

## The Presentation of Christ/Candlemas 2015

We are ending our celebrations of the birth of Christ. The time when God could, and did become a human being, a real baby, belonging to a particular couple, whose names we know, who lived in a known place, who followed the rules of their day.

Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem 40 days after his birth to complete Mary's ritual purification after the birth and to perform the redemption of the first born son, in obedience to the law of Moses (eg Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:12-15) Luke explicitly says that Joseph and Mary used the option for poor people (those who couldn't afford a lamb) and sacrificed a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Whilst at the Temple they met Simeon, who after recognising that the prophecy made to him was being fulfilled prophesied to Mary "Behold this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against. Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." The elderly prophetess Anna was also in the Temple, and offered prayers and praise to God for Jesus, and spoke to everyone there about Jesus and his role in the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:36-38).

All the readings today remind us that Jesus comes as Redeemer and Saviour but also as "The refiner's fire" the "purifier of silver", there will be judgement we hear quite clearly in Malachi. In Paul's letter to the Hebrews we are told that "he did not come to help angels but the children of Abraham." So Jesus came to free us from death by dying on the cross for our sins.

He is the light of the world, he is love, we are asked to carry his light to others, the ones who may not find it otherwise. By carrying his light we carry his love. We are children of Abraham, we sin, if we repent Jesus will carry our sins for us on the cross, this is the pain for Mary predicted by Simeon. The one who will bring hope to the world, to Israel will be rejected in the worst way possible, being put to death on the cross. And yet, it doesn't end there because of the resurrection, we have the knowledge of resurrection for ourselves. The covenant of God is fulfilled in Jesus, his people will be brought home to his loving arms.

We are warned by Simeon though, that we can't hide our sins from God, we can't use rituals, formulaic prayers, good deeds, church work if our hearts aren't right, because God knows us through and through, he knows when we are trying to be right with him, he knows when we are relying on good behaviour rather than love for God and for others.

So, as children of Abraham, rather than angels, we celebrate the light coming into the world, we celebrate that we have the chance of redemption, we celebrate the fulfilling of God's word to his people and we praise and thank God for his love for us that is revealed to us by the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection.