

Swaythling Parish
Sunday 31 January 2021
Candlemas / Presentation of Christ in
the Temple

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use at home. You can also find our Sunday morning reflection on YouTube channel, available at 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

*If we can support you in any way at the present time, or you would just like to chat, do please get in touch: peter.dockree@outlook.com
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Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, however you are joining us. This Sunday we remember the story of Jesus was presented by his parents in the temple, and his significance was recognised by Simeon and Anna. We reflect on where hope is found in the midst of so much uncertainty.

Greeting

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

And also with you.

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Prayer of Confession

When we have time to think, then the things that hold us back and pull us down can weigh even more heavily on our minds. The mistakes we have made and the decisions we may regret. We are called not to be pulled down but to be lifted up. Lifted up so that we can fulfil our God given potential. Those mistakes, those sins, those wrong choices, can be given away, given to God so that we need not carry them any longer. So let us bring those things before God, as we confess our sins.

Lord God, for the wrong choices we have made, and the pain we have caused others.

For the times when our actions have taken away hope and joy from others.

For the moments when careless words and actions have left people hurting.

For the things we could have done and didn't.

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy.

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,
Forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
light of the nations and glory of Israel:
make your home among us,
and present us pure and holy
to your heavenly Father,
your God, and our God.

We begin by singing a song about grounded hope. Hope that holds us.

Hymn: All my hope on God is founded

- 1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.
- 2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.
- 3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore, from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

4 Daily doth th' Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand, at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call, one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Joachim Neander (1650)

Readings

Hebrews 2: 14-end

The writer describes the work of Jesus in terms of High-Priestly sacrifice.

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by

what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Luke 2: 22-40

Jesus, six weeks old, taken to the Temple, is recognised as the one who will bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles.

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 turtle-doves 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 for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped 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.

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection by Rev Peter Dockree

If you were playing football, and you scored a majestic goal (a reach for my imagination but maybe not for you), and then as soon as you scored people dug up the goal posts and moved them 50 metres and said your goal didn't count because the goal posts should have been in the new place, you would I suspect be pretty miffed. Or if you played a game but you didn't really know the rules and they seemed to keep changing, it is hard to stay motivated and positive.

That is the reality of life for so many of us right now. We want to stay hopeful but timeframes, promised solutions all seem to be movable things.

In the midst of the movable, we I suggest need a hope that reflects the situation we find ourselves in, one that relates to where we are. Anna and Simeon had been holding out hope. Hope of the one who would come. But over many centuries that hope had been held, but no one knew where the goalposts stood. They had the promises of the prophets, but no clear timeframes, very few certainties. People tried to pin down the prophecies to events, as they have done since, but to no avail. In the midst of this came the baby Jesus. Anna and Simeon were able to recognise Jesus in the midst of so much uncertainty. Jesus who would become the one who would suffer, spoken of in our Hebrews reading.

The emergence of the one who would suffer, the one who had been promised, doesn't

suddenly nail down the goalposts. It doesn't bring all the answers. Jesus's arrival posed as many questions as it brought answers to those first century Jews. We know too well how the disciples, who came to know him best, fumbled as they tried to work out what was happening. The goal posts must have constantly felt like they were moving for those early followers. They gave up everything, followed him, but he seemed to always be calling them further, and then things took a turn none of them could predict in his arrest and crucifixion. Sometimes in his parables Jesus seemed to sew more confusion not less. And yet it is the presence of the one who was promised, God's son in the midst of the storms of life, that brought a hope that had the ability to hold true in the midst of all the moving pieces. A hope that released Simeon and Ann, a hope that held the disciples as their worlds fell apart and were rebuilt again. A hope that can hold us in the ever changing scenes of life.

We follow a God who is fully connected to the realities of life on earth, and whatever goal posts seem to be moving for you right now, I pray that you may find a hope that holds you in the midst of the storm.

A moment to reflect

Prayers

Let us pray for our world, our community and those in need around us. You may wish to light some candles as you pray

In the power of the Spirit let us pray to the Father through Christ who is our light and life.

God our Father, through Jesus the Light of the World, you call us to be lights in our turn. Help us to be faithful. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, and lead us ever more deeply into your truth; strengthen us to share the riches of your grace with others around, so that they will be drawn to join us in the joy of worship and service.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Simeon and Anna recognised the promise the child Jesus embodied. We pray for all children, especially those whose lives are blighted by poverty, hunger or fear, and for all who try to help them. May they all grow to know your love and trust in your care. We pray especially for all who are finding it difficult to learn on line, who miss their teachers and their friends. Be with teachers and all who making provision for them, and all who have to decide when it will be safe to return to school.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we pray for all who live in the darkness of fear, in war zones or under oppressive regimes. We pray for all who cause suffering by trying to gain power by violence, that your light will transform their desires. We pray for all who have authority over others, that they

will be enlightened by your wisdom, and use their power justly.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Simeon and Anna were old and full of wisdom. We thank you, Father, for the faithful, loving lives of older people we know, and for all who have encouraged us to persevere in our life journeys. We pray for all who find their older years difficult, as physical or mental ability constrains them. We pray for all who find life difficult at the moment because of economic hardship, or illness, or uncertainty about the future, and for all who are suffering from the effects of the Corona virus. We thank you, and pray for all who work in or alongside the NHS, for scientists developing vaccines and all managing their delivery. We pray for all who will find it hard to obtain the vaccines in less well-developed parts of the world.

In a moment of quiet we bring to God the people and concerns we carry on our own hearts....

Lord, give us all the healing and courage that we need.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, you kept faith with Simeon and Anna. Give us grace to put our trust in your promises, and the patience to wait for their fulfilment. In the fullness of your time, bring us to share with all your saints in the glorious freedom of your Kingdom.

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

Amen

Hymn: Of the Fathers love begotten (v1,2,6).

- 1 Of the Father's love begotten
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the Source, the Ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore!
- 2 At His Word they were created;
He commanded; it was done:
Heav'n and earth and depths of ocean
In their threefold order one;
All that grows beneath the shining
Of the moon and burning sun,
Evermore and evermore!
- 6 Christ, to thee, with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be,
honour, glory, and dominion
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore!

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for worshiping with us today.

St Patrick's Breastplate

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ within me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ at my right,
Christ at my left,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks
of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who
speaks to me,
Christ in the eye of everyone that sees me,
Christ in the ear of everyone that hears me.

In the midst of moving goal posts, changing timeframes and uncertainty, may we know God's abiding presence with us, and may the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

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