

## Thought for Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

### Read Luke 2:22-39

I thought we would just take a brief break from looking at the life and journey of Abram, and return to Mary and Joseph. It is now 37 days since Christmas day, so although we don't believe Jesus was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December, I am looking at the passage, the events of which happened, when Jesus is 40 days old. Verse 22 talks of *'the time of their purification.'* To be true, it is the time of Mary's purification, the purification as talked about in **Leviticus 12 (read)**... especially verses 3 and 4. Verse 24 in Luke 2 implies that Mary and Joseph offered a *'a pair of doves or two young pigeons'* but as we read in Leviticus 12:6 it mentions, *'a year old lamb or a pair of doves or two young pigeons'* I believe this implies that the Magi had not visited the family at this time. To offer; *'a pair of doves or two young pigeons'* was for the poorer section of the community, if the Magi had already visited they would have had the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. I'm sure that had they received the gold, they would have used it to buy a year old lamb, they would have wanted to have done the 'right' thing (Luke 2:39). Matthew 1:19 says; *'Joseph was a righteous man'* he would have known what the right thing to do was. Joseph and Mary knew they had a special job to do, they knew they had a very special baby in Jesus, the angel Gabriel told them; *'You will give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.'* When you have been given a special task to do, by God, you dare not mess it up. And because they did what is right by God, then they are blessed again. Yes, their home was in Nazareth but they are called to travel to Bethlehem to register for a census, Mary is all but ready to give birth but still they make the 90 mile journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth, no cars or fancy transport but go they did. Nowhere to go to give birth to this very special baby, just a manger to lay him in, then their blessing is a group of shepherds who come tell them what they had seen and heard concerning Jesus. Luke 2:21 tells us they had Jesus circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and gave him the name Jesus, as they had been told to do. Now, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day, they come into the temple courtyard. They didn't have to come into the temple, after giving birth to Jesus in Bethlehem and having given their names in the census, they could have just travelled back to Nazareth but I believe they either decided to stay and go to the temple of the purification service, or God intervened in one way or another. Whatever the reason, because they did go to the temple, they see Simeon and Anna. How many times have I heard people say that had they done something different, something wouldn't have happened, some people say it is fate, some say it is a coincidence, I believe these are God-incidences. God knew they had to see Simeon, Simeon who had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would see; *'The Consolation of Israel.'* *'The Lord's Christ,'* before he died. Mary and Joseph wouldn't have seen that coming, but by doing the Lord's will, they were blessed again. *'Simeon took him (Jesus) in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.'* Joseph and Mary marvelled at what was said about him, but I would guess they were also starting to get used to the idea they had been chosen by God for this special role. And if that wasn't enough, there was this prophetess, Anna, who came up to them and; *'gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.'* What we have to recognise is that when we do what God asks us to do, we will receive a blessing. The blessing may not always be as visible as it was for Mary and Joseph, but a blessing it will be and we have to

give thanks for that day on day. For Joseph and Mary, it still didn't mean an easy ride. Luke doesn't mention it but Matthew does. It is Matthew who tells us of the visit of the Magi, sometime after the birth of Jesus. As I said earlier I don't believe the Magi had visited prior to Joseph, Mary and Jesus going to the temple. Matthew tells us; *'The Magi having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'* *'So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'* Luke just tells us at the end of this discourse of the meeting at the temple; *'When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.'* Why Luke doesn't mention the trip to Egypt, we don't know, it is possible that when Luke spoke to Mary, who we believe would have given Luke that piece of information, she didn't think it was important, although for Matthew it was. Matthew was writing for the Jews and this event was the fulfilling, as he saw it, another of the Jewish prophecies, Hosea 11:1; *'Out of Egypt I call my son.'*

Open my eyes that I may see  
glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;  
place in my hands the wonderful key  
that shall unclasp and set me free. *Silently now I wait for Thee,*  
*ready, My God, They will to see;*  
*open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine.*

Open my ears that I may hear  
voices of truth Thou sendest clear;  
and while the wave-notes fall on my ear,  
everything false will disappear.

*Silently now...*

Open my mouth and let me bear  
tidings of mercy everywhere;  
open my heart and let me prepare  
love with Thy children thus to share.

*Silently now...*

Open my mind, that I may read  
more of Thy love in word and deed:  
what shall I fear while yet Thou does lead?  
Only for light from Thee I plead.

*Silently now...*

*Clara scott (1841-97)*