

Sunday 1st February 2026

Candlemas

Gospel Reading

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 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.

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.

Other Readings: Malachi 3.1-5

Psalm 24.[1-6]7-10

Hebrews 2.14-18

Homily

Can you imagine bringing a newborn baby home for the first time? Many of us have been there. The nights without sleep, the mixture of sheer panic and joy-filled wonder at being a new parent, the jumbled haze of trying to settle into some kind of routine, before eventually emerging back into life in the outside world.

Our gospel reading begins with a similar, very ordinary, very human story. 40 days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph, like all new parents in Israel in their day, after the blur of those first few weeks, are now ready to head outdoors, and take the newborn baby Jesus to the Temple, to present an offering to the Lord in accordance with the Jewish law.

In our passage we discover 3 key ideas:

1. Jesus shared our **humanity** and experienced our **poverty**

Mary and Joseph cannot afford the more expensive offering of a lamb (the better of two options for the ceremony) and instead simply bring the offering for those who are poor. A pair of doves or pigeons.

So, Jesus knows exactly how it feels to be poor. His first visit to the temple could not have been more humble.

You would have thought the divine son of God would be born into a wealthy family, wouldn't you? But Jesus is born into poverty.

In the same way, you might have thought Jesus would be some kind of superhero who escapes human weakness, but instead Jesus is born as a fragile baby, just like each of us, and experiences the full range of human challenges and emotions. He shares our humanity and he enters into our weakness.

In fact, Hebrews tells us sharing our human nature was essential. If Jesus wasn't fully like us, he wouldn't be able to be the one who could fully set us free. The hero has to be human for salvation to be real.

2. Jesus brings **salvation** through **suffering**

When Simeon sees Jesus and holds him in his arms he says: 'My eyes have seen your **salvation**'

Simeon knows through the revelation of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the source of salvation – not just for the Jews in Israel, but for the whole world – he is the light of the world, the light that Christians have celebrated down the centuries through the lighting of candles on this day, traditionally called Candlemas.

Jesus brings light and salvation to all people. And how does he do it? Through the **suffering** that Simeon goes on to speak about when he says to Mary: “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel ... and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” Simeon is prophetically speaking about how many will turn against Jesus and he will be pierced as he goes to the cross. The pain of seeing this will, of course, pierce the heart of his mother Mary also.

It is through Jesus’ **suffering** on the cross that we can receive **salvation** – it is through his stripes that we are healed, as Isaiah puts it. It is because he was punished in our place that we can go free.

3. God **reveals Jesus** to those who **seek** him.

Anna and Simeon are wonderful examples of people who have spent their whole lives seeking God and longing for him to fulfil his purposes. Simeon was ‘looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.’ Anna ‘never left the temple but worshipped there night and day’.

They clearly knew the truth of Hebrews 11:6 - ‘God rewards those who earnestly seek him.’ Their reward is meeting Jesus, their Saviour and Messiah.

God does this for everyone who seeks him – young and old, rich and poor, Jews and non-Jews.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be like Simeon and Anna? Patiently seeking Jesus, waiting for him to be revealed and knowing the joy of meeting him for ourselves. Whether we’ve been seeking God faithfully for years, or we are taking our very first steps towards him, let’s be encouraged that God does reward us as we seek him, and take steps towards him today.

Let’s be like Simeon and Anna - always on the lookout for Jesus - and when we find him, let’s embrace him with open arms and give thanks to God for him, who was willing to share our humanity, enter our poverty and suffer in our place, so we could receive his salvation.

Conversation Questions

1. What does it mean to seek Jesus for ourselves? How can we take a step closer to Jesus today? How can we allow the light of his salvation to shine into our hearts this Candlemas?
2. How do you respond to the truth that Jesus shares our humanity and our poverty and won for us salvation through his suffering?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty and ever-living God,
clothed in majesty,
whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple,
in substance of our flesh:
grant that we may be presented to you
with pure and clean hearts,
by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*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.*

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