

Our Service Together

February 2nd 2025

Candlemas

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

*The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.*

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

Amen.

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire
with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalms Psalm 84 *We say the psalm aloud*

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My
soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the Lord; my heart
and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young: at your altars, O
Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.
Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion, who going through the
barren valley find there a spring, and the early rains will clothe it with blessing.
They will go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion.
O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; listen, O God of Jacob.
Behold our defender, O God, and look upon the face of your anointed.
For one day in your courts is better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.
For the Lord God is both sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; no good thing shall the Lord withhold
from those who walk with integrity.
O Lord God of hosts, blessed are those who put their trust in you.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Malachi 3.1-4

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. ²But 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; ³he 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. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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 ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴ 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.'

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ 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 ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

³⁶ 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, ³⁷ 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. 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.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

Historians may gather all 'the facts', however they have reasons for the facts they use in their telling of 'the historical story'. When we read Luke's works, his gospel and the Book of the Acts we have to hold in mind Luke is a historian. It is good to ask ourselves what are Luke's concerns, his agenda, in the telling of his story of Jesus and the early church; and especially what is he looking for us to know.

Thank fully Luke lays everything open for us in the opening sentences of the gospel. I paraphrase his words thus, 'having listened to the first hand telling of all the events of the past few decades in which God has fulfilled many things I have now made an orderly account dear 'God's loving child' (Theo-philus) that you may know the 'truth' of what you have heard before. It would seem that Luke's concern is that folks who have heard the gospel already, who are part of the worshipping family, the church, would have words to affirm and encourage them along the way of their faith filled life. This might help us as we look at this account of Jesus' 'presentation' at the temple.

Firstly, and simply, we see Jesus' family fulfilling their religious obligations following the birth of their child. Jesus is presented at the temple and an offering made by his parents. In this he is received as a full part of Israel, Jesus is a Jew through and through! All is the good, right and proper, and actually very normal and frankly quite boring. That is until the Spirit of God intervenes on matters and Simeon and Anna come into view. Here is another of Luke's 'truths'; 'God's loving children' are to be on the lookout for the presence and action of the Spirit of God – the 'authorship' and 'signature of authentication' of God on matters. Anna and Simeon are spirit filled and their lives enabled by 'God's presence with them'. Malachi too is moved by the Spirit to prophesy God intentions. God will send a messenger of the 'delighted in' covenant

right into the heart of matters, to the temple, to reform its leadership (the Levites), to renew said covenant and to enable all people to gather and offer 'acceptable' worship once again.

'Mine eyes have seen your salvation' declares Simeon as he takes Jesus in his arms. The Spirit gives him sight to see that this baby is different from all others being presented at the temple that day, or any of the days Simeon has been there, waiting and watching. For Simeon Jesus is the living, breathing fulfilment of God's promise spoken of in Malachi's words; and personally, the fulfilment of everything Simeon had hope to see for the people he held in his heart.

Anna too is moved by the Spirit, moved to praise and worship, and to telling everyone there about 'the child'.

What then is the 'truth' that Luke wants us to know of in this story (which surely he had to have gathered from Mary herself)? I wonder if there might be three things!

Firstly, 'God's loving children' are to be open to both being anointed by the Spirit of God and to Her direction and wisdom for a life in faith. Secondly, to be open to being moved to joy and worship when we see the presence of God in the little and ordinary; after all these may be the beginnings of something much greater than is initially seen. Lastly, to be expectant of seeing God work His purposes out in our lifetime and location, to never give up hope but keep looking for God's fulfilling of matters in Jesus Christ. Whatever the time scale it, may we be open to the peace and joy it will release us into!

The Creed

All: 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,
he is seated at the right hand of 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 *We make our intercessions*

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

Strengthen Michael and Ruth our Bishops and those who seek to serve you in this diocese. May they be filled with the spirit of wisdom and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have wisdom and lead us into justice and peace. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for nations at war, that they may reconcile their differences and live in peace.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the homeless, hungry and starving, that their needs may be satisfied.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may bring light and hope in the darkest places.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

The Collect

All: 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. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.
And forgive us our trespasses, 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.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day. Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.