

Soulby Prayers from Rev Jean Wright. 2/2/2021.

Preparation

O be joyful, in the Lord, all the earth;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.

Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and bless his name.

For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting,
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Psalm 100

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.

Today 2nd February is Candlemas Day when the Church remembers how Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to be Presented to the Lord according to the law of Moses. He was recognised as the promised Saviour by Simeon and Anna

The Collect for this day:

Almighty and everlasting 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 us alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Reading from Luke ch 2

v. 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...

v 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, then as a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day...

Reflection

Old age is not seen as something to look forward to yet for these two old people, Simeon and Anna, the best thing in their lives happened in their old age. Throughout their lives they had held to their faith in God's promises. For them this meant trusting that one day God would keep his promises to his people and send a Saviour. Simeon had kept so close to God that he had been promised that he would not die until he had seen this Saviour and it was when Jesus was brought into the temple that the spirit within witnessed to Simeon that this was the promised Saviour.

Likewise, after the death of her husband Anna devoted herself entirely to God living the life of something like a nun, worshipping the Lord in the temple with prayer and fasting night and day, like Simeon never losing her trust and faith that God would send a Saviour. She too recognised this Saviour when the baby Jesus was brought into the temple. Ongoing faith and trust in God played a part in the old age of these two people.

They remind me of my Grandmother whose old age played a part in my life. I was in my twenties when my Grandmother was living through her old age. Crippled with arthritis much of her life was spent in her chair, the longest journey she made was from that chair to her bedroom. In contrast my life was so different. I was young healthy, active. I had just got married, enjoying the new home with my husband, driving to work every day to teach, active here there and every where. I wondered what meaning my Grandmother could get out of life living with all her limitations.

God must have a purpose she said for me going on living. Like Simeon and Anna she brought a faith into her old age. She probably never knew in this life how her old age affected me.

I realised that everything that made up my life at that time my Grandmother had had once but now it was gone. She once had been young and active and healthy. She had had a husband and a busy life as a farmer's wife bringing up four children. She had once enjoyed the various homes she had lived in. But now both body and house were burdens. I realised that if I lived as long as she had lived, for me too all that was making up my life at that time would go also. Youth, health, activity, career, I too would be a widow by then no doubt. But I also realised that all that made up my life at that time could be gone in an instant. There was no guarantee that there would be no illness, accident, bereavement or other sudden change in my circumstances. As I realised the transitory nature of all human life I realised that it made no sense to me if

I could not believe in something eternal, something that was not transitory. I could only live the life I was living if I lived it with faith in the eternal God. Even if I became a mere vegetable on a bed, I thought, God would still be there.

My Grandmother's faith enabled her to live through her old age with meaning. Like Simeon and Anna, she trusted in God's loving purposes.

She did not live to see the effect her old age had in bringing me closer to God. Simeon and Anna did not live to see the unfolding purposes of God brought about by the coming of the Saviour. As we put our faith and trust in the God revealed to us in Christ, that faith and trust will never be in vain. We will know something of God's love and faithfulness in this life but there is always a wider picture which we cannot yet see but in which we are playing a part.

Prayers of Confession

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world, he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Let us bring our failures to love and follow Him as we ought into his light and confess them in penitence and faith.

Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past: and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon us, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Creator God and ruler of the nations we bring our troubled world to you; a world where many do not know or recognize the Saviour you have sent.

Redeemer God, we bring your Church to you; the Body of Christ called to bring your Word to all peoples. Renew her with a fresh outpouring of your Spirit that all may hear your living Word. We pray that your Word may fall on good soil and that lives may be changed. Bless all who continue to prepare Worship and Sermons each week; we pray that these may encourage the faithful and nourish the seeds that fall on new ground. May the lives of all who confess your name be united in your truth, live together in your love and so reveal you in the communities where we live.

We give thanks for the Queen; bless her and give strength and wisdom to the leaders of our nation, guide them in the decisions they are called to make; make your ways known on earth and your saving health among all nations. We give thanks for the vaccines that are being given and pray for all working to administer them quickly and fairly.

We bring to you those working in our hospitals and surgeries and on the ambulances; all carers wherever they are. All teachers. Where they are feeling overwhelmed by their burdens of sickness and death or pressures of work give them rest and renewed strength.

Bring comfort to all who are anxious or lonely or sick in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope. May we recognize the opportunities given to us to meet their needs.

We bring to you all who are grieving the loss of loved ones..... we remember with thanksgiving those we have known who have died..... those who have confessed the faith and those whose faith is known to you alone..... Grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Let us conclude our prayers by saying the prayer our Lord gave us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.....**

Lord, bring us to this day's ending
blessed through having shared the day's beginning;
may God keep us in the Spirit's care
and lead our lives with love.
May Christ's warm welcome
shine from our hearts
and Christ's own peace prevail
through this and every day.

Amen