Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Alison Heal on Sunday 1st February 2026

Bible passage: Luke 2: 22-40

Reading 1: 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 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), 24 and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

25 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. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.[f] 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon[g] came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon[h] took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 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 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too."

Walking into Jerusalem temple… different to walking into All Saints Luxembourg

into All Saints, downstairs door, odd entrance way, office building. first visit, come to the right place?

When Mary and Joseph walked into the grand temple in Jerusalem with their firstborn son, Jesus, … knew they'd come to the right place. … been there before… wasn't their regular place of worship. animals for sale. cheapest option, a pair of pigeons, … couldn't come before God without a sacrifice.

So the animals for sale, and the needing to come to God with an animal sacrifice, are a huge difference, an experience we're never really going to have today.

difference … temples aren't really places to sit down in. We're all sitting here, we get up to sing, we sit down to listen, pray and that's not what worship was like in the temple. Different things would be happening… different parts of the temple, all at the same time. In our snapshot of this key moment in the temple, a poor family was bringing their firstborn son to be dedicated to God, and symbolically 'buying him back' through their sacrifice, and an old lady in another corner of the temple could be praying completely different prayers. Actually that old lady is there, in another part of the temple complex, waiting for us to hear her story in a moment.

But in this reading we meet a man, probably an older man, but certainly a man very used to coming into the temple, in tune with what God was doing, could get up and go when the Holy Spirit told.

..that's a similarity, between the temple and our All Saints community. … long term members and … recent arrivals. … people who pop in every day… week, and there are occasional visitors. .. tiny babies, growing children, single people, families, older and more experienced people. faithful families bringing their children before God, faithful older people listening to what God is saying to them.

In story today we meet Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Simeon…a turning point in those lives. Simeon, waiting for God to begin his saving work in the world. Mary and Joseph know that their baby Jesus is that rescuer ('he will save his people'), not much idea about how.

don't have all the answers, but Mary and Joseph go along to the temple to faithfully do rituals their faith requires. Simeon faithfully waits, prays, looks and listens for signs of God at work in the world.

wham, Simeon appears, disrupt this routine ritual offering. Presumaby asks permission, takes baby into arms, thanks God, recognises God's plan of rescue through Jesus, blesses the parents and then speaks these sharp, piercing words to Mary, how her son will bring falling and rising to many, and a sword will pierce her own soul.

Only have to look to the crucifix on the wall here, to know what Simeon was talking about

A faithful ritual… a moment of prophecy breaks through.

How would that seem in our own lives? Prefer the faithful repetition of worship which shapes us into the people God needs us to be? The surprising and unexpected action of his Holy Spirit?

Or is it reasonable to state a preference? Maybe we're called to both. The faithful, daily, weekly attendance to God's word and worshiop. AND waiting for the prophetic, the unexpected.

Hold that thought, going to listen to the next person in this temple story:

Reading 2:

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, 37 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. 38 At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child[1] to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

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

Here's our elderly lady in the corner, Anna, prayer warrior. Woman who's come through loss, made a new life for herself, allowed God to shape the last 40 or 50 years of her life through rhythms of temple worship.

Like M and J, knows how important acts of repeated ritual, worship, prayer and study…

Like Simeon, knows how to act outside normal rhythms when Holy Spirit calls

Not an either-or person, not someone who wants *either* regular patterns or the surprising

Someone who has learned over decades to trust God in both, routine and unexpected

Like Simeon, Anna senses HS leading her to Jesus. Similar message, shared to *many*: child is God's redeemer, saviour, rescuer. Again, look to that crucifix, then look to our empty cross, to know where the HS is pointing Anna,

PAUSE

What did Mary, Joseph and Jesus do after this extraordinary series of events, evebts beginning with the stories we read at Christmas, and ending with this presentation in the Jerusalem temple?

We know from the other gospels, may have had more unexpected times, visit from kings, period as refugees in Egypt. But then, things settle down, and they head back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

They settle down and follow the routines of life, the routines of their faith. Faithful Jews, don't separate daily life from faith. As Jesus grows, strengthens, filled with wisdom. Not wisdom that comes out of the blue. Comes from these home practices of prayer, studying the scriptures, weekly worship, as well as from the power of the Holy Spirit in his unique life.

All Saints this year, sensing this call to get deeper into patterns of daily prayer and studying the Bible. Bibles to give away. We can be like Mary, Joseph, Jesus and Anna, allowing God to shape us through daily immersion. Can we also be like Simeon and Anna, those wise older people, allow God's Holy Spirit to break through in unexpected and the new, as well as the ritual and the routine?

In Jesus, in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, God rescued the world. That crucifix shows us the last time a sacrifice was ever needed. This empty cross shows us how Jesus grew up to become everything Simeon and Anna hoped for, and more.

God shapes our lives through the ways we turn to him, to be formed by regular commitments. God shapes our lives through our openness to the work of his Holy Spirit.

Mary, Joseph, Anna and Simeon had the advantage of a culture shaped by ritual and expectation. But God has transforming work to do in you and me, too. God calls us to action, to take steps beyond hearing about what he *can* do, to putting ourselves into a position where he *will* do it *in us*. Today is a challenge for you to respond to his call. We have several ways you can respond: you can sign up for our Alpha course online, starting next month. You can take a Bible if you don't have one, and use the links in e-news to follow a daily rhythm of prayer and Bible Study. By doing one of these, you're taking a tangible step to let God's call bear fruit in your life. It's a commitment to let God work in you, as he worked in Anna and Simeon, as he worked in Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Don't let this moment pass: choose to act and see how God moves in response.