

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

Today is first Sunday of Christmas. In Luke 2: 21-40 we consider Jesus presentation at the Temple and affirmations of Simeon and Anna that Jesus is Saviour. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

### A gathering prayer

As Mary and Joseph went on the pilgrimage of faith to Jerusalem, so we, too, have come on a pilgrimage of faith today, to this place of worship. Meet us, O God, as we gather, and open our eyes to see the eternal truths all around us, calling us into love and more love and things that are everlasting.

**Amen.**

### A prayer of confession

Jesus, name above all names,  
sometimes we use your name lightly, without thinking.

**Forgive us, Lord.**

Sometimes we hear others take your name in vain,  
yet do nothing about it.

**Forgive us, Lord.**

Sometimes we see only the bits of you we want to see,  
the comfy bits.

**Forgive us, Lord.**

Make us people who are proud to be called by your name.

**Amen.**



**Our Father who art in heaven...**

**Song For unto us a child is born/Open the eyes of my heart – Paul Baloche**

[\(307\) Paul Baloche - For Unto Us A Child Is Born / Open The Eyes Of My Heart \(Official Live Video\) - YouTube](#)

### Luke 2:22-40 - Simeon Praises the Lord

<sup>22</sup>The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, <sup>23</sup> just as the Law of the Lord says, “Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord.” <sup>24</sup>The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving at least a pair of doves or two young pigeons. So that is what Mary and Joseph did.

<sup>25</sup>At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God’s Spirit came to him <sup>26</sup>and told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. <sup>28</sup> Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

<sup>29</sup> “Lord, I am your servant,  
and now I can die in peace,  
because you have kept  
your promise to me.

<sup>30</sup> With my own eyes I have seen  
what you have done  
to save your people,  
<sup>31</sup> and foreign nations  
will also see this.  
<sup>32</sup> Your mighty power is a light  
for all nations,  
and it will bring honour  
to your people Israel.”

*Mine eyes have  
seen Thy  
Salvation*



<sup>33</sup> Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said. <sup>34</sup> Then he blessed them and told Mary, “This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him, <sup>35</sup> and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking.”

### **Anna Speaks about the Child Jesus**

<sup>36</sup> The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died. <sup>37</sup> And now she was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.

<sup>38</sup> At that time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

### **The Return to Nazareth**

<sup>39</sup> After Joseph and Mary had done everything that the Law of the Lord commands, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>40</sup> The child Jesus grew. He became strong and wise, and God blessed him. *Contemporary English Version (CEV)*

### **Family of Faith**

In Luke 2.21-40 we read how Mary and Joseph take Jesus to be presented in the Temple, where Simeon and Anna recognise the promised Saviour and confirm the words of the angels before he was born: ‘they shall name him Emmanuel, God with us’ (Matthew 1.23); ‘you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High’ (Luke 1.31-32); ‘the Saviour, the Messiah’ (Luke 2.11).

Named Jesus when he was just eight days old, Mary and Joseph's first son is presented to God in the Temple a month after his birth. This family ceremony, including the presentation of an offering to redeem (buy back) a firstborn son, was an ancient Jewish custom (Numbers 8.1). The Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish life. Anna and Simeon represent strong links with past and future. We may assume that Simeon was a priest at the Temple. Anna's family tree (the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher) reaches back to the origins of Israel's twelve tribes (Genesis 49.20) and Simeon sees far ahead through Jesus' life.

The individuals in this story are named, unlike many others in the gospels, helping us to identify them and feel we know them better. Simeon recognised Jesus as the Christ/Messiah. His poem represents a vision of salvation for all people, Gentiles and Jews (see Isaiah 49.6): he sees Jesus as Saviour. Anna recognises him as the Redeemer of Jerusalem (v. 38).

Mary and Joseph had taken Jesus to the Temple in accordance with Jewish tradition to present their son to God. Simeon and Anna identify Jesus as the saviour, the Messiah.

Birth traditions are important. In some Christian traditions babies are baptised, in others they are dedicated. In both these services, the child's name is used. Names are significant in Scripture and today. In Isaiah 43.1 the Lord says, 'I have called you by your name, you are mine'. We are identified by name and called as individuals to be God's people – what a fantastic privilege and calling. Let us be built up by this as we are about to enter into a new year.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Today we honour Simeon and Anna. Old, both, they had a light that sustained them. They both held strongly to what they knew they hoped for. May we – people of all ages – be held together by what sustains us. Whether seven or seventy, may we know what is most important.

**God in your mercy, hear us.**

Today we honour all shapes of families. Families by choice, families by adoption, families by birth, families in grief, families in multiple homes, families in negotiation, families in care, families in support. In all shapes of family, may we find words of love and kindness.

**God in your mercy, hear us.**

Today we pray for people who are ignored because of their age. In an era where youth and beauty are praised, we have so often ignored wisdom, experience, longstanding faithfulness and perspective. For all who have felt overlooked, for all who have love and wisdom to share, we pray.

**God in your mercy, hear us.**

*Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .*

**Song Joy to the world/Our God saves – Paul Baloche**

[\(307\) Joy To The World/Our God Saves \(Lyric Video\) - Paul Baloche \[ Official \] - YouTube](#)

### **HOLY COMMUNION Prayer of Thanksgiving – Family of Faith**

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,  
for you have fulfilled your promises  
and clothed us in the garments of salvation  
and the robes of righteousness.

And now in the fullness of time,  
our eyes have seen your salvation come.  
Born of a woman  
and growing in strength and wisdom,  
he fulfilled the life-long yearnings  
of those awaiting your redemption.  
Rising up as a sign of your grace  
and exposing the truth in our hearts,  
he was opposed by many, and crucified,  
but you raised him to life  
and opened the way of salvation  
so that we might be adopted as your children and heirs.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,  
we offer you thanks and praise at all times  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.***

### **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit.  
We bless you for Christ, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.  
By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that shall last.

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

### **Prayer after communion**

Loving God, you have fed us generously at this table, as we have remembered Jesus and rejoiced that he is with us today. We are ready now to follow him, and to be your people in the world. May your Holy Spirit show us the way, make us holy and fill us with love.

### **A sending out prayer**

Lord, your faithful servants Anna and Simeon  
had dreams and visions that sustained them into their old age.  
Enrich us all with visions and dreams that sustain us, from one decade to the next;  
so that our eyes might always be bright, with the life that we see all around.  
Send us out, today and all days, with this love, and this vocation. **Amen.**



