

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Light

This Sunday many churches will celebrate Candlemas.

But why is it called Candlemas?

It's because of what Simeon said when he took Jesus in his arms in the Temple, "My eyes have seen your salvation [...] a light for revelation to the Gentiles". Simeon is saying of Jesus what Jesus will later say of himself (e.g. John 8:12) - that He is Light. Simeon recognises in this child the power to guide, to illumine, to spark, to catalyse and to shine! Therefore, this day has become a day of lighting and blessing candles in churches and Christian homes.

But how? How does Simeon know who Jesus is?

Well, we read that "the Holy Spirit rested on him" and that he was "guided by the Spirit" to go to the Temple and seek out Jesus that day.

Right from the beginning of his Gospel, Luke is clear about the work of the Holy Spirit. He explains that Zechariah is told that his son will be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15), Mary is told that she will become pregnant by means of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and then her cousin Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41) when she meets with Mary. After the birth of his son, Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and enabled to prophesy (Luke 1:67) - and that's all just in chapter 1!

Luke's clear explanation of the Holy Spirit's work is both helpful and exciting. The Spirit's work is so varied and powerful often resulting in hopeful proclamations of truth. Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit exclaims the beautiful truth to Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Zechariah filled with the Holy Spirit exclaims the beautiful truth, "God has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty Saviour for us". And Simeon filled with the Holy Spirit exclaims the beautiful, "my eyes have seen salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles".

At the beginning of Luke's Gospel Elizabeth, Zechariah and Simeon are filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly tell the truth about Jesus. The words they speak have become prayers and songs sung across the world for hundreds of years. The same Spirit that filled them can fill us. May we too, empowered by the Holy Spirit, speak of Jesus boldly and beautifully.

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