

Candlemas

By God's Grace may I speak in the name of the God who reveals Godself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you ever thought something like: Wow, there are all these spectacular stories in the bible of how people lived their faith and encountered God. I wish I would experience some of that? Or something along the lines of 'I am not sure if I recognise my faith in the bible stories, because my faith is quiet and ordinary, and these stories are full of the extraordinary.'

If any of that is somewhat familiar to you, then the presentation of Jesus at the temple is full of stories for you. First there is Simeon, an old man. This is the one and only time he is mentioned in the bible. It is said that he was devout and righteous and that the Holy Spirit had let him know, he would see the Messiah sent by God before he died. 99% of Simeon's life and faith was not particularly noteworthy beyond mentioning that he was devoted to God and tried his best to act in ways that would please and honour God. And then for one brief moment he meets the little baby Jesus and his parents, fulfilling the promise that he would see the Messiah. It is one very special moment in a very ordinary and mostly quiet life of faith.

Second there is Anna. Granted she chose a rather unusual way to spend her life after having become a widow, when she began to spend all her time in the temple fasting and praying. In some ways she became a kind

of nun. And I am sure there were some people who shook their heads at her or simply wondered why she would choose to spend her life in this way. But again, she lived a mostly quiet life of fasting and prayer. 99% of her life is unspectacular, a life of faithful prayer and worship, with a brief moment of spectacular glory, as she encounters baby Jesus.

And the third is Jesus. There were a lot of spectacular things around his birth and later there will be about three years of his life that will literally change the world. But in between his birth and his cousin John baptising him at the beginning of his public ministry, there are thirtyish years we barely hear about. For most of his life, Jesus lived the ordinary life of a son, a brother and a neighbour. He learned carpentry from his father and worked alongside him, until he probably took over from him and became the head of the family when Josef died. Jesus took care of his family, worked hard, got sweaty and dirty, got hungry and tired. Jesus ate and slept and lived an ordinary life, until it was time for him to start his public ministry. Following the presentation in the temple, which we celebrate at Candlemas, Jesus lives an ordinary but faithful life for roughly thirty years, before he begins his public ministry which will last about three years. Most of Jesus' life was spent ordinarily faithful.

There are many stories of unspectacular, quietly lived faith in the bible, but they are often hidden and overlooked, because they are only a sentence or two in between wonderful, powerful stories of extraordinary encounters and experiences with God. There are also many stories of unspectacular, quietly lived faith built into the big story of the Church. People who in a particular place, at a particular time lived out their ordinary faith in regular prayer and worship and by doing the best they

could to live in ways that would please and honour God. Even Jesus spent most of his life as an ordinary man, unknown beyond the community of his little town. What others saw of him there was rather unspectacular, because, as we heard last week, when they heard him claim to be the Messiah, that seemed rather improbable to them.

The good news of Jesus Christ and of the Kingdom of God has mostly been shared and handed down by ordinary faithful people all around the world and through the centuries. Ordinary people who worshipped God and prayed for the people they cared about, their communities and the world. Ordinary people who lived out their faith by loving and caring for their families and neighbours. Ordinary people who tried one day at a time to speak and act in ways that would honour and glorify God. Countless stories of quiet, ordinary and unspectacular faith lived out and shared. Maybe with the occasional extraordinary glimpse of God's glory and beauty, like Anna and Simeon experienced that day in the temple.

Ordinary lives faithfully lived is how God writes the big story of God's love for the world God created and entered. Ordinary people faithfully carrying the light of Christ into their daily ordinary lives is how God transforms the world, how hope, faith and love are kept alive. Who are the ordinary people who faithfully shared God's love and care with you? How might it look like for you to live faithfully, to do your best to speak and act in a way that honours and glorifies God this coming week? How might we carry the light of Christ into the world in our ordinary everyday lives?

Amen.