

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3; Psalm 148;  
Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 22-40 (First Sunday of Christmas)**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Isaiah 61:** *'I will sing for joy in God, explode in praise from deep in my soul'* (v10 The Message) Why? Because God has brought healing and wholeness and salvation; and God has declared us righteous. How wonderful if we were to 'explode in praise' because God has touched us deeply and we rejoice in all He has done for us. *'As the earth bursts with spring flowers, and as a garden cascades with blossoms, so God brings righteousness into full bloom.'* (v11 The Message) What a lovely picture that touches the senses with beauty and fragrance. God wants our lives to *'cascade with blossoms'* as we allow Him to bring His own beauty to perfection in us. Let's allow God's life to flow in us that His fragrance will waft forth from us wherever we are.
- **Psalm 148:** A psalm of praise. The whole earth sings God's praises, the Psalmist says. *'Give praise! Unite together in all your diversity, that peace and harmony might flourish on earth .... For all are called to be friends, companions to the true Friend, giving their lives joyfully as co-creators and people of peace.'* (Psalms for Praying) Let's praise God for who He is and for giving us life and let's celebrate our diversity and work towards peace and harmony where we are.
- **Galatians 4:** God sent Jesus to show that we are His beloved and He our Father, that we might have an intimate relationship with God through Jesus and inherit the riches of His grace, and to know the freedom that

God can give us - freedom from fears, anxiety, guilt etc. Let's enter into our full inheritance as children of God.

- **Luke 2:** Simeon had been living prayerfully expectant that he would see some hopeful sign for his people. He recognised Jesus as the longed-for Messiah. How extraordinary that he saw God in this baby, the One who would light up the darkness, not only for the Jews, but for us Gentiles too. Only the Spirit of God could have revealed that to him. Anna had spent her days in prayer and fasting, totally dedicated to God. She, too, recognised in Jesus the One who would set people free. Do we have eyes to see God in unexpected places and people? Does this story of Simeon and Anna challenge us to live more prayerfully, open to God, alert to His presence, expecting to see Him and to encounter Him in our everyday lives.

**A prayer**

*Lord God, I desire to be like Simeon - so still before You that I can hear and respond to every prompting of Your Spirit, so in tune with You that I may become a sensitive, loving mouthpiece for You, so grafted into You that I may bear Your fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As this New Year unfolds, give me the quiet trust that watches and waits, that listens and believes in You at all times and in all places and that blesses others. Like Anna, Lord, I would submit my whole being to You, that my conscience may be quickened by Your holiness, my mind nourished by Your truth, my imagination purified by Your loveliness, my will surrendered to Your purpose and my heart flooded by Your love. May my whole being focus on You in selfless adoration, ceaseless love and constant praise. (Joyce Huggett)*