

Candlemas – 2.2.14

Those who know the film, “The secret lives of Walter Mitty”, will know the power of our imagination. Danny Kaye in that film is in turn a successful gambler – one who fixes the apparatus around the hospital bed of a patient who is very ill and saves his life – an aeroplane fighter pilot – a superlative sports man and much else. The point is he is transported by his imagination.

We too know something of this when our attention wanders from the person with us. Then it is that we say, by way of apology, that we were day-dreaming. But it is only half an apology, because semi-secretly we know the attraction, the value, of our imagination.

The figures in the Christmas Crib Service, become real to us – if we will allow that to happen. And so with the Gospel narrative. We remember seeing the crib being furnished by the children – and we probably close our eyes to see the figures more clearly. And so it is – we close our eyes to see the picture Luke gives us of the Temple scene at Jerusalem, when the child Jesus is presented to the Lord. On that occasion three ceremonies are included – the purification of the mother, the redemption of the first born, and the presentation of a child to the service of God. But our hearts care not much for any of these. Our root concern is that these things are instrumental in our salvation – things realised not academically, but which are heartfelt. These things of the Jews that have a long history. Things according to the Law of Moses – of a thousand years earlier. These things take place in the Temple, the Temple replete of so much in Jewish history. They are things that are done in the presence of Anna the daughter of Phanuel. A very old woman – who knows these things backward – one doubly respected. We are thankful for Anna’s wisdom and her disciplined life.

And if we allow our imagination free range, we too with Simeon shall know the peace he speaks of – and we too shall know it before we die.

We hear no more of Simeon and Anna. What we know is that they have realised the meaning is in the waiting. “They have climbed the mountain and seen the promised land.”

And we shall not be unaware of the sword that will pierce the soul of Mary. Nor shall we be unaware of what God may require of us. Our Lord has made it pretty clear that a Cross is part of discipleship.

If need be we might enlist the help of Danny Kaye, to see the child Jesus filled with wisdom, waxing strong in spirit, and radiating the grace of God.

Or, with confidence, we might go it alone – and be transported in our going.

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