

## 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020 First Sunday of Christmas

Readings

Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4: 4 - 7

Luke 2: 22 - 40



### A Lightbulb Moment

I am sure many of us will have known what we call a 'lightbulb moment' when suddenly the problem we have wrestled with or the puzzling events of our past experience drop into place with meaning and purpose - 'Now I see!' Christmas may be seen as the world's lightbulb moment. The story is full of light in the midst of darkness. A conjunction of planets in the sky. Bethlehem shepherds dazzled by what must have seemed like a million lightbulbs flashing across the hills as heaven and earth touched!

I thought about that choir of lit-up angels and wondered what they were singing. It was probably a BC1 version of the psalm beloved of Francis of Assisi – today's Psalm 148. It's a song which is universal and all embracing. It calls all creation to praise God - from the armies of heavenly angels among the sun, moon and shining stars to the smallest animals, reptiles and birds – from snow-clad mountains towering over windswept plains and forests to an ocean filled with living creatures. *Let them all praise God!*

The angels were in fact singing their praise to God for this moment in the history of universes which demands a concert of the greatest orchestras and choirs ever to be assembled. This was the crisis which all time had waited for – the fulfilment of prophetic promises – the beginning of a new world built around God's Kingdom of love. This was truly creation's *lightbulb moment* when truth dawned and the world's evolving history began to make sense. Christmas has been described rightly as *the hinge on the door of history!*

It was a similar epiphany experience which came to old Simeon in the Temple at Jerusalem. Our Gospel reading today tells his story. Joseph and Mary had travelled to the city for Jesus' dedication sacrifice as was required by the Jewish Law – and Simeon was there as he often was.

Simeon was a man of deep faith in God whose life was steeped in the scriptures – a devout man, guided and illuminated by the God’s Spirit. In early years he had become convinced he would see the Messiah in his lifetime. Many faith-testing years had passed until today when, guided by the Holy Spirit, it all came true for him! He was inspired to go to the Temple at the precise time of Jesus’ dedication and the light flicked on just at the moment he saw the young couple with their child. Yes! This was how the prophet had seen it. He would not live to see the Messiah in conquering glory. He would meet the child born to be king, coming from humble origins in a different sort of glory. Light had come, not for the learned theologians and pious religious teachers who thronged the temple courts but for Simeon who lived prayerfully, and lovingly; for this humble man who had spent his years close to God in peace and hope; for this man whose supreme happiness was to take a baby in his arms and speak words of comfort to a young mother facing a life of sorrow; this man who lived by faith; who lived on God’s timetable and was ready for his lightbulb moment. I would love to have known him!

Light and timetable have been in the news this week with the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn reminding us of the Christmas epiphany when magi saw the bright star in the east. Even if the cloud cover prevented us seeing it, it came at the expected time. In our reading from Galatians, the apostle Paul describes what happened in Bethlehem about two thousand and seventeen years ago as being at the right time. It was the day when ancient prophecies were fulfilled and God came to us in Jesus, born of a human mother, so that WE in our humanity could become his children too – so that we, by our faith, could have our own switched-on experience of life in Christ and live like Simeon whose trust in God never failed him.

#### PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes to see you,  
open our minds to understand your Kingdom  
we will open our hearts to receive you  
and live as your children.

