**Morning Praise @ Home 5th February 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Malachi 3: 1 – 5 Matthew 5: 13 – 20

**Reflection from John**

A man was sleeping when his wife shook him and said, "Wake up, wake up, someone is breaking in!"

The man had gone through this almost every night for 20 years, and he knew that the only way he would get any rest was to go and check it out.

This time, however, there was a man with a gun who had entered to rob the house.

As the thief was about to flee the man said, "Wait, you have to come with me and meet my wife."

The thief said, "Why would you want me to meet your wife?"

**The man replied, "Well, it’s as if she’s been waiting for you for 20 years."**

Waiting isn’t easy. Delayed gratification is one of those things that have been forgotten in our age of fast food, instant communication and short attention spans.

But sometimes it doesn’t hurt to have to wait. Waiting can be a helpful thing. For example it allows you time to prepare. Imagine if you found out you were having a baby the day before it arrived! You’d be lost, wouldn’t you? You just wouldn’t be prepared. But on the other hand, if the wait gets too great, you start to wonder whether it will really happen.

Well today I want you to hear first-hand from someone called Simeon…………He knows a thing or two about waiting.

**Here’s my spot (on the seat).
This has been what I call my waiting spot.**And I have been waiting for a long time.

But in Jerusalem, we are used to waiting.
In fact, one could say that it has been in the history of the Jews to wait.
Whether we want to or not, we wait.
For 400 years we waited in Egypt.
For 40 years we wandered in the wilderness waiting to enter the Promised Land.
For years we waited for a king.
For 70 years we waited in exile.
And now for 400 years, we have been waiting to hear from God once again – there has been no prophet to warn or encourage us.
 **This is where I have been waiting.**I have seen Israel wait.
We have been under the oppression of the Babylonians…
…the Persians
…the Greeks
…and now the Romans.
We have been waiting for the One who has been promised…
…for the Anointed One
…the Holy One
…the Messiah
…the Christ to Come.

**This is where I have been waiting.**
But I am not waiting anymore!
For my dream has come true.
And it is more wonderful than I ever imagined!

 You see……..…..I was given a promise.

God promised me that I would meet the One whom God would send as the Saviour of Israel.
I was not going to die until I met Him.

**And this is where I’ve been waiting**

I have to admit I was a bit surprised.
For when the Lord promised me that I would meet Him, He never told me how old He would be!
I was expecting some great man to come and make His mark on Jerusalem.
It never occurred to me that He would start out as a baby.
The Messiah has come…not as a man…but as a baby.

And as I saw this couple, Mary and Joseph with their baby………I knew. This was the Messiah.

God has kept His promise.
This little baby was the good news of great joy.
There has been no greater privilege.
I have held Him in my arms.
And now…

**For me at least, the waiting is over. I am ready.**

My life is completely fulfilled.
I have experienced everything I desire.
I’ve seen the Messiah.
I have held Him in my arms.
And I am content.

Yes, I am ready to die.
And it is not because life is so empty, but because it is so full. My life is fulfilled.

**This is where I’ve been waiting** and now God’s deliverance has arrived!

Joseph and Mary told me their story…
…the road to Bethlehem
…no room at the inn
…the birth of the baby
…the shepherds
Much had gone on that caused us all to marvel.
I was amazed and wondered what more could be ahead.

And then God showed me……………………
I had a vision of this child’s future that brought tears to my eyes.

It will not be easy for the Messiah.

He will not receive the hero’s welcome I expected.
He will not rescue us from the Roman occupation.
And though paupers and cripples will welcome Him, the priests and Pharisees will not.
I saw the shadow of a cross on the outskirts of Jerusalem.
This vision was breaking my heart.
This baby boy will be a controversial and divisive Messiah.
He will raise up those who will trust in Him, and be a stumbling block to those who oppose Him.
Everyone. Yes, everyone, will have to decide to say yes or no to Jesus. **What will you say to him?**

Now **he’s waiting.** Waiting for your answer! Waiting for you to say yes! Waiting for you to follow him on the next step of the journey.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by John Morris-Best**

*The Lord's Prayer is prayed millions of times every day. Jesus gave his disciples a framework for prayer which we do well to explore thoroughly all our lives and in all our praying.*

**Our Father in heaven.**

Father, thank you for the privilege of calling you that - Father, Daddy, a really close word.

Obviously, Jesus could call you that, but now we can too - which makes Jesus our older brother.

As we continue to practise calling you Father, make us more like our older brother, more like Jesus. Maybe practice will make perfect - our Father in heaven.

**Hallowed be your name.**

May your name be holy, and recognized as holy, all over the place. Our society regards many strange things as holy, or worthy of worship - money, sex and power, for example.

We pray that the mystery of your holy presence may slip through all our defences and catch us unprepared.

Yes, hallowed be your name.

**Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.**

This must be the most exciting prayer in the world! We pray for a time when your reign of justice, peace and love will make this world sparkle with your life.

Help us to spot the kingdom coming, and to join in with everything we've got.

Yes, your kingdom come on earth - as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

Father, in your kingdom everyone will have what they need - their particular 'bread'.

In anticipation of that time, we dare to ask for what we need - what we really need, not what we'd rather like to have.

But even as we pray that prayer, we have to bring with us the hungry of the world whose need is simply bread, basic food, clean water, and a chance in life.

We pray for our hungry neighbour.

Give us all this day our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**

Father, we know that much sin is love which has been misdirected onto the wrong things.

You long to redirect our love to each other and to you. Help us to be open to your rich and reckless forgiveness.

But make us aware too of those people we aren't forgiving, and against whom we still hold grudges.

Bring them to our minds now and release them from our grasp… (*pause*). Forgive us our sins, as – so, importantly - we forgive those who sin against us.

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

It's not so much the minor infringements you're bothered about, Lord; it's the habits of the heart.

You deeply desire that we shouldn't be taken into the clutches of the much greater darkness that opposes your reign of love at every turn.

Rescue those who are playing with the darkness; keep a guard on their heart, a watch on their door, especially anyone we feel is particularly under pressure right now… (*pause*).

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever.**

Thank goodness! The outcome of our struggles isn't in doubt.

Following Christ may be hard, but it's not as hard as following nobody, or trying to follow ourselves!

Where Christians are struggling today - in countries where religious repression is normal, or even in this country where many congregations are small and confidence is low - raise the eyes of your people to the coming dawn, for nothing can hold back your reign.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen, Lord, amen.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**