**Anna and Simeon – Precious elders. 2021 Bev’s sermon from 31st January**

Anna and Simeon were elders at a pivotal moment in history. They lived in a world where everything had changed, a world that had become unbalanced by politics, by oppression and occupation, by a nation whose stories and values were different to the stories and values that they had received from their own people’s history. A history of compassion and care for all life that was preserved still in the religious spaces, that held precious a story of love and liberation. Its here they chose to spend most of their time in their older years, because here is where their lives now resonated, In the peace and presence of the greater self, of God.

How we see ourselves changes throughout life. When we’re young we are eager to chase our hopes and dreams believing they will give us more freedom and power over our lives, make us more popular, more loveable, but as we mature, we realise that these fleeting ambitions are will of the wisps that often cause us more anxiety than pleasure, more confusion than clarity and lead us down a long and winding road to midlife crisis.

If we are fortunate to grow out of this stage and into maturity, we see that all the striving that we thought was so was important to life was not really that important at all.

Then we begin to sense a deeper experience of being as we enter the realm of the elder where relationships to others and to life in all its beauty seem so much richer as we experience ourselves much more as part of the whole ebbing and flowing stream of life.

This is where we find the elders, Anna and Simeon, In the temple, abiding in the sacred space where their source of being flows. Tuning in to its energy feeling its fluidity, losing themselves happily in its beauty and tranquillity. Some would look and think that they were dosing, not realising that they were deep in prayer, deep within slowly becoming one with the stream. It is only from this depth of being that they can lift an eyelid as the baby cries and see the sun rising on a new day, the promise of a new dream for life on earth. In that cry they hear the suffering of all who are separated out as unworthy and abandoned and know the pointless destruction of self-seeking, the poor becoming poorer, the discrimination, destruction and oppression of those still chasing pointless dreams in selfish ambition.

When they see this child, they re-call the sacred scriptures that speak of a God that loves all life is in all life a life where every expression of being is dependent on the other.

In this picture of Mother, Father and child, they are reminded of the constant renewing spirit of life and its pattern inscribed on every heart. They see the love and belonging infused in every cell of life and every level of consciousness, running like a great stream, ebbing and flowing arising and becoming.

And they utter forth the promise deep within sacred words that flow in the rising and falling notes of life, the continual promise of the healing salve and new light in the promise of a vision of life revealed in this picture of mutual inter dependence and new birth.

It takes a life time to come to the place where Anna and Simeon were. It takes years of unlearning to see with clarity all that’s important in life.

It takes a life of mistake making and sometimes great loss to discover that you are a precious expression of life. It requires a growing generosity towards oneself to be generous to the mistakes of others and to know that the opinions of others are more about their own turmoil than any effect you might have. Now you can see more clearly what gives life and what denies life and mention it in passing. You can let loved ones go back into the stream of life knowing that they are with you always as your toes are already there. You can help those who feel abandoned to belong because there’s nowhere to go but God.

You can live like you have nothing to lose, because you haven’t and you can let go of all that keeps you afraid of entering the stream and becoming one with the life giver.

Elders are precious rare beings in this world, a gift to all new life, because they know that this is just a fleeting, miraculous moment, the dance of a ripple in the stream of life and such knowing is sacred to those who do not yet know.

So, remember when you hear a baby cry, utter again and again the sacred song of Anna and Simeon and have faith in the potential of humanity to grow into a new way of being as you go in peace through the rest of this part of life because you have seen Gods healing love deep in the stream of Life.

Amen.