

Bride Valley Service for Sunday 31st January 2021 Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle

Psalm 24 Entrance into the Temple

Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

verse 10

Opening Prayer

Welcome in the name of Christ. God's grace, mercy and peace be with you. **And also with you.**

Confession

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love: fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith: fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust: fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen

Collect

God of heaven, you send the gospel to the ends of the earth and your messengers to every nation: send your Holy Spirit to transform us by the good news of everlasting life in Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Malachi 3 verses 1-5

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

Gospel Reading: Luke 2 verses 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 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.

Reflection by the Reverend Jane Williams

Earlier this week I read about a baby boy, he was about 12 hours old and had been abandoned on the vicarage steps in Hackney. The postman who found him alerted the emergency services immediately and he is described as a healthy baby being well cared for. People are looking to find his parents, particularly his mother. A tragic start to this baby's life, he has been named Edward after the postman who found him, please pray with me for him that his life turns out to be better than this unworthy start!

Then I read this reflection by Rebecca Sparey-Taylor: 'Through the eyes of Anna' which really struck a chord and so I've adapted it for us;

"A little spark of excitement leapt in my heart. Could this be the couple? Could this be the baby spoken of by the shepherds? Could this be the Messiah? Here in the Temple? My eyes were transfixed upon the child, his face peeping out from the swaddling bands. Sleeping. The couple nervously eyed all the stalls. They exchanged the few coins they had for the Temple money and went to the stall selling birds, they obviously couldn't afford a lamb, as they took the poor families' option of a pigeon. A strange start for Yahweh's chosen one, his Messiah. Maybe this wasn't the right baby after all. And yet, the father as he gently protected his wife and child from the crowd, gave out an air of gentle confidence, of love, of kindness, that maybe the money didn't really matter. That maybe that wasn't what would be important in this child's life.

They made their way over to Simeon, they seemed unsure of what should happen next, and Simeon was the obvious choice as he smiled over at them. And soon Simeon had the baby in his arms, the light of the Holy Spirit glowing from his face, and I crept over quietly to get a little closer, to see what was happening.

Simeon was praising God he seemed to be sure that this child was the Messiah. The one whom God had promised he was going to see. His life appeared to be complete, and nothing was going to better this moment. The mother and father exchanged marvelled glances with each other. As if their dreams and hopes and aspirations for their child, things they hadn't quite dared to believe before, might actually be true. And they fell to their knees as Simeon pronounced God's blessing upon them. But then the demeanour of the couple changed and I listened in harder to what Simeon was saying to them now.

He seemed to be saying that not everyone was going to welcome the child, God's Messiah, with open arms. That he would know the intentions of their hearts, the good and the bad, not just their outward actions. A skill that would win him many enemies as well as friends. And then he uttered the words that have stuck with me, and I'm sure will stick with his mother for a long time. "And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

What could this baby, this Messiah, this chosen one of God do that was going to be so terrible that he would cause such pain to his mother. Many children might go off the rails for a year or two as they sought their own independence, a bit of back chat or the odd fight. But a sword piercing her soul? This sounds like more than that. A heart wrenching action to destroy your mother's soul, to bring such heartache.

And I couldn't allow myself to let that be the thing the mother and father were left with. The shock on their faces too great to bear. The moment of joy and exhilaration, of beautiful prophecy, had been replaced with the shock of pain and anguish. I hurried over as fast as my elderly body would allow me. To view the child. To speak of joy at seeing him. Those beautiful brown eyes peering up at me. And I knew, just knew, that everything would be alright, God had indeed sent his Messiah to bring salvation not just to Jerusalem, not just to the people of Israel but to the whole world. To all who suffered. To all who believed."

Amen.

Let us declare our faith in God

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 and sitteth at the right hand of God 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 of Intercession.

Jesus displays all the signs that mark him out to be God's chosen One.

As we gather in the presence of the almighty, all-knowing God,

Let us pray

Holy God, great Spirit of all, may the whole Church
Honour and glorify your name in daily lives, private prayer and public worship.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

May the whole world resound with your truth, activate your compassion, and be soaked in your peace.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

May all homes and households make plenty of room for kindness and forgiveness; clear the clutter of discontent and make us more thankful.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

May all who ache with sadness or physical pain be comforted and cherished, knowing your love for them.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

May the dying be surrounded with our prayers, may those who are mourning the loss of loved ones and in particular of the over 100,000 who we now know to have died from Coronavirus, know the comfort of your presence.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

As we step into each new day may our thanks and praise give joy to you, the Living God.
Amen.

Let us pray that we may know life and hope in Jesus Christ as we say together:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.**

May God keep you in all your days.
May Christ shield you in all your ways.
May the Spirit bring you healing and peace.
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from you and pour upon you blessing and light of His love. **Amen.**

Glory to God,
**Whose power at work among us,
Can do infinitely more than all we can ask or conceive; to him be glory in the Church and
in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*Sources: Common Worship, New Patterns for Worship, material from which is included here, are copyright©
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Intercession are adapted from Susan Sayers.*