

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Presentation of Christ - 31st January 2021

Collect:

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.

Amen.

Psalm 24

- 1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;
- 2 for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.
- 3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.
- 5 They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation.
- 6 Such is the company of those who seek him, who



seek the face of the God of Jacob.

- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
- 8 Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews (2.14-end)

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. **This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (2.22-40)

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 turtledoves 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 seven years after her marriage, 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. 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. **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

One of the most amazing things about scripture - is the way it paints a picture of people, lighting up events, of prophecies and miracles. During the last few weeks, in fact since the beginning of December (Advent) we started the gospel story all over again. Just lately we have been looking at various scriptures to enable us to understand this stage in the gospel stories. Birth of John the Baptist; the time leading up to Christmas and the birth of the Christ child; the calling of the disciples, the transformation of water to wine - and we move from Jesus being a child to an adult; at least we did last week!

If you can imagine that Scripture is like a large mosaic, gradually piecing together the life and times of Jesus who we come to understand in the gospels. ... as a time when heaven touches earth and Jesus is revealed to his people little by little. We are part of that mosaic. Today we return to Jesus as a baby - in fact 8 days old - as Mary and Joseph travelled to Jerusalem - for Jesus' naming and purification rite. And in these few short words, God once again opened eyes and hearts to the wonder of who Jesus is - and what he will do during his short human life. As Mary, Joseph and Jesus arrive in Jerusalem - no doubt excited to present Jesus to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in the temple - their expectations are raised when an older man Simeon and an older lady Anna approached them. Both of them had been waiting for many years to see the Messiah who they knew the Lord would send - it was one of his promises when the people of Israel were in exile - in an unfamiliar land. They knew they wouldn't die, until they had seen Jesus - the Messiah.

Simeon is waiting for God to deliver Israel from the Romans and we learn that Anna is in touch with the people who are waiting for Israel to be redeemed (redemption means being saved from sin). They are both living in hope where suffering has become a way of life. After many years of waiting, and through the Holy Spirit their eyes were opened when they saw Jesus - and welling up from deep within them is that hope, that realism that at last the Messiah is before them. With hope rising within them - they proclaimed blessings that all could hear. Simeon gave thanks for the light and salvation he had been waiting for even though he also gave a warning - and then Anna, like the shepherds, proclaimed the glory of God and Mary watched and waited - and treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

In the picture the mosaic laid before us today - we all fit in. No matter who you are or where you are, the story of Jesus, from the feeding trough in Bethlehem to the empty tomb and beyond, can become your story. We are ordinary people whom God uses for extraordinary things... As you think about and identify more and more with the story from scripture - this story can become your vocation, your calling, a kind of life mission.

So what of our calling: what does God expect from us?

Everyone has their own role in God's plan. For some it will be active, obvious, working in the public eye, perhaps preaching the gospel or taking the love of God to meet the practical needs of the world. For others, it will be quiet, away from the public view, praying faithfully for God to act out his promises. Or maybe a mixture of the two. For most of us, there is usually a moment when we recognise the Messiah for ourselves and the wonder of who he is for each of us. And our hearts too are full to overflowing to the wonder of who he is – the Messiah - and what he came to do. Mary and Joseph needed Simeon and Anna at that special moment - and they listened in amazement to all they heard. Mary's heart was full; Simeon and Anna's call was complete - and they thanked God from deep within. Let us do the same for Him who is Lord of all.

Amen.

- Rev Jackie Sears

In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high has broken upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace...

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.
Christ, be our light!...

Longing for food, many are hungry
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us Your bread, broken for others
Shared until all are fed.
Christ, be our light!...

Longing for shelter, many are homeless
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us Your building, sheltering others
Walls made of living stone.
Christ, be our light!...

Many the gift, many the people
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another
Making Your kingdom come.
Christ, be our light!...

A prayer for Epiphany

Come freshly to us now, Lord God,
And as we offer you our lives, renew in us your
gifts:
The gold of our potential.
The incense of our prayers and aspirations,
The myrrh of healing for our pain;
Feed us and nourish us
that we may grow in the life of Christ;
Fill us with your Spirit
that we may overflow with your love,
and transform the world with your glory.
Amen.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dicker-
son, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy
Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen,
Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean
Dominy

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily,
Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie,
Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt,
Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, Andy Fosker

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK
and around the world: *For all who have lost their
jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all
who have lost their lives; the injured, the bereaved.
For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors:
**for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for
all. For refugees across the world & diplomats and
peace makers, working to end conflicts**

**Those who have recently died, and their families
mourning their loss:** Barry Stammers, David Baker
(Eric's brother), RIP

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

A huge Thank You to everybody who helped us fundraise in any way over Advent and Christmas. The final figure raised from the mini-market, Canon Chris' cards, our Giving Days, Simon's hymnathon, the hamper raffle, and donating to church instead of sending Christmas cards, was **£1900** ! Thanks to your generosity, we were able to finish last year's accounts with a small surplus, which is incredible!

Our shoebox crafts were very well received with lots of families saying how much they loved them. Emma is planning similar children's craft bags for Lent & Easter Messy Church. **If you are able and willing to help in any way please contact Emma** - all help most gratefully received! (emma.knight1@hotmail.co.uk)

Newsletters: it would be lovely to have a couple more newsletters to keep us connected with each other. This time, how about writing about your favourite hobby or interest? Whether it's baking, gardening, knitting, an interest in trains or boats, a love of animals, a passion for fashion, whatever is your thing, write a short paragraph to share the joy with others! Send contributions to Rev Cat.

New Vicar Search: the process for appointing a new vicar at St Thomas' is underway. We hope to advertise around March/April, and potentially have a new vicar appointed by September.

- Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Please email her with anything you'd like to share as this process unfolds. jackie@jbsears.com
- We'd love to know what you would most value in our next priest! Email or phone Rev Cat with a word or sentence saying what qualities would be most important to you.

Prayer for growth! Please join in this prayer at home:

"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

This Week:

Sunday 31st January

10am: Zoom church - you can join by phone too! Speak to Malcolm or Rev Cat.

Monday 1st February

4.30: STPC evening prayer – all welcome, speak to Malcolm for Zoom link

Tuesday 2nd February

5.30: Meditation group —livestreamed on facebook/stthomasipilgrimcommunity

Wednesday 3rd February

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

Thursday 4th February

4pm: Bible Basics

7pm: Zoom Alpha

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Pam Everett; Christine Fisher; Caroline Fisk & family; Joanne Goddard with Patrick and Christine; Alison & Malcolm Gibbs; Carole & Frank Groom; Myrtle Hughes; Emma Knight with Steve, Brad & Esmae



5th Feb: Kyle Harrison

6th Feb: Jill Wilson

Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly

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Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

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Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135

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Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748