



**Lord Jesus Christ,
light of the nations and glory of Israel: make
your home among us, and present us pure and holy to your
heavenly Father, your God, and our God. Amen.**

Psalm 24 Malachi 3 v 1-5 Luke 2 v 22-40

Today we remember that Jesus was presented in the Holy Temple. The Temple was a symbol of God's presence. Solomon originally built the Temple however it was destroyed in the Exile and then rebuilt.

But why a temple- doesn't God's presence fill the whole of creation? Yes- in Genesis we hear that God's presence fills creation as God rests and rules. What is interesting is that the creation stories speak of God bringing order in seven speeches and seven days. In the stories of the Temple there are also seven speeches recorded in seven days! The Temple was painted with images of Eden. The Menorah candlestick in the temple was used as a symbol of the tree of life – God dwells with his people and it is a place of delight. As people were asked to work and keep Eden, so God's priests and Kings worked and ruled with God's presence.

However, we know because it is a repeated Biblical theme that humans want to rule on their own...

The book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and was written 100 years after the Israelites had returned from Babylonian Exile to Jerusalem. The Holy Temple was rebuilt. People were hopeful that the Messiah would come and unity would reign. However, poverty and injustice continued.

The structure of the book is a conversation between God and the Israelites. God confronts their corruption, accuses the people of bringing poor offerings that dishonour God, accuses the men of divorcing the wives for no good reason and shows them their selfishness. The tithe was not being paid so the Temple was falling into disrepair. The people ask God but where is your justice? God responds by saying turn back to me and reminds them that

scriptures tell the truth about the human condition of selfishness *and* the promise that God will bring restoration and healing justice and send a messenger.

For Christians, Jesus is that messenger, full of God's presence, fulfilling God's rule in his own life, death and resurrection. Jesus promised that after his resurrection God's presence would dwell in and among those who believed through the Holy Spirit. The New Testament Letters speak of believers being filled with the Holy Spirit and their bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit. The early church were communities of people where God rested and ruled- 'living stones.'

The Good news is that we are a bodily temple in which God dwells. We offer our intelligence and care, our material belongings and our very selves to God to be 'light' in our communities and our wider world.

As you read about Jesus being presented before God in the Temple, think about how you can present yourself to God who loves you. Can you bring before God those parts of yourself that you hide? Can you bring before God those parts of yourself that you value? You may also like to think 'How am I presenting God to others in my everyday choices?'

Lord make your home in me.

Revd Becky

CANDLEMAS and THE PRESENTATION

There are several very good hymns suitable for today. You might like to read them, in a hymn book or on the Internet

- the traditional *Hail to the Lord who comes, Thou whose almighty Word, or The people that in darkness sat;*
- Bishop Timothy's gentle *Faithful vigil ended,* or Robert Willis's excellent *In a world where people walk in darkness;*
- *Shine, Jesus, shine* for those who like that style; or the one below:

Elizabeth Cosnett (b. 17/5/36), a Past President of the Hymn Society, has spent virtually all her life in Liverpool, as child, student, secondary-school teacher and University Lecturer. Her MA Dissertation was on "The Poet as a Hymn Writer", concentrating on Robert Bridges and William Cowper. Her Hymn for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is in the New A & M, together with all the others listed above.

Elizabeth clearly wrote the words with the tune in mind. There are thirteen two-line verses, each with a two-line refrain. Verses 8 - 12, omitted below, look ahead to the Crucifixion and "peace at the last". Verse 13 is really part of that sequence, but I have left it in because it is so good. The tune is *Lourdes, or Immaculate Mary*, notated in France 34 years after Bernadette's first vision at Lourdes. It is so simple that anyone can pick it up instantly, like a Taizé chant. The whole hymn would be ideal for children.

When candles are lighted on Candlemas Day
the dark is behind us, and spring's on the way.

REFRAIN *A glory dawns in every dark place,
The light of Christ, the fullness of grace.*

The kings have departed, the shepherds are gone,
the Child and his parents are left on their own. *R.*

They go to the temple, obeying the law,
and offer two pigeons, the gift of the poor. *R.*

But Anna and Simeon recognise there
the Christ-child who came at the turn of the year. *R.*

The old who have suffered and waited so long
see hope for the world as they welcome the young. *R.*

They gaze at God's wonderful answer to prayer,
the joy of the Jews and the Gentiles' desire. *R.*

The light is increasing, and spring's in the air.
Look back with thanksgiving! Look forward with awe! *R.*

The candles invite us to praise and to pray
when Christmas greets Easter on Candlemas Day, *R.*

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The next theme in the Old Testament series is Moses and the Torah. You may like to watch the Bible Projects short 7 minute videos about Exodus 1-18 whose major theme is EXODUS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E&feature=emb_logo and Exodus 19-40 whose major theme is COVENANT

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNpTha80yyE&feature=emb_imp_woyt Or you may like to look at the overview of the TaNaK <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALsluAKBZ-c> Torah= instruction, Prophets and Writings. (Ten minutes well worth the time!)

