

**Sunday 3rd Feb 2019 Do we miss what is right under our noses?
Mal. 3:1-5 Psalm 24 Hebrews 2:14-18 Luke 2:22-40**

Intro

I put bird food out for the birds each day but usually only really see the squirrels or a couple of birds feeding

This weekend I have been sitting with mum in the back room a lot more than I would normally do and have spotted LOTS of birds busy feeding on the feeders, in the tree, on the ground. Even a huge pigeon sitting in the Silver Birch Tree over by Angela's.

These birds are usually under my nose but I don't always spot them.

The story of Jesus as a baby is a bit the same... people did not realise who was under their nose so to speak!

The 4 readings for today all have the thread of the Temple running through them

*** **Photo of the reconstructed temple** - as it may have looked in time of Jesus

Our reading in Malachi is a prophecy announcing that the Lord whom the people are awaiting will suddenly come to his temple

For the Jews of the restored exilic community it was tempting to lose heart, tempting to give up lo-ng-i-n-g for God's Kingdom, tempting to be casual and apathetic in the way they lived out their faith. In their dishonouring living, God reminds them, through the words of the prophet Malachi, that the Lord will come... to the Temple

Psalm 24, our Psalm for today is one of my favourite and was written as a song for pilgrims to sing as they claimed the mount to the temple.

Who can ascend the hill of the Lord?

Who can stand in his holy place?...

Lift up your heads... and the King of glory shall come in!

In our Gospel reading the Temple is the context in which Simeon and Anna wait and see and early Jewish Christians make sense of the person and purpose of Jesus

Our Hebrews reading was written after Jesus' life on earth and is a reminder that Jesus became our High Priest. The High Priest served in The Temple but Jesus had to become like one of us, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, coming to redeem his people

Let us look at this account from Luke of Mary and Joseph taking their 40 day old first born son to the Temple

According to Jewish custom, Jesus would have already been taken, at 8 days old, to the local synagogue for circumcision

Being the first born son he would also have gone when he was a month old for the service of The Redemption of the Firstborn. The purpose of this was to acknowledge that the child belonged to God and an offering would have been made to 'buy back' their son from God

At both of these services the rabbi and those there in the temple missed just who this baby was, even when He was given the unexpected name Jesus - the Hebrew meaning of this name being "The Lord saves", the baby who would one day bring an end to the need for Temple Sacrifices. This baby who would one day become the saviour, the redeemer of the world.

But the people who saw Him had no idea, did not recognise just who He was.

When Jesus was 40 days old He was taken, by Mary & Joseph, to the temple in Jerusalem to be presented for the service of purification and an old man, Simeon realises just who is under his nose.

Photo *** Mary & Joseph entering the temple

Simeon has been waiting, longing, for the coming of the Messiah

It was 400 years since God had spoken to the nation, but He had clearly been speaking to individuals and Simeon was one of them.

The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon and he had learned to keep his eyes open to what God's Spirit was doing all around him

And this particular day we read that *'Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple'* vs 27

Mary and Joseph had been to the synagogue and temple for the Jewish rituals, they had walked through the local streets but the people around them, according to what is written, did not realise who this precious baby was.

Simeon, with a stirring in His Spirit, understands... he gets it

This child is the glory of Israel but He will also be deeply significant for non-Jews too

He is a 'light to lighten / for revelation to the gentiles' *'A light to lighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel'*

He is for all. The Light who crosses boundaries we humans, in our insecurity and fear, create and protect

Many first century Christians would become shocked and disgusted at the claims of Paul & others that Jesus the Messiah had come for Gentiles as well as Jews

But here, this old gentleman, full of the Holy Spirit, realises that the promise he has had from God has come into being, and that this child was unique and significant.

And he takes Jesus in his arms and begins to worship.

*** Photo of Simeon holding Jesus

At the same moment Anna also came, and saw and recognised who this baby was

Simeon and Anna were old and their eyesight may not have been so good BUT their insight was second to none

They recognised this month old baby as nothing less than the hope of the world

They also knew this time in the temple was not to be the end of the story

The LONG wait for God's Messiah is over - celebration

BUT there was to be great suffering in store

With their insights coming from years of praying and waiting they recognised just who was under their noses and their words, especially Simeon's, are a stark reminder that this baby who was such a blessing and the light of the nations, would also go on to experience great pain which would pierce Mary's soul.

Simeon words make us move our eyes from the cradle and all the celebrations of Christmas, to the grave and the enormity of Good Friday and to the awesomeness of Easter Day. Candlemas marks the end of Christmas and Epiphany and signposts us towards Lent and the cross

How often do we miss what is right under our noses?

How often have I missed a Black-Cap (a bird - with a black cap!!) feeding off the plants at the end of my garden?

How often do we miss what God is doing right in front of us?

As part of our journey with PMC (Partnership for Missional Church) we are seeking to notice more of where God is at work... in our lives as individuals, as a church, and within our community. Simeon and Anna saw and noticed what or should I say who was before them because they were people of prayer and filled with The Holy Spirit

Maybe, as we move forward towards Lent and Easter, let us pray that we would be filled with The Holy Spirit so that we may be more attuned to notice where God is at work and celebrate with Him

*** [Video clip of Simeon](#)