

Worship - Sunday 27th December 2020

The Sunday after Christmas

Conducted by the Rev'd Clare Downing

Opening music: Torches, Torches (Joubert) sung by the Senior Choir St. Edmund's School, Hindhead

Welcome: Margaret Armes

Opening responses:

God of God, Light of Light,
true God of true God,

We bless you.

Object of the Magi's search,
subject of an old man's song,
fulfilment of the Baptist's preaching,

We bless you.

Mary's son, Joseph's son,
God's only son,

We bless you.

Prayer of adoration:

Loving God
who conceived life,
originates ingenuity,
embraces individuality,
welcomes everyone,
celebrates diversity,
encourages unity,
offers serenity,
gifts simplicity,

lavishes compassion,
we worship you!

Living Jesus
who breathes our air,
walks our streets,
feels our pain,
sheds tears,
enjoys company,
bubbles with laughter,
holds our hands,
we worship you!

Gentle Spirit
who strengthens fragile spirits,
shelters the suffering,
brings life and hope,
transforms all sorrow,
binds broken hearts,
sets captives free,
we worship you!

Beautiful Trinity of Love,
for your presence in our lives,
for your comfort and company,
for shaking us out of tired routines,
and calling us ever to follow you
then, blessing our journey with unexpected discoveries,
expanding our horizons,
tendering endless encouragement
and travelling with us,
we worship you! Amen.

Confession & Forgiveness:

Forgive us when...

- when we make you smaller than you are
- when we forget that you walk with us
- when we do not care for the weak
- when we do not act in ways that reflect you

Jesus - Emmanuel - God with us -
came to live amongst us,
to die and rise again for us.
Accept his pardon.
Receive his peace. Amen

We say together the words Jesus taught us - in whatever
version /language we wish:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 read by Philip Le Fanu

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

⁶² For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. ²The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. ³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Luke 2:22-40 read by Stephen Le Fanu

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the

Lord”), 24and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

25Now 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. 26It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27Guided 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, 28Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 29“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; 30for my eyes have seen your salvation, 31which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” 33And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34Then 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 35so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” 36There 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, 37 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. 38 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. 39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Reflection

We are at that strange moment in the church year between Christmas and Epiphany. Our nativity sets have everyone there at the stable in Bethlehem - but meanwhile, our gospel reading today takes us to Jerusalem and the presentation of the baby Jesus at the temple. It's a part of the story of Jesus which is only found in Luke's gospel. Luke has already given Mary a 'starring role' - in the annunciation story, which many of us will have heard last week. And whilst Joseph is here too, it is Mary who is more of a focus. Of course, Luke is the only gospel writer who takes a great deal of notice of women - and of others who are outsiders in many ways.

- Mary is very much a part of Luke's telling of the arrival of Jesus - but lets just take a whistle stop tour of her place in the other gospels
 - Matthew - she's there in the nativity, but very passive. Joseph is the key player both pre and post Jesus' birth. Mary also makes an appearance at the empty tomb.
 - Mark - her only real part is when she, and Jesus' brothers, come to take him home when he's preaching, and causing a bit of a stir
 - John - there isn't a birth narrative but Mary (though never called by her name) appears both at the wedding at Cana, and at the cross

Mary here is the young woman, who finds herself and her child as the centre of attention amongst older folk. We have heard the story of the annunciation - Mary's call, and her 'yes' to that invitation. Whilst it's a 'one off' experience, a short encounter, Mary's response is going to change her life for ever - and that becomes clearer in the story we've heard this morning, where, at the temple, she encounters Simeon and Anna.

- Simeon -
 - probably old - we assume so, though it's not said outright
 - devout, righteous, the Holy Spirit resting on him
 - seeing deliverance for Israel not just as something in the past - a remembrance of the Exodus...

- ...but he is looking forward to a new deliverer
 - is waiting expectantly - has his eyes open to new possibilities
 - is old - but not stuck in his ways
 - gives a blessing - but also, to Mary, a warning
- Anna -
 - definitely old
 - a prophet - a 'seer' (see-er)
 - doesn't seem to have a family - an oddity - an outsider
 - sees, and knows what she is seeing
 - full of praise to God
 - an evangelist - telling all those who were looking for redemption that this child was special

God using the young, and the old. God calling Mary to a unique task - and confirming that through the words of these two older people. NB - Our own perception of call as Reformed Christians - involves both the individual sense of call but also the recognition of that call by others.

Simeon and Anna have both been waiting for the promise of God to be fulfilled. Their parts in the story are small, but vital. They are holders of the 'old' story, and receivers of the 'new'. They bring continuity but are also announcing change. We are moving from the old covenant between God and people into the new one. They may, in some part be set in their ways, (every day...) but they are open to change.

We make a big mistake if we see the nativity as being a story for children – and the way in which we present it often makes it that. Mary and Jesus are the only young ones. The Christmas story is full of older people, who, wittingly or unwittingly are going to take their part in changing the world. Not just Simeon and Anna – there are others who were, or may well have been older:

- Elizabeth and Zechariah
- Joseph
- shepherds
- wise men

So for those of us who are getting older what part are we called to take? What is God's call to us? What do we learn from Simeon and Anna?

- listening for God
- having the Spirit of God
- knowing the story so far – being able to look back...
- ...but also wanting to look forward to something new
- being those who praise God
- and who tell the good news

Song – the Pedigree (*Tune: Love Divine Stainer*)

**Not the powerful, nor the privileged,
not the famous in the land,
but the no-ones and the needy
were the first to hold God's hand.**

**Not a well - established family
with an heirloom christening shawl,
but a homeless, wandering couple
parented the Lord of all.**

**Not at first to little children
nor to those whose faith burnt bright;
but to adults, stalled in darkness
angels brought God's love and light.**

**God, determined to be different
from the standards we think best,
in his choice of friends and family
lets forgotten folk be blessed.**

**Not obsessed by our achievements,
wordly wealth or family tree,
may we, in and with God's chosen
find our fondest pedigree.**

Prayers of Concern

During the prayers, there will be periods of silence.
You are free to pray quietly, or to unmute yourself,
and mention a person or situation out loud.

We bring to God our concerns for the day...

We bring to God the people of today...

We bring to God ourselves....

Lord, give us wisdom before we speak,
Understanding while we listen,
sensitivity towards those we spend time with
and the perspective of your kingdom
in which to see the things of the earth.

Bring us to the day's ending
blessed through having shared the day's beginning.
In Christ's name we ask this.

Amen

Closing responses

From where we are
to where you need us,
Christ be beside us.

From what we are
to what you can make us,
Christ be before us.

From the mouthing of generalities
go making signs of your kingdom,
Christ be beneath us.

Through the streets of this world,
to the gates of heaven
Christ be above us.

Blessing

Surround us with your presence,
inspire us with your purpose,
confirm us in your love,
and may the blessing of God,
Creator, Christ and Spirit
be with us this day, and every day to come.
Amen

Closing music: In the bleak midwinter sung by Geraldine Latty

Responses led by Moray Henderson

Opening and closing responses, prayers of concern and
‘The Pedigree’ are all © Wild Goose Resource Group

Hymn tune from [† Free Music Backing Files for Churches -
Piano, Band, Pipe Organ † \(smallchurchmusic.com\)](http://smallchurchmusic.com)

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