



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Simeon & Anna: Faithfulness in prayer but watchful anticipation

Revd Nathan Falla

February 2nd sees the conclusion of the season of Epiphany with the celebration of Candlemas; the day 40 days after Christmas Day when we remember that Jesus was presented at the Temple as the law required. The events (as recorded in Luke 2:22-38) are remarkable because we are introduced to two characters, Simeon and Anna, who are stirred by the Holy Spirit; Simeon prophesies when he sees Jesus and Anna praises God.

Normally, whenever I have reflected on this passage to preach from it, I have been drawn to what Simeon says, how he prophesies that Jesus will be a light for all people in the passage (verses 29-32) known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, Latin for "Now let us depart". However, I have just come back from Ministers' Retreat where we focussed on unpacking the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, and what I was struck by when looking at the presentation, was just how long Simeon and Anna had been faithfully praying for, and watching for both the Messiah and for the redemption of Israel.

The text does not say how old Simeon was or why he came to the Temple apart from he was righteous and devout. Tradition has said that he has been waiting a lifetime. Whereas the family history is provided for Anna in quite some detail, including that she is a widow and 84 years old, who never left the Temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day.

In Simeon and Anna we have two people who are faithful in prayer and who are watchful in anticipation, they are ready and waiting, with their eyes open to see what God is doing. I wonder how faithful we are in prayer, and how open we are to see God at work?

Last week I dropped my glasses behind the bed and to retrieve them I got out my spare pair, so I could see what I was doing. I don't wear my spare pair that often and so they were considerably cleaner and less scratched than my existing pair (I am going to the opticians for a long overdue appointment). However, I discovered that everything was so much clearer, I had a different perspective when I used my spare pair.

The importance of being faithful in prayer, is not to change God's mind but through prayer, for our minds to be changed and renewed that we may see things in a new way, from God's perspective. Prayer should not be a way that we bury our heads in the sand, but a way that we can see the world through God's eyes.

No matter how old we may be, let us be faithful in prayer, and let us have watchful anticipation that we may see and know what God is calling us to be and do as individuals, as churches and as a circuit.



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week is led by Revd Nathan Falla.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

2. Zoom Opportunities

If you're feeling isolated, are not ready to be face to face yet, or can't, but are happy to meet on Zoom, there is a weekly coffee time at 3pm on a Monday run by Charles Street but open to all, email Mel Watson for more details: mellwatson42@gmail.com.

There is also still a weekly Zoom fellowship called 'The Gathering' which is part of Southwell Methodist Church and run by Philip and Francine Holmes. You'd be most welcome, contact Philip to connect: philipholmes8100@gmail.com.

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am – 6th February

The Queen's Accession

Sunday 6th February marks the exact seventieth anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne. In this service of Matins the community of Westminster Abbey marks the occasion as they look forward to the Platinum Jubilee celebrations later this year, and back to the Coronation service itself.

4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

Here am I

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8 & Luke 5:1-11
Revd Nathan Falla

"There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a special song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one can speak my message, or sing my song, or offer my act of love. These are entrusted only to me."

I love this quote from John Powell, because for me it says something of the nature of call which is individual, and that says God calls me to be me, to bring who I am in all that I do as I seek to serve to God. I don't necessarily need to go anywhere specific I just need to be who God calls me to be in the location where God has called me.

This does not mean however that God does not call people into specific paths of service, or to go to specific places, but it does mean that if we have said yes to God's offer of a relationship through Jesus Christ, then we are called to a whole life of discipleship, where day by day we become more like Jesus in every area of our lives. Discipleship is not an optional accessory but is the golden thread of a life in Christ.

In our readings we have two accounts of people being called, both of which can help us as we explore what God is calling us to and to be. Isaiah sees a vision of heaven, a vivid picture with the Lord seated on the throne surrounded by six winged seraphs or angels all calling "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" and he is so overawed that he cannot help but recognise his own weaknesses and his sinfulness; all the wrong things that he has done. The picture of holiness makes him see that he misses the mark, and he believes that he is ruined because in the Old Testament anyone who saw God face to face dies, he recognises that he is a man of unclean lips. Then there is the remarkable picture of a live coal being brought down by one of the seraphs and touching his lips, so his sin; all the wrong things that he has done and his guilt can be taken away. Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And Isaiah responds immediately, here I am, send me. Isaiah responds to this amazing sequence of events, not really knowing what he is saying yes to, but the first step has been made and all will be made known in the goodness of time.

In comparison to the high drama and heavenly visions of Isaiah's call, the call of Simon is much more every day and down to earth. Jesus comes to the lake but there are so many people who came to hear surrounding him that he asks Simon if he can use his boat to preach from, so that all could hear. After this Jesus asks Simon to go out into deeper water to catch fish, Simon is dismayed maybe a little annoyed because he had been trying to catch fish all night, but he had respect for Jesus and so let down his nets. There was then this wonderful haul of fish, so large that the nets were beginning to break and the boat being

weighed down so much that another boat was called and still they struggled. When Peter saw this, he recognised that Jesus was special; he does not want to be in the same place as Jesus as he recognises that he is sinful. But then we have the wonderful words of Jesus: “Don’t be afraid, from now on you will fish for people.”

God’s call can be very miraculous and stunning and it can also be very normal and every day, it can be a one-off event that stops us in our tracks and makes us think wow! It can also be a gradual process with different events making us think and when we put all the pieces together like a jigsaw then we realise that God is calling us.

God does call us; God calls each and every one of us into a relationship, to follow Jesus. God offers us an invitation, a free invitation, why? Because we are loved. When we first say yes to Jesus, like Isaiah and Simon Peter we have no idea where it may take us, as God calls us to follow, for God to be the compass for our lives, and to follow by serving in a whole variety of different ways.

When God calls us to a particular service, it is natural to think, how can I possibly do that? It is part of recognising that we are vulnerable people, we have faults and failings, but then we need to move beyond this, and hear Jesus’ words “do not be afraid”. We must not fall into the trap of using age as an excuse or time as an excuse, or anything else as an excuse, because excuses do not wash with God. God uses normal, everyday people and by grace transforms our weaknesses into amazing opportunities, for if God has called us to serve in a particular way then by the power of his Holy Spirit God is going to equip and enable us to fulfil that calling.

There is a danger that when we think about calling, that we think about the calling of others, our opening quote reminds us that everyone has a vocation; a message to deliver, a song to sing, an act of love. God calls for each of us to live every day for God, our work, our rest, our leisure to be Jesus to all that we meet.

What is your calling? To be more like Jesus where you are, where God calls you to be.

This Sunday (6th February) marks the 70th anniversary of the accession to the throne of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A life that has lived out the calling to serve others. This is a very public example of someone who seeks to be more like Jesus. But what about you?

Each of us in our own way, can be more like Jesus, through the Holy Spirit working in and through us. So let us recognise the call of God on our lives, let us not be afraid. God takes us and transforms our weaknesses so we become more like Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer Space

Loving God,
we pray for all those feeling out of their depth at this time. All who are fearful and swimming against the tide of oppression.

We bring before you those caught up in the ever-rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine. We ask that you place your hand on the volatile situation and bring about peace and harmony.

We pray for the people of Afghanistan: the families struggling to cope and find money for food, the girls no longer being educated, the women no longer able to work freely. We pray for all hopes and dreams squashed by those yielding power.

We pray for all in this country, for all in our local communities as we attempt to return to some normality after the covid restrictions. We pray for the lonely, those still anxious about mixing with others. We pray for the jobless and the bereaved.

We pray for all who are in leadership. In parliament. In our local councils and communities. For all leaders of the church, all those in ministry sharing the Gospel in whatever form. We pray for the weary, those feeling out of their depth and those who are sinking beneath the heavy load of responsibility.

God of all power, we bring before you her Majesty the Queen, who on this day seventy years ago in Kenya heard the news of the death of her father King George VI. This day marks seventy years of her accession to the throne, a historic milestone. Seventy years in which she has endured the ups and downs, joys and sorrows of life’s story, personal and public. Yet she remains steadfast in her faith. We pray strength and good health for our Queen.

Holy God of all power and saving grace, may we all feel your sustaining hand helping us through whatever lies ahead. Lead us as we are caught up in your story and tread the path laid out for us. Amen.

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join a prayer chain and receive prayer requests or to submit a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com. It is for those of any church or none!

Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult – StF 250

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth – StF 666, SOF 386

Will you come and follow me – StF 673, SOF 1120

Called by Christ to be disciples – StF 660

Please click on the song title to access YouTube clip of each song.

Discussion Questions

Church is best done together but we know that this isn't always possible - particularly if you're housebound, isolated or even shielding. But why not contact a friend and arrange to watch the church service online or read the newsletter simultaneously and get in touch by telephone afterwards to talk about it. Below are some questions that might help you to reflect together!

1. How would you describe a vocation?
2. How does it feel that God has called you to be you? The best you, you can be?
3. Where has God called you to be at the moment?
4. When you think about call do you associate more with Isaiah, Peter or maybe a different Bible character?
5. How have you and how might you respond to God's continual invitation?

SAVE THE DATE

***Every Church has a silver lining:
Safeguarding and the Challenges of
later life***

**Saturday 5th March | 10am-1pm
followed by light refreshments and
conversation until 2pm**

**at
Southwell Methodist Church**

In person worship across the Circuit during the next four weeks...

December 2021 - February 2022	6th Feb	13th Feb Racial Justice	20th Feb	27th Feb Sunday before Lent
Balderton	10:30 am K Trowbridge	Bates HC	LA	Bates
Charles Street	10:30 am Winnington	Mathews	Falla	LA
	6:00 pm Hardy	Falla HC	Bates	Beech
Collingham	10:45 am Castle	Hall	Bates HC	Pearce
Elston	10:45 am	Hibberts		Hart HC
Hope Community	10:30 am Falla at H'ville / HC	Beech at B'gate	Gibson at H'ville	LA at B'gate
Long Bennington	10:30 am Bates HC	Hart	Dalby T	Cozens
North End	6:00 pm Falla	Bates	Hardy	Bates
North Muskham	10:30 am	West		Hibberts
	2:00 pm Hibberts Café		Bates HC / Café	
Southwell	10:30 am Hibberts	Ward T	Hibberts HC	Winnington
	Other Hucknall HC / 4pm	Hibberts PicC / 2pm	LA 4pm	Hibberts Fringe
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am A Trowbridge	Falla Breakfast / 9am		United at All Saints HC / 10am
	Other		Hibberts 2pm	
Lectionary Readings (Year C)	Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13) Psalm 138 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11	Jeremiah 17:5-10 Psalm 1 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 Luke 6:17-26	Genesis 45:3-11, 15 Psalm 37:1-11 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50 Luke 6:27-38	Exodus 34:29-35 Psalm 99 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:
<https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/circuit-plan-dec-21-jan-22.html>

*May the Word of God guide our footsteps,
the power of God equip us for service,
the grace of God constantly renew us
and the love of God surround us always.
May our vision be clear,
our commitment strong,
and our faith constant.
May peace flood our souls
and light shine from our hearts.
May Christ be our constant companion
on the path of discipleship,
until our journey is over
and we meet with God face to face,
secure in the joy of God's everlasting kingdom.*