

NEWSLETTER

6th February 2025



Dear Everyone.

The end of the Christmas season traditionally takes place on February 2nd. It is signalled by Candlemas in many churches when candles are lit to symbolise Jesus as the “Light of the World”. Many Christians take their candles back to their homes and keep them for the year. This is also the time when Joseph and Mary presented Jesus at the Temple for Mary’s purification 40 days after his birth (Luke 2:22-38). At the Temple he was seen and recognized by Simeon and Anna, two faithful Jews, who had waited long for the Messiah. We are all familiar with the story and remember the faithfulness of these two. Anna, the prophetess, who recognised the importance of Jesus and how significant he would be for those waiting for redemption. Simeon from whom we have the famous and oft repeated or sung “Nunc Dimittis” said everyday at evensong, “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”. “The visitation” is one of the most famously painted scenes in art, down through the centuries. One of the most well-known is by Rembrandt, which he painted just before his death, and is thought unfinished. He, as a man nearing the end of his life, captures the old age, of Simeon waiting to see the Messiah before he departs his life. Anna is looking down on the Christ child who she too has longed to see. There are so many paintings and icons of this festival, some of which are in the newsletter.



Nationalmuseum Stockholm

How good to have the **Revd Kostakis Christodoulou** back with us on Sunday. Below is the sermon he preached.

Candlemas Reflection and Sonnet: In his usual reflective way, Malcolm Guite, has given his thoughts on Candlemas and a sonnet to go with them. He has included a picture of a small baby to represent, in our age, the baby Jesus at the Temple. He writes how grateful he is to the baby's mother, Margot Krebs Neale, for the beautiful image who photographed him to go with his sonnet. Below she too writes her thoughts on this Candlemas day and what the story represents through her, then, tiny baby.

The Sunday School sung a hymn for us that they had been rehearsing, with percussion accompaniment. It was called, "I will enter his gate with thanksgiving in my heart". We were encouraged to join in, clap and dance, which several did and enjoyed it greatly. There is no doubt singing joyfully together makes your heart uplifted.



Food Bank: This is just to remind you that we would really welcome more contributions for the Food Bank at All Saint's Church. There is increasing need among families. Please put contributions on the table in church which will be taken to All Saints during the week. With many thanks.

Sunday School sang a hymn for us that they had been rehearsing with percussion accompaniment. It was joyful and we were encouraged to dance to it, which some of us did!

Wednesday Morning Coffee: from 10.30am-12noon; coffee, cake and a chat. Do come and join in.

Listening and Learning, Bible Study: This session will take place on Thursday, 13th February at 6.30pm.

Toddler Group: This group is in church every Tuesday from 9.30 – 11.30am. We are very grateful to all those who help and keep the group going. If anyone would like to volunteer to help during his time we would be very grateful to hear from you. Please talk to ifey or Kamran.

With love and good wishes - Sally

Sermon on Sunday 2nd February 2025 - Revd Kostakis Christodoulou Luke 4 22-30

Preaching and healing in Galilee

Jesus, fresh from a preaching and healing campaign in Galilee, has returned to Nazareth after an absence of many months. On the Sabbath he is invited to read from the sacred scrolls and comment on the text.

Nazareth would see what kind of teacher he had become.

Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-5, about the Spirit of the Lord anointing him to preach good news, heal and set free, and then says,

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21).

1. The rejection of Jesus by His hometown
2. The message of Jesus to His hometown
3. The persecution of Jesus by His hometown

The rejection of Jesus by His hometown (Luke 4:22).

People were amazed. At first it seemed like the people of Nazareth were ready to listen to Jesus.

The people were impressed with what Jesus had to say. His words were filled with grace—that is God's undeserved love. The reaction in the synagogue that Sabbath was one of astonishment.

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.

They wondered, marvelled and were astonished.

They had never heard Jesus as a public speaker, as a teacher. His life among them had been as a carpenter, never a public figure.

This was an entirely new role. Matthew and Mark report that people were astonished. They were amazed and overwhelmed.

Matthew 13:54

54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.

Mark 6:2

2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?"

Jesus' "gracious words" were impressive.

2. People took offence at him

There was a wave of approval, followed by muttering, son?" "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

They were unable to view Jesus in any other context other than as *Joseph's son*.

They quickly responded by saying isn't this Joseph's son. A member of a Nazareth family. This was a small town, and people talk.

Matthew and Mark record other comments of the crowd.

Matthew 13:54-56

54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. 55 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

Mark 6:3

3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

They were amazed, but sceptical. They "took offence at him" With that question, there seems to be a change revealing of what they were really thinking. How could good old Jesus be who he was claiming to be?

He's just the son of the carpenter Joseph. Jesus just wasn't living up to their expectations!

They were hoping that at the very least Jesus would do some of those miracles, take away their problems and make their lives easier.

1 Corinthians 1:22 (ESV)

22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, Jesus never performed miracles in response to manipulation.

Ask and You Shall Receive:

Pastor Larson and his council president, Johnson ended up in a heated argument over a seemingly minor worship detail.

"I suggest we go home and pray to God to grant us peaceful hearts," said Pastor Larson as Johnson stormed past him into the churchyard. After worship the next Sunday morning, Johnson greeted Pastor Larson warmly. "I took your advice," he said. "I went home and said a prayer."

"Great!" said Pastor Larson. "So did I! I prayed that God would grant us both peaceful hearts and a fresh start."

"That's not what I prayed," said Johnson. "I asked God to help me put up with you."

2. The message of Jesus to His hometown

1. No prophet is accepted in his hometown. (Luke 4:23-24)

Jesus sensed their unbelief and scepticism. People made no attempt to hide their feelings. Jesus confronts their unbelief:

23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" 24 "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 'Physician, heal yourself' are plain enough.

They are saying, you've healed elsewhere, how about in your own hometown? The doubt in Nazareth was so widespread Mark records,

Mark 6:5-6

5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith.

2. God's Blessing on Two Foreigners (Luke 4:25-27)

Since the Jews at that time were proud of their history and made a big deal out of the fact that they were God's chosen people Jesus gave them a little history lesson. It was a history lesson that showed their unbelief.

Jesus refers to two stories of how God blessed two non-Jewish individuals, at a time that many Jews had needs that went unmet.

The widow at Zaraphath: Jesus tells of the widow at Zaraphath, a village on the coast of present-day Lebanon, near Sidon (1 Kings 17:7-24). The Prophet Elijah had stayed with her and her son during the 3-1/2-year drought.

The prophet told her to bake him a cake, and she said that was her last bit of flour and olive oil. The next day she and her son would begin dying of starvation. Elijah said "Don't worry, the jar of meal did will not be empty, nor will the jug of oil fail for many days till the rains come (1 Kings 17:8-16).

The widow's small jar of flour and tiny jug of oil were not depleted, though they fed the three of them for years.

Later, when the widow's son died, Elijah's prayers revived him from the dead. No Israelites received such a blessing.

Naaman

Then Jesus told of Naaman, general of the army of Israel's enemy Aram, whose capital was Damascus (2 Kings 5).

Naaman had leprosy and heard that the Prophet Elisha in Israel had the power to heal. At Elisha's word, Naaman had dipped seven times in the Jordan, and after the seventh time his leprosy was healed and his skin restored like that of a child. There were many lepers in Israel at the time Jesus said. But only the foreigner Naaman was healed. Jesus

indicated that the Israelites in these eras were unworthy of these miracles, and so God bestowed miracles on outsiders who believed.

The historic reaction of the Jews to God's prophets had been consistent. Again and again, they rejected the messages God had sent through his prophets. And over and over they rejected the messengers as well. Two of the greatest prophets Israel had ever known, Elijah and Elisha, were persecuted and ignored!

Why did Elijah have to flee from his homeland to stay with a widow in a foreign country? Because of the unbelief of God's people! King Ahab tried to kill him and none of the people defended him. They had hardened their hearts to his preaching.

And why was Naaman, a leper from Syria healed rather than any lepers from Israel? Because God's people had hardened their hearts to everything Elisha said and did.

They worshiped false gods and ignored God's Commandments! Because of their unbelief they suffered God's judgment on their lives and on their nation. But a Gentile General believed Elisha's words and was healed of his leprosy.

Outside this village, Jesus had performed amazing miracles, but the unbelief in Nazareth was too thick. Even though they wanted to see a miracle show, they were neither worthy nor ready. A prophet wasn't honoured in his own hometown.

Both of Jesus' stories involved people who were outside of Israel, or Gentiles. They involved individuals who had to believe God's word before the miracle occurred.

That a Gentile could be found more worthy than a Jew for God's blessing quickly changed the atmosphere. Those who had been amazed and admiring, quickly became furious!

The two stories were very familiar. But Jesus pointed out a very unexpected conclusion. There were a huge numbers of widows in Israel at the time of Elijah, but not one of them experienced a miracle. And there were hundreds of lepers wandering around the countryside and not one of them was healed (Luke 4:26-27).

3. The persecution of Jesus by His hometown Luke 4:28-29)

Would it be any different that day in Nazareth when God's Son had a message to deliver? Would God's people finally listen to the Greatest Prophet to ever walk the earth?

Luke continues,

28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.

Jesus' hearers were furious at the suggestion that God cared about foreigners from among the despised Canaanites and the hated Syrian enemies of Israel.

Nothing had changed in the hearts of God's chosen people when it came to the message and mission of the prophets.

The resentment and disbelief now exploded in fury and attempted murder.

The people rose up from their Sabbath synagogue worship intent to kill their homegrown teacher.

They drove Jesus out of the building and out the village.

Nazareth is built at the edge of a mountain. To the west the ground drops very rapidly to the fertile Jezreel Valley below. Without hearing or trial, and in violation of both Jewish and Roman law, his townspeople intended to kill him by throwing him over a hill.

The people were furious with Jesus

Walking Away (Luke 4:30)

30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Though they forced him to the cliff, they couldn't throw him over. Jesus just walked away, through the crowd, and out of town.

Jesus often escaped the authorities or a hostile crowd because it was not God's time, which reminds us that God is in control.

John 1:11 (ESV)

11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Jesus words revealed what was in their hearts! They were stubborn and obstinate. And if they didn't repent, they would suffer for their unbelief in time and in eternity. Because they had rejected God's Son, they would be rejected by God.

We need to see ourselves in these verses and take to heart Jesus' warning.

Could something like this happen to us?
Would we ever act this way toward Jesus?

The Jews at the time of Elijah and Elisha had hardened their hearts to God's Word.

Could that happen to us?

It most certainly could! We live at a time when many things in the Bible are being challenged or worse yet, they are even being changed. It would be easy for us to go with the flow and do the same.

The people in the synagogue refused to see their sins and to repent. They had remade the Messiah into what they wanted him to be. And then they rejected the real Messiah who was standing in front of them!

He warns all who might reject his message and mission. His face is still filled with concern and love for sinners. But it is also serious.

If in unbelief we are stubborn and obstinate, if we close our ears to God's Word and harden our hearts to God's will, we too will face God's judgment.

Today our Saviour calls to us. May we hear his voice and take his Word to heart.
for Disciples

There are two lessons for disciples:

1. Rejection is part of following Jesus. Sometimes we believe that if we witness or live perfectly everyone will like us. Not so. We can expect to be rejected sometimes, too. Seek to follow what the Lord shows us to do.
2. Rejection is likely to come from those closest to us.

By God's grace, some of us see our families won to Christ by our testimony, but many don't. A prophet still has no honour in his own country. Did any good come? Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection restored our lost relationship with God.

Anger and evil do not ultimately prevail. It was necessary for Jesus to go to his own people in Nazareth, and to his larger people, the Jews, even though he knew he would be rejected.

Though Jesus knew that Isaiah 53 applied to him, yet through it, he saw the promise that is fulfilled through suffering. Jesus' disciple John sums it up best:

John 1:10-12

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Jesus continues to reach out to all who will listen. The voice of Jesus goes out calling sinners to repent and believe the good news of what he has done for all people.

The story is told of a man who died and approached the gate to heaven. He was stopped at the gate and was asked, "What's the password?"

The man quoted John 3:16. The angel at the gate said, “Nice try, but that’s wrong.” The man quoted John 3:17 and a bunch of other Bible verses. The angel said, “Nice try, but that too is the wrong answer.” The man recited the 23rd Psalm from beginning to end. Again the angel said, “Nice try, but wrong.”

Helplessly exasperated, the man blurted out, “Well, then, I give up!” And the angel responded, “That’s it! That’s the password to heaven.” The angel extended his hand to the man and welcomed him into eternal life. “I give up!” really is the key to heaven, isn’t?

When we give up on our own ideas, our own efforts, our own goodness and trust in Jesus alone heaven is open to us.

1. The rejection of Jesus by His hometown
2. The message of Jesus to His hometown
3. The persecution of Jesus by His hometown

Prayer

Lord, you know how we hate rejection. How we go way out of our way to avoid being or feeling rejected.

Help us to grow out of it. Give us courage to face those who distrust, dislike, or resent us, who look down on us. Help us to love them, while refusing to compromise our integrity. Forgive us where we’ve been afraid. Amen.

A Reflection on Candlemas – Malcolm Guite

Though the 12 days of Christmas ended with Twelfth Night and Epiphany, there is another sense in which this season, in which we reflect on the great mystery of God in Christ as an infant, continues until February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. This feast, which many churches will be keeping this coming Sunday, came to be called by the shorter and more beautiful name of Candlemas because the day it celebrates, recorded in Luke 2:22-40, is the day the old man Simeon took the baby in his arms and recognised him as ‘A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.’ It became the custom of the church to light a central candle and bring it to the altar to represent the Christ-light, and also on the occasion of this feast to bless all the ‘lights’ or candles in the church, praying that all who saw that outward and visible light would remember also and be blessed by the inner light of Christ ‘who lightens everyong who comes into the world.’

It had always been prophesied that God would one day come into the Temple that human beings had built for him, though Solomon, who built the first temple had said ‘even the Heavens are too small to hold you much less this temple I have built’. Candlemas is the day we realise that eternity can come into time and touch us in the form of a tiny child, that God appears at last in His Temple, not as a transcendent overlord, but as a vulnerable pilgrim, coming in His Love to walk the road of life alongside us. Against the dark our Saviour’s face is bright.

Candlemas - Malcolm Guite

They came, as called, according to the Law.

Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,

They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,

For God was coming with them to His temple.

Amidst the outer court’s commercial bustle

They'd waited hours, enduring shouts and shoves,
Buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,
Had made a killing on the two young doves.
They come at last with us to Candlemas
And keep the day the prophecies came true
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,
The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.

Reflection by Margot Krebs Neale on Malcolm's Poem



"This picture is of my first born on his first outing to walk to the station with his grand-mother who was returning to France. Then he was four days old. On the way back I stopped at the local bakers, whom I knew well and we were both properly feasted. Was I proud and pleased! I choose it because something of these lines (by Malcolm) was my feeling:

*"Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,
For God was coming with them to His temple".*

He was a new little Temple of the Lord. There was definitely a sense of awe for me. We chose his name for the Olive branch brought by the dove.

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple – Carved Stalls



These 16th century carved stalls are in the Collegiale Notre-Dame of Montréal, a fortified village in the Yonne département of Burgundy. On the left Simeon, attired as a bishop, receives the 40 day old infant Jesus from Mary and Joseph who stand on the right, and blesses him. Next to Simeon stands the aged prophetess Anna (Luke 2.22-40). The festival, also known as Candlemas, marks the 40th day after Christmas and the end of the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season. The church was built in the 12th century in a transitional Romanesque-Gothic style. It was restored in the 19th century by the pioneering architect Viollet le Duc



*Photo by Victoria Salvo
who uses techniques that enable us to see things that are there
but are unseen by the human eye*

How We Are

We send all those who are sick our love. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health. We pray that God's healing hands may be upon them. Pray also for those who are grieving because of the loss of a loved one.

Pray for Myfanwy Khan, who is at home but waiting to hear if she has to go back to hospital. She is being well looked after by Florence her carer. We all send her our love. Pray for Diana Turvie, who is still unwell from a stomach ailment, for Anita Houghton, Tony Nwanodi, Chuba Agbim, Eunice Adiele, Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada, and Sheila Grodzinsky.

We send our sympathy to Connie, whose older sister, Dorothy, died in Lagos last week. We keep her and her family in our prayers.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing love.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0xDaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

Reader:

Intercession:

Hospitality:

Eucharist Minister:

AV Desk:

Contact details:

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti Office Tel: 020 8455 1873 Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk

Feb - Mar 2025								
Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Duty Managers	Service leader
09/02/25	Psalms 138	Khan	Simon	Silvia	Nehar/Nwadi	Shaniv	Chinwe	Nehar
	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	Cynthia						
	Luke 5:1-11							
16/02/25	Psalms 1	Nwenna ka	Nehar	Silvia	Nehar/Nwadi	Dozie	Chinwe	Alexis
	1 Corinthians 15:12-20	Abi						
	Luke 6:17-26							
23/02/25	Psalms 37:1-11,39-40	Andrew	Jenny	Bilan	Sally/Simon	Daniel	Tim	Jenny
Bring & Share	1 Corinthians 15:35-38,42-50	Sim						
	Luke 6:27-38							
02/03/25	Psalms 99	Sam	Kai	Naila	Tim/Naila	Oneyka	TBC	
	2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2	Sohail						
	John 2:1-11							
05/03/25	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	Kieth	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC		
Ash Wed	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21							
09/03/25	Psalms 91:1-2,9-16	Elizabeth	Alexis	Nora	Daniel/Ezim	Ruth	Synthia	
	Romans 10:8b-13	Dozie						
	Luke 4:1-13							
16/03/25	Psalms 27	Guy	Simon	Rose Dean/Veronica	Ifeyinwe/Onyeka	Onyeka	Shaniv	
	Philippians 3:17-4:1	Keith						
	Luke 13:31-35							
23/03/25	Psalms 63:1-8	Khan	Rose	Silvia	Nehar/Nwadi	Shaniv	Chinwe	Nehar
	1 Corinthians 10:1-13	Cynthia						
	Luke 13:1-9							
30/03/25	Psalms 32	Poppy	Tony	Cynthia/Chinwe	Nehar/Nwadi	Dozie	Chinwe	
	2 Corinthians 5:16-21	Daniel						
	Luke 5:1-3,11b-32							