



The Methodist Church

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist
Circuit: Worship at Home – 31 January
2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever you are sharing in this act of worship, you are welcome.

A Call to Worship:

Almighty God

Through many and various ways You come to us.

Steal into our hearts now as we think once again

of the new gift of life granted to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Clarify our vision and steady our nerves so that we might be willing to venture forth to serve You as we ought.

Capture our minds and devotions as we realise in this moment of worship

Your power over death and the enormous possibilities for victorious living day by day granted to us through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

Hymn:

Thou whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard
and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray
Let There Be Light!

Saviour who came to bring
on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind
Let There Be Light!

Spirit of truth and love,
lifegiving, holy Dove,
speed forth thy flight;
move o'er the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
Let There Be Light!

Blessed and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world, far and wide,
Let There Be Light!

Prayers of Adoration and Confession
Lord God, you are the source of everlasting light.

Your son, our beloved Lord Jesus was presented in the temple 40 days after his birth. He was recognised by Simeon and Anna, and welcomed as the promised Messiah.

May we like them, behold the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Grant that we may stand before you with hearts cleansed by your forgiving love.

May we serve you all our days and make your name known as we worship you as our Lord.

So may we come by your grace to eternal life.
Amen.

Reading: Luke 2: 22 – 35

²² 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 turtledoves 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.”

Reflection

In the shops the Christmas bits have been put in the box and we have moved on to Valentines Day and Easter already. However as faithful Christians taking note of our lectionary we come this week to Candlemas, a feast sadly not celebrated by many churches these days. The feast of Candlemas is the end of the Christmas season in the Church. The Feast of Candlemas is always February 2, 40 days from Christmas. but we celebrate it on the Sunday closest. It is on that date because in accordance with Leviticus 12:1 seven days after Christmas, January 1, we have the feast of our Lord's circumcision, then thirty three days after that, February 2 is the feast of his being offered in the Temple.

I know this last week we had what is described as most depressing day of the year. Apparently the 27th is the time when bills arrive after Christmas, we haven't yet been paid and the Inland revenue are causing people bother, apparently it all converges on this date. Well thank God for Candlemas then.

It lies half way between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, so it marks the day upon which winter is half over and we are moving towards brighter and better days. For that reason it has many pagan and rural associations, with practices such as groundhog day and predicting the weather.

At this time we remember Simeon and Anna greeting the baby Jesus as he is presented in the Temple.

And we have these marvellous words of Simeon:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel." Luke 2:25-32.

In these words, Simeon sort of wraps up the Old Testament. The promised salvation has arrived, the Messiah is here. We can now start looking to the new age. As Christians we say with Simeon: "Our eyes have seen His salvation." Candlemas is a time of rejoicing that God has kept his promise and given his Messiah for the sake of the world. When we realise this we can understand how the group of Jews who believed in Jesus would have to move out away from the synagogue. The early believers were Jewish people, who had seen the fulfilment of the prophecies in Jesus and so now they were living in a new age inaugurated by the Messiah. Jews who did not acknowledge who Jesus was were left waiting for somebody who had been and gone.

Old wisdom tells us that the weather on Candlemas predicts the season to come. The beginning of the end of our winter is a time to hold on to the possibility of spring. In our lives at the moment, enduring a third period of lockdown which feels unending, we need to hold on to a promise.

I wonder how Simeon felt when he woke up the day after meeting Jesus and seeing the truth of what his future would hold.

I wonder if he woke up thinking, ‘today might be the day!’, before he remembered that yesterday had been the day and that he would have to find something else to do today.

I imagine he lit a candle, in the quiet of that winter morning, and prayed that the light of the world would break through the darkness and reveal to him the continuation

of God's promise. Let that be our prayer also as we journey through the seasons of this year and of our lives. In the Christ who has come, we can depart in peace...

Hymn:

Like A Candle Flame
Flickering Small In Our Darkness
Uncreated Light
Shines Through Infant Eyes

God Is With Us, Alleluia
God Is With Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia!

Stars And Angels Sing
Yet The Earth Sleeps In Shadows
Can This Tiny Spark
Set A World On Fire?

God Is With Us, Alleluia
God Is With Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia!

Yet His Light Shall Shine
From Our Lives, Spirit Blazing
As We Touch The Flame
Of His Holy Fire

God Is With Us, Alleluia
God Is With Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia
Come To Save Us, Alleluia!

Prayers of Intercession
With confidence and trust let us pray to the
Father
For the one holy catholic and apostolic
Church,
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

For the mission of our communities ,
that in faithful witness we may proclaim the
Gospel.
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

For peace in the world
that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may
grow among nations and peoples.
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

For all those in need in our communities
– the sick, suffering, unhappy, vulnerable and
lonely – that they may be comforted and
protected.
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

For grace to amend our lives and to further
the reign of God let us pray.
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

In communion with all those who have walked
in the way of holiness.
Lord of compassion
In your mercy hear us.

We offer our prayers in Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn:

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of righteousness, arise,
triumph o'er the shades of night.
Dayspring from on high, be near;
Daystar, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee;
joyless is the day's return,
till thy mercy's beams I see,
till thy inward light impart,
glad my eyes and warm my heart.

Visit, then, this soul of mine;
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me, radiance divine;
scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day

We go in peace to live and work to God's
praise and glory. Thanks be to God! Amen.