



**The Benefice of the Piddle Valley,
Hilton and Ansty, Cheselbourne and Melcombe Horsey**

Sunday 3rd February 2019

Candlemas – Presentation of Christ

Altar Colour – White/Gold

Psalm 24: (1-6) 7-10;

Hebrews 2: 14-18

Introduction and Prayer of Blessing:

Forty days ago we celebrated the joyful feast of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we recall the holy day on which he was presented in the temple, fulfilling the Law of Moses and at the same time going to meet his faithful people. Led by the Spirit, Simeon and Anna came to the temple, recognised Christ as their Lord, and proclaimed him with joy. United by the Spirit, may we now go to the house of God to welcome Christ the Lord. There we shall recognize him in the breaking of bread until he comes again in glory.

Let us pray. God our Father, source of all light, today you revealed to Simeon your Light of revelation to the nations. Bless + these candles and make them holy, that we who observe their light in your temple may come with joy to the light of glory. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Collect: Almighty and ever-living 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 is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Malachi 3:1-5 (ESV) - *The Messenger of the LORD*

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.”

Comment: Malachi 3:1-5 is a passage often quoted in connection with John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17,76; 7:27). But the reference connecting with the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is the second rather than first part of 3:1: "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." This of course is a connection utilised by the lectionary compilers and not one used by Luke. The passage in its own right is striking. The Lord is judge, is its theme. This judge is concerned to refine and purify 'the descendants of Levi' (verse 3b), that is, the priests who run the temple. Then the offering of the city and nation, 'Judah and Jerusalem' will please the Lord (verse 3c). Yet the judgment of God is not single focused, as though sorting out the temple is sufficient to please the Lord. Verse 5 is a challenging indictment of a range of wrong behaviours, with a very strong condemnation of those who treat others unjustly and without mercy. Between temple and community, religion and society, ancient Judah is forthrightly spoken to by God through his prophet.

Luke 2:22-40 (ESV) - *Jesus Presented at the Temple*

And 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 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

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The Return to Nazareth

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him.

Comment: When the infant Jesus is brought to the temple no one really knows or understands that 'the King of glory', as described in the psalm, has come into the temple. Simeon and Anna have some understanding. They have prayerfully waited for 'the Lord's Messiah' (Luke 2: 26). What actually happened at 'the presentation of Jesus in the Temple'? The Mosaic Law does speak about 'sanctification of the first born to God's possession' (Exodus 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19; Numbers 3:13) but this was no longer taken literally, the tribe of Levi having been set aside for the LORD's permanent possession instead (Numbers 8:17 following). An alternative of paying five shekels to a priest existed, but there was no requirement that this was paid at the Temple in Jerusalem. Luke anchors this story in the Law (2:22-24,39) and it appears that Joseph and Mary were being devout in taking up a cue from the law. Thus we read about a presentation which fits the circumstances of Jesus' conception and birth: an extraordinary beginning to his life and magnificent welcome via angels and shepherds. What devout parents in such a situation would not take their child to the Temple of the Lord? It is always worth pondering the faithfulness of Simeon and Anna. Who among us can wait so patiently on the Lord for his will to be done and his word to be fulfilled?

Short Preface: And now we give you thanks because, by appearing in the Temple, he comes near to us in judgement; the Word made flesh searches the hearts of all your people and brings to light the brightness of your splendour.

Post Communion: Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna, who lived to welcome the Messiah: may we, who have received these gifts beyond words, prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes to bring us to eternal life; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing: Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**



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Benefice Prayer Requests.

Please pray for:

Those who have been affected by the winter weather;

Colin Webb and for his family, Meg & Roger Gray.

June Kellaway, Robin & Victoria Maslin and children.

For Fay Lord and Terry Jeanes, Ted and his daughter Sue,

Michelle Simpson, Ann Lambert, Chrissie Combes; For

Betty – Hillary and Jane, Rev'd Deb Smith, For Mel, Isaac

and Iona Hazlehurst, For Janet Keen and family. For Susan Belgrave's family.

For the many care givers in our community who quietly go providing care for their loved ones, who are suffering.



Requiescant in pace – Susan Belgrave, from Piddlehinton.

Arthur Lane, from Melcombe Bingham (and formerly Hilton)

Funeral arrangements to follow.

Foodbank: *Please remember to bring a tin/packet a week* over the winter months to support those who are in need. *This week I have delivered food from Alton Pancras and Hilton – Thank you.*

What's going on around the Benefice!

Thursday 7th February: 9.30am: Morning Prayer, Coffee and a Chat with the Rector at Hilton:

7th February 9am Hilton



Thursday 7th February: 9.30am

Morning Prayer @ Piddlehinton with Alan Neades. This is a weekly service.

Stepping Stones Home Group: meets twice a month on a Tuesday evening at 7.30pm, at Orchard Cottage, Melcombe Bingham. (Richard and Julie Saunders on 01258 880585.) ***All Welcome.***

Next Sunday's Services

<u>10th February 2019</u>	<u>4th Sunday before Lent</u>
<i>Altar Colour – Green</i>	8.30am Holy Communion (BCP) at Hilton
Isaiah 6: 1-8 [9-end]	9.30am Family Eucharist at Alton Pancras
Psalm 138	11.00am Parish Communion at Melcombe Horsey
1 Cor. 15: 1-11	6.00pm Sung Evensong (BCP) at Piddlehinton
Luke 5: 1-11	