

St Alban's Candlemas Sermon 2 February 2020 - Revd Tim Ndegwa

What A Character

I would like to focus on one short phrase this morning from our Gospel reading.

And it is the personal words that Simeon said to Mary:

34. "And a sword will pierce your own soul too" ...

Simeon had been prophesying about Jesus's future ministry as the Messiah, and then had some personal words for his mother, Mary.

Why you might ask?

Candlemas is also known as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple; it's celebrated 40 days after Christmas. This reflects the fact that all Jewish male children were brought to the Temple 40 days after their birth to be dedicated to God.

Mary had to appear before the Lord with two offerings - one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering as a consecration of her first born to God.

Presentation of Christ in the Temple was part of the process which defined the Jewishness of Jesus

Why was that important?

Because - in the Old Testament – prophets had prophesied that the Messiah would be a Jew, and more specifically from the line of David.

The story of an old priest Simeon being led by God to go back into the Temple, at that specific time is interesting because,

"It had been revealed to (Simeon) by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (v.26)

Persistence and Endurance are alien to our modern culture, but they are still important Godly attributes for the Christian today.

I would bet that if you were to have asked Simeon what was the greatest day of his life – he would have replied that it was on the day when he saw the Messiah of Israel, the baby Jesus. It was worth the wait.

Away from Simeon and Anna the prophetess, let us focus on Mary.

Why?

Well, in Jesus's day - as indeed it still is today - the mother had a very important role to play in the determination of whether or not a child was born Jewish.

I wonder if you have ever thought: Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of his Son Jesus here on earth?

I believe the choice was deliberate; the answer lies in the character of Mary that we see in the Scriptures. From the Gospels I see three important character traits that we, as Christians, would do well to adopt ourselves.

1. Her humility
2. Her commitment to God and
3. Her bravery.

1. Her humility (Luke 1: 26-38)

“Mary do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen, you are going to conceive and bear a son and you must name him Jesus”

She could have had half a dozen excuses to say no if she had wanted to:

- i) "Lord I’m just a girl I’m not ready to be a mother.”
- ii) “I’m not wealthy, I’m not educated and I’m not able to provide him with a lavish lifestyle that the Messiah should enjoy.
- iii) “I am **not** worthy of this honour - maybe it should be given to someone else more worthy”.
- iv) “Lord, OK but can you just wait till I have married Joseph and squared it with him, so I won’t bear the slur of being an adulteress”

But that’s **not** what Mary said: "I am the Lord’s servant; may it be as you have said..." her trust was placed immensely in God.

2. Her Commitment to her God

She was totally “sold out” to God. When the shepherds spoke to her at the manger, she treasured every word in her heart and pondered over them. She was concerned with this salvation story till the end when Jesus was on the Cross.

3. Her Bravery.

Her obedience to the Will of God could have been very costly.

1. Joseph could have rejected her and broken off the engagement. In fact, that was his plan until God intervened in a dream to him. She wasn’t bothered by the ridicule that would have befallen her for being pregnant before marriage, remember adultery was punishable by death.

Conclusion

If we carried this these qualities on our Christian journey, the things we are experiencing at a personal level in our houses, workplaces, church and country would be less stressful because we all could know it’s not due to our power but **our faith in GOD.**