**THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON *MM online***

**Many thanks to all of you who listen to or read my weekly thoughts – and thanks for the encouraging comments you give me from time to time. One lady from Chelmsford says that these simple talks “keep her going”! This week’s finished with the prayer *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace,* which, until yesterday, I thought was by St. Francis! Anyway, I didn’t want to suddenly burst into song on the recording, so I thought it would be good and appropriate to sing it now as our opening song:**

***\*\*\*MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PEACE Mark G 2.51***

**OPENING PRAYER** of thanksgiving and remembering those who cannot join us today. Thanks that lockdown is easing, but prayer for restraint and that the virus will not spread.

**It’s communion today (hope you’ve got your bread and wine or a suitable substitute ready!), so here’s an arrangement of a favourite song of worship especially suitable for this service:**

***\*\*\*HOW GREAT THOU ART Citrail 5.22***

**NOTICES**

**[COMMENTS ABOUT REOPENING?]**

**We’re looking forward to more freedom, but let’s sing about the freest sort of freedom:**

***\*\*\*THE SPIRIT LIVES TO SET US FREE Chet Valley Churches 4.01***

**PRAYERS**: we have a dedicated prayer time every Thursday evening to which you are all invited, but it is only right to spend a short time interceding with God for one another

[JANICE, HANNAH, MARCUS….]

**Ok, so you’ve all read about Simeon, haven’t you? What, you haven’t? But it was your homework! Now, admittedly, it *was* your homework for the communion service back in March, which was cancelled because of the lockdown….so I’d better let you all off. In fact, I had to go back to my notes to remind myself what I was going to say!**

**Lk. 2:25-35**

**Ok, first question: what’s all this about *the time of their purification* in v. 22? Well, Luke tells us – it’s *according to the Law of Moses,* and this what it says:**

**Lev. 12:1-4, 6**

**Some of you may remember that this survived in our culture as “churching,” where a mother’s first trip out with her baby would be for a blessing in church.**

**But Lev. 12 goes on to say in v. 8, which Luke partly quotes here: *If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons….*Did you notice what Mary and Joseph brought? Two nondescript birds: this young couple were broke and far from home and those wise man had only just set out on their long journey with all their gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt. 2). Mary and Joseph couldn’t afford a lamb….although, strangely, they had One with them, it’s just that they didn’t know it yet.**

**Next question: Simeon was there, *waiting for the consolation of Israel (v. 25).* The question’s predictable: what was – or is - *the Consolation of Israel*? “Consolation” means “comfort,” doesn’t it? Didn’t Isaiah say, *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God (40:1)* and then, in the same passage, he goes on to talk about, *A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD” (v. 3),* and the one calling, was, of course, revealed to be John the Baptist as Luke says in ch. 3 (v. 4). So, it looks like Simeon was waiting for the forerunner who would *announce* the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29). Soon he’d realise he was holding the Real Thing!**

**Anyway, Jesus later said that the *Counsellor* or the *Comforter (Jn. 14:26)* was the Holy spirit and Luke says of Simeon that *The Holy Spirit was upon him (v. 25).* Wow! It must be great to have the Holy Spirit *upon* you. Yes, but this is before Pentecost. Because of this great Lamb of God, we have the Spirit *within* us (1 Cor. 6:19), which is even better! Our Comforter lives with us.**

**Luke says that the Holy Spirit revealed a great truth to Simeon (v. 29-32): as we approach communion, I wonder what He has revealed to you. Jesus said that, *When he [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:8).* I hope the Spirit *has* convicted you of your sin, not so that you will *stay* guilty, but so that you can come to communion in repentance and receive forgiveness.**

**Luke also says that Simeon was *moved* by the Spirit (v. 27): has the Spirit *moved* you? I hope, as you approach communion, you are *moved –* it’s not just a religious ritual to you.**

**You see, Simeon said that all people *could* see God’s salvation (v. 31), but Simeon rejoiced because *he* could see Him himself (v. 30) – it was a personal experience: what do *you* see when you look at the communion? Simeon called Jesus *A LIGHT FOR REVELATION (v. 32).* May God *reveal* to us Jesus Himself as we break this bread and spill this wine.**

**But Simeon didn’t just *see* Him: *Simeon* means *God-receiver –* he *held* Him. Take up your bread, pick up your wine – by faith, you are receiving Christ.**

**But, before we eat and drink, remember, Simeon took Mary to the cross in his prophecy – a *sword will pierce your own soul too (v. 35)*: how was her soul pierced? SHE WAS THERE as Jesus died (Jn. 19:25-7)!**

***\*\*\*WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD? Jinu03 3.35***

**Our Father,**

**As we take this simple communion, separated by circumstances, but united in Christ,**

**Take us to the cross.**

**Pierce us with sorrow for that sin which crucified the Lamb of God – break us that we might be remade -**

**And fill us with joy that, like Simeon, our eyes – the eyes of faith – have seen our salvation!**

**Receive our confession and may we receive Your forgiveness. Amen.**

**COMMUNION**

**Soon we hope to go out and come in again freely. Let’s sing Isaiah’s great hymn of freedom (Is. 55:12):**

***\*\*\*YOU SHALL GO OUT WITH JOY Divine Hymns 2.23***

**For our closing prayer, we’ll pray the *Nunc Dimittis,* taken from Simeon’s prayer:**

***Now, Master, let your servant go in peace. You have fulfilled your promise.  
My own eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the sight of all peoples.  
A light to bring the Gentiles from darkness; the glory of your people Israel.***