

# CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 241

## Candlemas Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’**

### Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Candlemas Sunday.

### Scripture Passage

*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 <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

<sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

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

<sup>36</sup> 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, <sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

<sup>39</sup> When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

## Reflection

I don't know, because I couldn't be bothered Googling it, why dying is sometimes called kicking the bucket, but the expression gave birth to another - the Bucket List, which is your personal list of things to do before you kick the bucket. You've probably got one, even if you've never written it down. Things to do before you die. I'm 74 for the next six weeks, so I've left it too late to have a record in the top ten, swim Mount Everest or climb the channel, but there's still things I want to achieve before the Lord calls me home.

Simeon had a very short bucket list - 1: See the Lord's Messiah, 2: er, that's it/ God's chosen one. He'd been promised that he would see him before he died. In South Cadbury church there's a small stained glass window of Simeon, and he's shown as an old man, and tradition usually has it that he was. But Luke doesn't tell us so. Anna, we're told, was very old at eighty four, and I guess that was *very* old in those days, but we're not told what age Simeon was.

He had been promised by God that he would live to see the Messiah, and he said, holding the baby Jesus in his arms, that he could now die content. But he might only have been thirty five, say, and realised that however long he lived, life wasn't going to get any better than this. Meeting the chosen one! Wow! what could top that? So now he can get on with his life, get that law degree, marry and have children, learn Italian. Whatever. But he would always know that however long he lived, nothing as important and wonderful as this was ever going to happen to him again.

That's my speculation, but let's follow tradition, and take it that Simeon was indeed well on in years. What did he learn from his meeting with Jesus, who was, after all, very small at the time?

He learned that God can be trusted to keep his promises. We don't know how God made the promise - vision, dream, voice in his head, but Simeon trusted him. And one day, he had the urge - the Holy Spirit prompting him - to go into the temple, where he knew - just knew - however long it took, he trusted God to keep his word, in his own good time.

Time to point something out. Simeon must have had a good relationship with God, so that when God spoke to him, he recognised him. Would I recognise God speaking to me? I have weird dreams sometimes, but if I dreamed God was telling me something, would I accept it, or just think it was part of the general strangeness of dreams? And I'm not, if I'm honest, expecting God to speak to me directly. But Simeon was good, and devout, and in tune with God, and had his reward.

So we come to Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. Eighty four, widowed for a long time, and lived in the Temple, which was quite possible, because in the court of the Gentiles, there were food stalls, and latrines, and prayer was what she did. There used to be a sort of hermit in this country - they were called anchorites, or anchoresses, and they lived in sealed-up cells in the walls of churches, praying and worshipping. Very odd, we might

think, but above the North porch in North Cadbury church, there is a little room where an old lady lived as recently as the late nineteenth century. She came and went - she wasn't locked in, but the church porch was her home. She smoked her cigarettes through a holder carved from a hare's leg bone, which is kept in the church safe.

When she saw the little family in the Temple, Anna recognised Jesus for who he was, and pointed him out to anyone who would listen - anyone who was waiting for God to set Jerusalem free. Sixty years since the Roman general Pompey took the city, and there were plenty of people who looked for just the man with charisma to push the Romans out again. They'd done it before, when the Greeks were driven out by Jewish rebels led by Judas Maccabeus. Why couldn't that happen again?

But there's setting free, and there's setting free. God's people would be set free, not from Roman rule - that wouldn't happen until the empire itself collapsed - but from the burden of sin, and guilt, and the domination of the Law, for all who would accept that.

Don't carry around that feeling you're not good enough. You're free from that. Yes I'm a sinner, but I'm a forgiven sinner. I'm free from that. And when I come before God to be judged, yes I will be found guilty, but Jesus will show the parking ticket with *paid in full* stamped on it, and I'm free.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph kept the Law, which is why they were in the Temple in the first place. Do you recall the story of Samuel? His mother, Hannah, prayed so hard for a child, and when God answered her prayer, she gave Samuel to God. Most Jewish mothers bought their child back, but Hannah didn't. She really did give him to God. He lived in the tabernacle with Eli the priest, and she only saw him once a year to give him new clothes. I find that really strange, and sad.

Every firstborn Jewish child belonged to God, and his parents went through

the process of buying him back. The price was two doves, so the value of two doves was paid to the temple, kerching! and the doves were taken to the priest who would kill them, and burn them as an offering to God. Sounds strange? To us, yes, but a thousand years of tradition lay behind it. So Mary and Joseph weren't just good, they were *righteous* - in Jewish terms, they kept the Law. And Jesus, when he came to be baptised by John, did so to "do all that God requires" - coming alongside his people, showing his Jewishness.

We sometimes call this day, the Sunday nearest February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Candlemas, and the church has traditions of celebrating with lights, to remember that Jesus is, in the words of Simeon, *a light to reveal God's will to the Gentiles*. Because from that very early point in his life, Jesus was recognised as being a Saviour, Liberator, Messiah, not just for the Jews, but for the whole world. In school assembly, when we used to light a candle at the start of assembly, the children would say that it's to *remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World*.

So a quick sum up. God can be trusted to keep his promises, whether it's not to flood the whole world, or to see us safe into eternal life if we trust him. We are home free, because Jesus has taken our punishment for us.

And Jesus is the light of the world - the world, not just the Jewish people, but for us, too.

Ron

## **Points for Prayers**

- Recognising Jesus as the light of the world
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Yemen, Israel, Gaza and the Ukraine

- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers and children of North Cadbury church school

## **Hymn**

One hymn we are singing this Sunday is 'Lord Jesus Christ you have come to us, you are one with us, Mary's son.'

## **Services for this week and next**

Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> February	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> February	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> February	11.00 am Candlemas Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton

## **Excalibur online**

The February edition of Excalibur has now been published online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://camelotparishes.co.uk). It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

## **The Parish Office**

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him via email ([office@camelotparishes.org.uk](mailto:office@camelotparishes.org.uk)) or on 01749 850934.

*Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family*

*We pray that 'we might live in love,  
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5: 2)