

God in the Ordinary

30th December 2018

We have just celebrated Christmas, that most wonderful of festivals, but also the most demanding and totally exhausting – and each of us approaches Christmas differently. We could bemoan the commercialism and bewail the amount of money we feel we need to spend and the amount of food and drink that is available, we indulge in, and worry, rightly, about those who have very little.

I believe Christmas is to be celebrated and enjoyed with family and friends – it is also to be shared with those who don't have family and friends and with those who have very little.

So, perhaps all of us could take stock at this time and think how we could do that. Mary's Song, the Magnificat, challenges us – it certainly does me! And as New Year rapidly approaches, I will certainly be taking stock and considering how best to share the plenty I have with those who do not.

What strikes me powerfully in the passages we have read is the phrase *God in ordinary*. We see God in the lives of ordinary people and God working according to the understanding that each of them has.

Samuel

The story of Samuel has so much that we can identify with:

A mother who became a mother after much heartache and prayer, who effectively gave up her son for adoption, and faithfully visited each year, touchingly bringing him a new set of clothing each year.

The elderly priest, Eli who had not a clue how to discipline his sons. The writer of the story, writing according to his understanding of the workings of God said *the Lord was planning to put the two sons of Eli to death*. And

then has the insight that God says *I will honour those who honour me,* and with his 600-500 BC understanding of who God is, carries on with *I will despise those who think lightly of me.*

Jesus in the temple

Then we have Luke's account of Jesus in the Temple. Again, we see a human situation. A 12 year old boy gets lost, doing something he clearly loves to do.

People talk about Jesus as being 'perfect'. The word most often used in the New Testament when speaking of people, is one that speaks of physical development, fully grown, or mature – which means that at 12 Jesus was a perfect 12 year old with all that that implies, on the cusp of puberty with all the attendant difficulties associated with puberty.

If he was fully human, as the Bible says, and as we believe, then he behaved like a 12 year old, sometimes thoughtlessly, sometimes selfishly – as he undoubtedly did when he stayed behind in the temple to discuss things with the scholars.

And being 'obedient' to his parents probably did not come easily – since when does a teenage boy 'obey' easily?

Mary was not the calm, serene person some make her out to be. Look at her remarks to Jesus! *Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere.*

It's all so human!

Colossians

Paul knows human nature. Even though the Colossians have accepted Christ, and are following him as disciples, Paul points out that wrong knowledge of God, getting God 'wrong', being 'hostile in mind' (Col 1:21) as

he phrased it, leads to broken and misshaped lives – and I guess that’s what happened with Eli’s boys! (Foster 2005:356)

The passage from Colossians reminds us how to live. Here is *The Message* version:

Chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

15-17 Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

Let this be what informs your personal life, and your life together this year.

Love – the all purpose garment.

The peace of Christ, keeping you in tune with one another.

Let the **Word of Christ** have plenty of room in your lives.

Instruct and direct one another using good common sense.

And **sing**! Let your lives be filled with praise, even when the going is difficult.

Let **every detail** of your lives **be done** in the name of Jesus, **thanking** God.

Pray, alone.

Pray together.

And God will bless you, will bless the life of this benefice, and through you all, bring great glory to his name.

Conclusion

God knows that we are all human, and that we are on a journey, a voyage of discovery.

God

- loves us in our humanness,
- bringing what is broken to wholeness,
- growing us up in every way.

There may well be things we would like to put right with God this morning.

We are going to have a short silence now to do this.

There is a bowl of water and as you come up for Communion you may want to take some water and sign yourself with the sign of the cross, as a symbol to yourself of cleansing and of a fresh start with God.

You also might wish to be anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit and a sign that you wish to be filled again/ topped up with the Holy Spirit for all that lies ahead for you. do just indicate this by raising your hand at the rail.

He who comes
comes to us now

in the silence
in the darkness
in the confusion
in the loneliness

as Word and
as Light
as Truth and
as Love

Emmanuel
God-with-us

now. *Harry Wiggett*

Amen