the covid pandemic our lives are constant waiting too. But can waiting be a helpful thing? Are their different kinds of waiting? Could it be their careful, patient waiting that enables Simeon and Anna to recognise Jesus as it has taught them to be deeply attentive to the world around and to how God works in the world?
- Simeon calls Jesus the light for all people. What other stories of light can you think of in the Bible? What different types/sources of light can you think of? (for example a night light comforts in the darkness) How does the image of Jesus as the light help us on our faith journey?

Respond to the Word: look back, look ahead

All age activity.

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple or Candlemas as it is also known is a turning point in the church year. We have been looking back to Christmas during January and the crib has been in church as we celebrate that Jesus comes among us. But today this season ends. The crib will be put away and our focus moves to looking ahead to Lent and Easter.

Look back: take a piece of paper and pencil and write and or draw your memories of 2020. It could be a personal incident or a striking item of world news. Then place them in a large envelope clearly marked 2020 and seal it. Explain that there is nothing we can do about these events any more. They have happened and we cannot change them. We may wish to treasure good memories, using them as a resource for encouragement in harder times. Equally, we may be trying to forget, or come to terms with, more difficult recollections. Holding the envelope pray that the God of time and eternity will help us do these things.

Look forwards: Repeat the process to write down or draw their hopes and plans for 2021, and place them in another envelope. Leave this envelope open, as we do not actually know what will happen during the year. Some of our hopes will be realised, others will be dashed. Only God knows for sure, hold the envelope and pray for God's presence with us as we travel through the year.

Or

Forward and backward

A simple craft activity to remind us of where we have been and where we are going.

You will need: Card/paper, pens

Cut the A4 card/paper in half lengthwise. Fold this over so that it has a top-fold and can stand freely.

Draw eyes on either side of the card/ paper so that they are back-to-back. Think about all the things you have done in the last year then write, draw or describe these things on one side of the card.

This side should be entitled '**Looking back**'.

Now think about all the things they would like to do in the coming year and write, draw or describe these things on the other side of the card.

This side should be entitled '**Looking forward**'.

The cards should stand freely and could be used with a pray for God's presence with us as we travel through the year.