

# St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church, Kirkcaldy

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*Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Christmas 1*

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*Introit Hymn:* Once in Royal David's City

*Welcome:* Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Collect for Purity:* **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Gloria:* **Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

*Collect:* Almighty God, you have shed upon us the new light of your incarnate Word. May this light, enkindled in our hearts, shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

*Collect SPB:* Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

*First reading:* Isaiah 61. 10-62. 3 (SPB Hebrews 1.1)

*Second reading:* Galatians 4. 4-7

*Gradual hymn:* In the bleak midwinter

*Gospel acclamation:* **Alleluia! Alleluia! We are called God's children, and that is what we are. Alleluia!**

*Gospel:* Luke 2. 22-40 (SPB St John 1.1)

*Homily:*

Well, here we are, two days past Christmas. And for most people, the presents have been opened, we may have been able to visit with family and friends and if we haven't yet taken down the decorations, we are thinking about doing so. The excitement of Christmas day, the day that we have been looking forward to for so long, has been decreased and we linger in these post-Christmas days using or wearing our presents, and wondering how our waist lines have increased.

And so, it might feel a bit strange hearing the gospel reading chosen for today. Luke is the only gospel writer who includes the words of Simeon. Simeon's words which are often referred to as Simeon's song are sometimes sung after receiving communion. "Now Lord, you let your servant go in peace." Some of us might find these words a bit strange this soon after Christmas Day.....a day in which we focus on birth and life. Why are we now hearing about an old man who is talking about going in peace.....who is talking about death. What just happened here?

According to Luke, it is now forty days after the birth of Jesus. In keeping with Jewish tradition, after reaching his eighth day Jesus has been circumcised and named, and now thirty two days later, he is returning to the Temple in order to be consecrated to the Lord. And before the consecration could take place, here comes Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit he takes the infant Jesus in his arms and praises God using the words that we now know as Simeon's song.

Mary and Joseph must have been a little alarmed at this knowing full well that this was not part of the consecration ceremony. But they did not interfere or demand to have their baby back perhaps because they sensed the Holy Spirit upon Simeon. And while Simeon holds, with awe, the infant Jesus he speaks these strange words:

"master now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Put in a nutshell, Simeon is asking to die. So why does Luke find it important to put this story right after the birth of Jesus.

In fact, Christmas can be a very sad and hurtful time of year for many people who are missing someone they used to share the Christmas joy with. Perhaps a Christmas carol, a favorite food, a particular decoration or some other Christmas memory brings the hurt right back to the surface and you feel the raw emotion as the tears burn in your eyes. And we can easily imagine that Simeon, being an old man, has also experienced the pain of losing loved ones.....he knows full well that death doesn't take vacations.

And Simeon is able to stand in the temple holding this precious baby in his arms while speaking words of praise to God even as he knocks at death's door, because this precious baby has come into the world in order to defeat death once and for all. Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, knows full well who he is holding in his hands. So there he stands, able to praise God while he accepts the death that awaits him. He knows that he is holding God's promise in his very hands.....a small bundle to be sure, but a small bundle that carries with him a promise of immense value. A promise that allows us to be able to look at death through the lens of the cross, knowing that death does not have the last say.....knowing that we now have hope.....hope that helps when a memory comes to us of someone whom we badly miss. Death without hope means that we live in despair. Death, being defeated once and for all by the birth of hope into the world, while it still stings, does not consume us completely. Death with hope lets us look at it as a temporary impediment.....a temporary pain that will be turned around into joyful reunions at some point in the future.

Yes, great things can come from small packages. Like a small seed that is planted in the ground, growing into a beautiful flower or a mighty tree. As the plant or small tree breaks through the soil it speaks of what the gardener may hope for in the next weeks and months and years.

Just like a seed sprouting up through the soil.....and just like the power that comes from a small gift, our readings for today talk about big dreams that have grown from events that seem barely significant in everyday life. Isaiah talks about signs that righteousness and praise will spring up even among the Gentiles. For the psalmist, praise of the Lord extends from likely sources such as the heavens and the angels to sources where it can hardly be imagined.....such as from sea monsters and foreign rulers.

Simeon and Anna are old when the baby Jesus is tiny and new. As these two prophets share a moment's time with this precious baby, they see in him not just the hope of the next generation, but the hope that Israel and the nations might together reflect the light and glory of God. All through the gospels Jesus busies himself with many small, seemingly insignificant actions.....such as spending time with the sick, eating with tax collectors and the rest of the despised people, and taking children into his arms. Like Simeon and Anna who spent just a moments time with the baby, we glimpse these moments in Jesus' life, and we see in them the beginning of a whole new world.....we see in them, hope. And we rejoice, that centuries later, this small bundle, this tiny present to the world, cares for us just as he did for Simeon and Anna, making us all children of God.

In a few moments at the Lord's table, we will receive a small amount of bread. We speak of this small meal as enacting our union with Christ and one another, one body with many members. Here, just like in Simeon's arms, God's salvation appears in a tiny package and makes all things new. There in your outstretched hands is placed hope.....there in your very hands is God's promise to you.....there against your lips you taste the reason to sing praises to God just as an old man did centuries ago. Thanks be to God for amazing power found in small packages. Amen.

*Nicene Creed:* We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one substance with the Father. Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father.  
With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*Intercessions:* *Composed and prayed on behalf of the congregation by a member of the Intercessors Group*

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, help us to pray for the life of the world; that your peace may be known and may prevail, and help us to keep the bright spirit of Christmas the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ with us throughout the coming year guiding us to do what is your will for us

Illuminate and cleanse the dark corners of the world where hang the cobwebs of apathy and the dust of neglect; shine on faces made grim by poverty, natural disaster and war; melt the icicles of despair and the hard frozen wastes of selfishness; and let your searching rays enclose the whole world in one great radiance. Christ born in a stable, give courage to all who are homeless and grant peace on earth to all who are oppressed.

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For all who exercise rule and authority; that they may acknowledge your power: For nations, for leaders and governments; that integrity may mark all their dealings. Christ before whom the wise men knelt, give humility and wisdom to all who govern.

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

In our Diocese we pray for the College of Bishops, for Bishop Mark, the Primus, and for our Diocesan Bishop Ian and for St Kessog, Auclerarder with St James Muthill and Tracy Dowling who serves there. Here we pray for Christine our Rector and all who help with ministry. Far away we pray for Archbishop Stephen of Burma and the Karen people in Northern Thailand.

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those members of our congregation who are unable to be with us this morning, For all who are sick or recovering from illness. For the anxious, the lonely, the bereaved and those who mourn. At this time we look forward to the coming of the coronavirus vaccine in the coming months and a brighter and happier 2021 when we may all travel safely once more to visit friends and family.

For those who are separated from us by death; that theirs may be the kingdom which is unshakeable, From our year's mind remembering Alan Ward, Albert Fowler and Jean (Jon) Caleri and in a time of silence, let us remember all those who we have loved but may see no longer in this life .....

Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manager give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.

Lord Jesus Christ, child of Mary you know us and love us, you share our lives and hear our prayer. Glory to you for ever.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

### *Confession*

*and Absolution:*

God is love and we are his children. There is no room for fear in love.  
We love because he loved us first. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

### *Silence*

**God our Father, we confess to you  
and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ  
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed,  
and in what we have failed to do.**

**We are truly sorry.**

**Forgive us our sins,  
and deliver us from the power of evil.**

**For the sake of your Son who died for us,  
Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

(May) God, who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins,  
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Peace:*

We meet in Christ's Name let us share his peace.

*Offertory hymn:*

The first Nowell

*Communion Prayer:*

God of infinite mercy. We thank you for Jesus our Saviour who feeds his people and gives them eternal life. Though we cannot consume the gifts of bread and wine we thank you that we do receive Christ's saving presence, the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his passion. Grant that we may continue for ever in the risen and ascended life of our Saviour. Amen.

*(This prayer is said during the online Provincial service).*

*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.

*Communion hymn:* Silent Night

*Prayer after Communion:*

**Source of truth and joy, may we who have received the gift of divine life  
always follow the way of your Son. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ  
the Lord. Amen.**

*Blessing:* Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and  
obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*Dismissal:* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
In the name of Christ. Amen.

*Recessional hymn:* Unto us a boy is born

### **7pm Candle Prayer**

**I have lit a candle, Lord,  
and in the stillness  
within its flame  
I glimpse your light.  
I have lit a candle, Lord,  
and in the stillness  
within its warmth  
I sense your love.  
I have lit a candle, Lord,  
and in the stillness  
of this moment  
I bring my prayer  
Amen**