



Hi there, and welcome to this Sunday Message. Apologies for running late (nothing to do with New Year celebrations), which reminds me to wish you a very happy New Year, let's hope it's a good one. Shall we begin with a reading from the Psalms:

From Psalm 8

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

Mission Praise 1086

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5hN_m55uoM

Light of the World, You stepped down into darkness,
O pen my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You,
Hope of a life spent with You.

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God:
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days, O so highly exalted,
Glorious in Heaven above,
Humbly You came to the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God:
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God:
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

Let's pray

Dear heavenly Father at the turn of another year we turn to you once again. Your goodness and mercy have attended us throughout the year that has past and surely will continue attend us in the years ahead, until our time comes to leave this troubled world and join with all who have gone before us into your glorious kingdom, 'Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary find their rest.' We have fond memories of those who were taken from us this past year; our fellowship is the poorer for their absence. As we journey on, we place ourselves firmly in the hands of the one who is able to keep us from falling. Lord, increase our faith and strengthen our resolve to serve you no matter the cost. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.



Our first Reading comes from the book of Isaiah. I once read that the theme of Isaiah is servanthood, if that is the case then our reading expresses the very heart of Isaiah's message.

Isaiah 42: 1-9

The Lord says,

“Here is my servant, whom I strengthen—

the one I have chosen, with whom I am pleased.

I have filled him with my Spirit,

and he will bring justice to every nation.

He will not shout or raise his voice

or make loud speeches in the streets.

He will not break off a bent reed
nor put out a flickering lamp.
He will bring lasting justice to all.
He will not lose hope or courage;
he will establish justice on the earth.
Distant lands eagerly wait for his teaching.”

God created the heavens and stretched them out;
he fashioned the earth and all that lives there;
he gave life and breath to all its people.
And now the Lord God says to his servant,
“I, the Lord, have called you and given you power
to see that justice is done on earth.

Through you I will make a covenant with all peoples;
through you I will bring light to the nations.
You will open the eyes of the blind
and set free those who sit in dark prisons.

“I alone am the Lord your God.
No other god may share my glory;
I will not let idols share my praise.
The things I predicted have now come true.
Now I will tell you of new things
even before they begin to happen.”

Amen.



Looking backwards, looking forwards.

If the theme of Isaiah is given its clearest expression in our Reading, it is also true that a theme of the bible in its entirety is expressed in these verses as well, the theme of promise and fulfillment. Consider the final words of our reading:

“The things I predicted have now come true.
Now I will tell you of new things
even before they begin to happen.”

The point is that if God has been shown to keep his word in the past, we can be assured he will keep his word in the future. This gives us a huge incentive to study the Old Testament and see how God always keeps his word.

The promises of God often concern children; 'Unto us a child is born' (Isaiah 9:6). My most memorable moment of 2021 was when Michelle and Scott brought their new-born baby, Julia, into the church for the first time. I remember folk crowding round to get a look at this miracle of new life, and I particularly remember Wilma being present and greeting Julia, just a few days before she departed this world in peace. This kind of 'moment' is the theme of our second reading.

Luke 2: 22-38

The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: "Every first-born male is to be dedicated to the Lord." They also went to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons, as required by the law of the Lord.

At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah

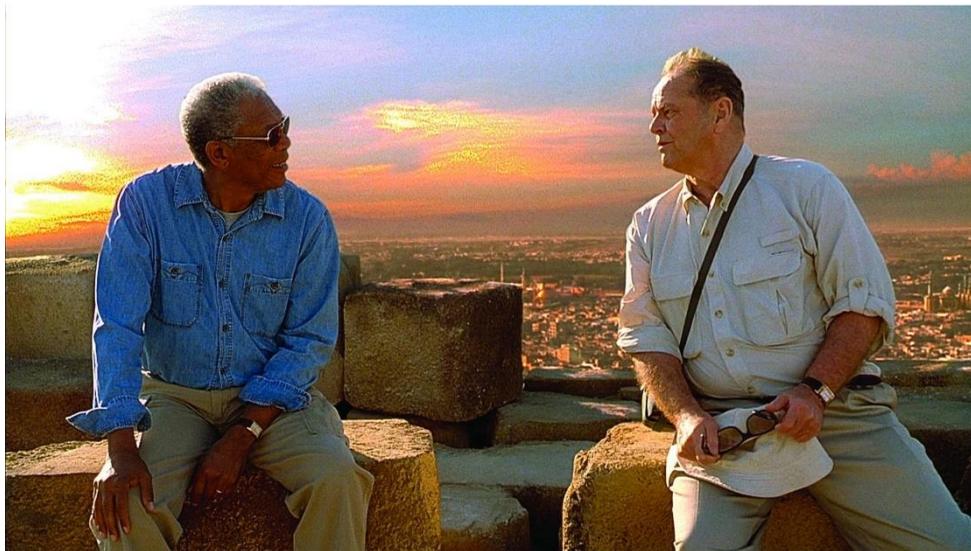
Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required, Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

“Now, Lord, you have kept your promise,
and you may let your servant go in peace.
With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, which
you have prepared in the presence of all peoples:
A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles
and bring glory to your people Israel.”

The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, “This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.”

There was a very old prophet, a widow named Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for only seven years and was now eighty-four years old. She never left the Temple; day and night she worshiped God, fasting and praying.

That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free. Amen.



In the Film, The Bucket List, two men (played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman) have both been given a short time to live and between them compose a bucket list of the things they want to do before they die, which they then start ticking off. In our reading from Luke, it seems Simeon only had one thing on his bucket list, and that was to see the Lord's promised Messiah. I wonder what your wish list for 2022 is?

Over the last two years the church has been in limbo, even now we don't seem to have any clarification on the way forward, but by the end of this year (if presbytery and the Church of Scotland keep to their timetable) we should at least know what the plan is for the West Fife villages. Whatever the final outcome of our deliberations, my wish is that we continue to be a 'Light of revelation to the gentiles', that is to those in our community who live without God and without hope. I believe this is also God's wish, so let's embrace the new way of delivering ministry, whatever form it takes, just as Simeon embraced the Christ child.

Having seen the God's salvation with his own eyes, Simeon can depart this world in peace. So, shall we conclude with CH4 646:

Forth in the peace of Christ we go;
Christ to the world with joy we bring;
Christ in our minds, Christ on our lips,
Christ in our hearts, the world's true King.

King of our hearts, Christ reigns in us;
Kingship with him the servant's gain;
With Christ, the Servant – Lord of all,
Christ's world we serve to share Christ's reign.

Priests of the world, Christ sends us forth
this world of time to consecrate,
Our world of sin our grace to heal,
Christ's world in Christ to re-create.

Prophets of Christ, we hear his word:
He claims our minds, to search his ways;
He claims our lips, to speak his truth;
He claims our hearts, to sing his praise.

We are his church, he makes us one:
here is one hearth for all to find:
here is one flock, one Shepherd- King:
here is one faith, one heart, one mind.

And so now, go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
and may the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit be with you.

Amen.