

2

Even if no salvation should come, I want to be worthy of it at every moment.

Franz Kafka, 1883–1924

3

We sinned for no reason but an incomprehensible lack of love, and he saved us for no reason but an incomprehensible excess of love.

Jesus-Shock / Peter Kreeft. 2008

4

The salvation of man is through love and in love

Man's search for meaning / Viktor E. Frankl. 1946

Related topics

For further study:

Mystery of Christ; incarnation; evangelisation; ecumenism

Closing Prayer

Inspired by your Spirit, Lord,
we gather in your temple to welcome your Son.

Enlighten our minds
and lay bare our inmost thoughts.
Purify your people, and make us obedient
to the demands of your law,
so that we may mature in wisdom
and grow to full stature in your grace.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers. 2 February⁵

CPL • Presentation of Christ B.odt • 2020-12-22

⁵ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

4

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) • 2 February (or Sunday between 28 January and 3 February)

Principal Service readings

Malachi 3.1-5	Suddenly the Lord will come to his temple
Psalm 24.[1-6]7-10	Lift up your heads, O gates, and the king of glory shall enter
Hebrews 2.14-18	Christ shared equally in human nature
Luke 2.22-40	The Presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus 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'), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

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

²⁹Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’

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

³⁶There 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, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

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

Luke 2.22-40 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

As Luke tells the story we can see that Messiah emerges from within a family and social world deeply embedded in the traditions of Israel. His parents observe the laws regarding circumcision, purification, and presentation of the first born as dedicated to the Lord, and do so in the heart of what it means to be the people of God, the temple in Jerusalem. The rules for circumcision, given to Abraham, specify the eighth day (Genesis 17.12). The purification rules, given to Moses, applied to a woman after childbirth, who was considered polluted for forty days (eighty days for a girl), and then an offering was to be made (Leviticus 12.2-5). The presentation of the first born came out of the narrative of the people’s liberation in Egypt (Exodus 13.2). The idea of being ‘first born’ was important from this (Exodus 13.12, 15).

According to Leviticus 12.6, the woman is to offer a year-old lamb and either a turtle-dove or pigeon for her purification, but if she is poor (according to Leviticus 12.8) she can offer ‘a pair of turtle-doves or two

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

pigeons’ as described by Luke. The parents are thus portrayed as among the poor.

Simeon is described as righteous, and also shown to be ‘expectant’, a term Luke uses to show those positively disposed and open to God’s visitation. Luke makes Simeon’s prophetic role clear – he has the Spirit upon him (2.25), receives revelations from the Spirit (2.26), and comes into the temple ‘in the spirit’ (2.27).

Simeon’s preparedness has enabled him to become a prophetic voice. The theme of peace is woven into Luke and Acts.² Salvation is another important theme in Luke-Acts.³ The etymology of Joshua/Jesus indicates that ‘Yahweh saves’. The ‘nations’ (*ethnon*, 2.32), really means the gentiles, for the people of Israel are also mentioned. Luke records Paul’s turning towards the gentiles (Acts 13.46).⁴

Simeon has some more disturbing words for Mary that indicate that she too will suffer. The mixture of positive and negative prophecy help to shape the reader’s perception of what is to come. Simeon and Anna both symbolise the welcoming people of God, who gladly receive God’s visitation. However. This visitation will cause division, and others will reject it.

Quotations

1

If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus’ fist, but by his nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that he might win; he destroyed his enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer him.

Preparing for Jesus’ return: daily live the blessed hope / A. W. Tozer. 2012

² See Luke 2.14, 29; 7.50; 8.48; 19.38, 42; Acts 7.26; 10.36.

³ Jesus is the Saviour (2.11), and brings salvation (2.30; 19.9); the message about Jesus preached by the apostles is also salvation (Acts 13.26; 28.28).

⁴ The first of three rejections by the Jews, one in Asia Minor, one in Greece, 18.6, and the last in Rome 28.28. See also Acts 28. Each is accompanied by a biblical text or gesture.