

**The Gospel  
Luke 2:22-40**

**Jesus Is Presented in the Temple**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

**The Return to Nazareth**

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

**A reflection on the Gospel  
from Revd. Maureen**

This is quite a long Gospel passage, but it is packed full of things for us to notice and reflect upon. I would like to share a few points which occur to me, to help us to "ponder" – as Luke tells us elsewhere that Mary does in these early days – and perhaps you may find other interesting or thought-provoking aspects for yourselves.

- From the start, Jesus is brought up in the Jewish faith: Mary and Joseph bring their child to Jerusalem in obedience to God's law.
- I always imagine Simeon to be old, but we are not specifically told that. Did my imagination trick me, because we are told that Simeon had been promised that he would not die before he met the Messiah? Might certain words trick us into embellishing other Bible stories?
- How did Simeon recognise who Jesus was, and what made him enter the Temple at that particular moment? We read that Simeon was "guided by the Spirit".
- Simeon's words, as he holds the child in his arms, have been considered so important through the centuries that they are repeated every day in the service of Evening Prayer.
- Simeon blesses not just the child, but also his parents and includes a forthright and prophetic warning. How might we have responded/reacted, if we had been them?
- We are left in no doubt how old Anna is! Notice how Luke, in a male-dominated society, includes both male and female recognising this baby and his destiny.
- The family return to their home and life goes on as before until the time is right for things to change.

So do re-read and ponder, perhaps putting ourselves into the shoes of Mary, Joseph, Simeon or Anna. Look at this passage from their perspective.

To end, the words of my favourite poet - Malcolm Guite's Sonnet for the Feast of Candlemas are shared with you, with his permission:

'They came, as called, according to the Law.  
Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,  
they moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,  
for God was coming with them to his temple.  
Amidst the outer court's commercial bustle  
they'd waited hours, enduring shouts and shoves,  
buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,  
had made a killing on the two young doves.  
They come at last with us to Candlemas  
and keep the day the prophecies came true;  
we share with them, amidst our busyness,  
the peace that Simeon and Anna knew.  
For Candlemas still keeps his kindled light:  
against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.'

### **Our prayers from Revd. Maureen**

Sisters and brothers in God's family, let us pray for the Church and for the world, and let us thank God for his goodness and his many gifts.

God our Father, we pray for those who enable us to worship in these difficult days, using their gifts and talents to reach out and include us all as much as possible. We thank you for their use of imagination, energy and enthusiasm as well as their prayerful commitment and care. May your blessing rest on each one.

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

God our Father, we remember before you the world's great needs and its unnoticed sorrows: the countries where some are intent upon war but most are desperately weary of it, and what is still happening while the world's gaze has moved on. May your blessing rest upon each nation and all peoples.

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

God our Father, we remember before you our families, friends and the communities where we live: we thank you for all who are giving their time and care in these days of concern regarding the spread of Covid-19. We pray for all who are working in the medical profession, and also those involved in scientific research into causes, vaccines and cures; for all involved in education, that right choices and decisions will be made. May your blessing rest on each person and place, to renew and transform them.

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

God our Father, we remember before you individuals in need of hope, and we name them silently in our hearts: those in hospital or at home; those coping with long-term conditions; the anxious or confused; the elderly and the very young. May your blessing rest on each person we have thought about and named....

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

God our Father, we remember before you those who have died: the close relation whom we continue to miss; those we know whose early death saddens us; the people in the news who have died; all in your world, unknown to us but known and loved by you. May your blessing rest upon all those who are mourning especially at this time when contact, visits and attendance at funerals is restricted.

Lord hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

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.

Merciful Father **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **World Wide Day of Prayer**

The plan is to hold our service later in the year when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. This year's service is arranged by the women of Vanuatu, an archipelago of about 80 islands over 1,100 miles to the east of Australia in the south western Pacific ocean. As the work of WWDP is totally dependent on the funds raised from this worldwide event it is very important we do our best to hold this service

On Friday March 5th at 10:30am the International Committee plan to hold a service in English with the people of Vanuatu on YouTube. This can be accessed on their website: <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

If anyone would like the accompanying service book please contact me and I will get one to you.

*Maureen Lord*  
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### **St. Mary's: important notice concerning writing of cheques**

Lloyds Bank has stepped up security against fraud and will not accept incorrect cheques. Unfortunately, they no longer send the cheque back so the first we know about it is when I check the bank statement.

This involves going back to source and asking for another cheque. This can be difficult/impossible and embarrassing, especially if the cheque is a donation to St Mary's at a funeral, as we may not know the donor concerned. Subsequently, the church books must be amended.

I am therefore trying to let everyone know that cheques for St Mary's MUST be made payable to **PCC of Bishops Lydeard**. Please also note that the bank will no longer accept amended cheques.

Thank you, your help is much appreciated.

*Margaret Gover*  
PCC Treasurer

### **Ash Wednesday**

Soon Lent will once again be upon us. If you have a palm cross for us to burn please let us know to collect it or drop it off at your church.

As you know, 'ashing' is an important part to the opening ceremonies of Lent, but with trying to limit gatherings and touch we are thinking about ways to do it differently.

If you request, we can visit and mark your door post/lintel/gate or some other marker outside your home and leave you a 'blessed' candle from Candlemas as a sign of light and hope. Do let us know and we would be pleased to arrange for this.

*Revd. Mark*