



Our Opening Prayer.

Living God, we do not find it easy to live by faith. We want some idea of what the future holds, some assurance that things will work out as we hope.

Teach us that the future is ultimately in your hands, so help us to seek your will before all else and to trust that, whatever life, or death, may bring you will lead us safely through.

In Jesus Christ's name.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

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

Bible Reading Lk 2:25-38 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy

Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

This week at the end of the season of Christmas and Epiphany we go to the account of when the baby Jesus was taken by Mary and Joseph to the Temple. It was the Jewish religious custom then to take your firstborn baby to the temple to be dedicated to God. This goes back to the time of Moses when firstborn children were to serve God in the temple and community throughout their lives. But in fact, the Levites (descendants of Levi) actually served in the place of all newborn males in Israel.

This coming Sunday, February 2nd is when many churches celebrate Candlemas which is traditionally the 40th day of (and the conclusion of) the Christmas season. Candlemas is when, in some churches, many candles are lit and it commemorates the presentation of Jesus at the Temple of Jerusalem. It marks the return of light, a symbol of protection and truth revealed - the coming of Jesus 'the light of the world.'

After the elderly Simeon had seen the baby Jesus Simeon says to God "now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation..... a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." He knows for certain that the baby that he holds in his arms has come from God. Simeon then says these prophetic words to Mary: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a

sword will pierce your own soul too." Words that came true for Mary at the foot of the Cross.

Anna was also there, a prophetess who was eighty -four years old. She also acknowledged the baby Jesus as being the Christ and said that the moment all the people had been looking forward to had arrived.

These two elderly people then had lived with an expectation throughout their lives that God would come to them in a physical form that had been prophesied in their ancient scriptures scripture which is now our Old Testament. Can you imagine just how overjoyed they both were to have lived long enough for their hopes to have come true, and the feeling it gave them that they could now be at peace.

All of us can experience that same peace of mind today knowing that Jesus did come into our world and he really is alive through God's Holy Spirit in us. That knowledge of God through the small baby Jesus brought Simeon and Anna purpose to their lives, as the living presence of Jesus brings meaning and purpose to our lives today.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

Living God, I praise you for the assurance that your will shall be done and your purpose will finally triumph. Teach me then to live each moment with total confidence in the light of your Son Jesus Christ my Lord.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett