

The Celebration of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple
Family Eucharist for Candlemas, 3 February 2019
Talk by Ordinand, Sarah Geileskey
Text: A Dramatised Reading of Luke 2:22-38

Over the last few weeks we've been hearing stories about people who saw something special about Jesus...

- the travellers from the east with their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh who recognised Jesus as the Christ Child,
- John the Baptist who recognised Jesus as 'the Lamb of God' who would take away the sins of the world [John 1:29,34]
- last week we heard about how 'the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him' when Jesus read from Isaiah's prophecy... 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me' [Luke 4:18a].
- this morning's story tells us about how Simeon and Anna saw Jesus on the day that Mary and Joseph took him to the temple when he was about six weeks old... 40 days old so the Jewish law tells us [Leviticus 12:1-8]... I wonder about that because the temple is enormous! Perhaps, before seeing Jesus, they would have heard the baby crying first, amidst the noisy-ness of the daily comings and goings of the temple.

Some of you will have recognised Simeon's prayer... the Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon.... we use it everyday at Evensong...

For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation;

Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people;

Sometimes I think it's all very well for them because all these people actually lived when Jesus lived. They saw him and met him... but it's tricky for us though because we can't see Jesus. In our community we have someone who can help us to think about we can see things more clearly... delighted we have home grown guests this morning.... Piers and his guide dog, Willow.

With this morning's reading in mind, Piers and I enjoyed coffee together in the Pilgrim's Kitchen last week.... and we now have about five minutes to condense an hour's

conversation! So... just three questions for you now and an invitation to everyone to come and talk to us after this morning's service to find out more!

How does your dog help you to make sense of the world around you?

I always used to look down at my feet, at the ground... now I can look up and look around me. Since having a guide dog, first Oyster, now Willow, the dog looks down for me so I can look up. It means I can lift up my head.

The trainers say that training someone with residual vision is harder than someone with total sight-loss. By the time you've seen something ahead of you, the dog is already plotting a route around it... I have to trust the dog and not try to control where it is the dog is taking me, even if I can see that there appears to be something in the way... the dog is saying to me... let me nudge you in the right direction.

Often the dog has seen something that I haven't seen and I have to have faith that the dog will lead me in the right way, even if I think I can see a better way.

What impact has your dog had on your life?

You wait so long for a dog... and then one day, the dog comes.. and it's a totally new life... but what now of this new life? There's no point having a dog and sitting at home, even if it is scary or daunting, or snowing... having a dog opens up new possibilities... now what? Doing something new or scary.... It brings new life. It transforms life. It's not just because now I can see things.... I see things very differently... and as a result, I do things differently.

The dog coming into my life has required me to change what I do and how I live.

You explained that it's not just about your dog seeing everything for you and you dispelled a myth for me during our conversation.

It's a myth that blind people hear better.... What they do is they listen harder. I listen to patterns of sound and because I listen a lot, I can hear when things are out of sequence.

I used to work on customer complaints and before letters were sent out, I would listen to all the letters that I typed. By listening it would help me to spot spelling errors and grammatical mistakes because I would hear them... not only see them or read past them.

Piers, thank you... our conversation has given me a lot to think about and there's so much more we could explore... I hope that these three questions are just the beginning of many different conversations with many different people.

Now I have a question for our young people... it's a spelling question.

What do you get if you spell dog backwards?

As we come to the end of Epiphany, the season when we have seen and heard how God is revealed in the world ... as we follow in the footsteps of Piers and Willow the dog, my friends we too have some questions to ponder...

How does God help us to make sense of the world around us?

What impact has our relationship with God had on our lives in terms of changing how we respond and how we live?

And what we are doing to learn to listen harder to God?