

Christmas Day Parish Eucharist

In the beginning and St. John takes us back to before creation began. Baby Jesus is no afterthought of God. Salvation – for that is what Jesus is all about - is not a matter of God reacting to sort out the mess, as if the mess we make took God by surprise. From the very beginning God knows that we will mess things up and God still loves us.

Christmas Day is about love, hope and joy – so this morning we won't dwell overmuch on the dark side of our world. For many Christmas Day is special precisely because for just a few hours we can push the darkness to one side. But such a deliberate choice of brief ignorance - really a pretence- is the equivalent of tinsel, turkey and lights – destined to end up in the bin by Boxing Day. The dark still rises – and all too often it appears that the light barely shines in the darkness, and the darkness is fast set on overcoming it.

An older translation reads : the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not-, simply does not understand, does not get it. From before all time, in the timeless love of God's creativity, God knows that we will never comprehend, never understand, never explain God. How could it be otherwise? The only truth we can speak of God is the truth of Mystery, the Mystery which does not so much lie at the heart of the Universe but the Mystery which holds the Universe in Being. Measured by the vast scale of the Universe we are tiny; measured by the infinite and eternal glory of the Mystery of God we are, as the psalmist put it long ago, mere specks of dust.

And yet ... the Word became flesh and lived among us. Hear that, really hear that and your life will be changed. The Word became flesh and lived among us. Hear that, really hear that and you will begin to grasp, how loved, valued and valuable you are- each one of you. You are so loved by God that God becomes one with us, one of us. That's the only certain foundation for any truly humanist and therefore Christian ethic. That's the glory of the Mystery of Christmas : God becomes flesh, God enters our world as a vulnerable, helpless human baby – a baby holding out his arms to us, requesting our love and support.

The mystery of God , the Mystery of Love is the ineffable truth that in the end, in the end, only the Love of God can truly overcome the evils of this world, only the Love of God makes us true human beings, only the Love of God offers hope in the darkness.

God offers God to us- that is what the Church means when we speak of salvation. In Christ God begins a whole new creation - humanity and God brought totally together to be signs of hope, reconciliation and blessing to a frazzled world. God saves us in Christ - saves us from ourselves, saves us to be Christ's community of love. God becomes one with us – so that we may become one with God; God becomes fully human so that we, often sinful and unloving human beings, may be remade in Gods' image of love. The eternal, infinite love of God becomes a vulnerable baby, dependent on us so that we may in turn may discover our life giving dependence on God. One early Christian teacher put it like this: Christ became what we are that we may become what he is.

Being saved by Christ we his worldwide Church share Christ's work to overcome evil by being people of hope, love and justice in a needy world. This little church of ours seeks to build community, to care for the lonely, to support the Benwell Foodbank. Every day in Christ's love we pray for the world. In the Bethlehem crib God entrusts Christ to Mary, to the shepherds, to us. In the bread and wine of Eucharist God entrusts Christ into your hands –that you may be love in a loveless world.

Tinsel and lights down, all too soon we are back to work, back to the news – but as you come to Christ's manger-bed, as you receive the Holy Communion into your hands, as you place your life into the Love that is the Word made Flesh then you bring hope to our world, you bring Jesus as a light in the darkness, a light never wholly understood, a light and a love never defeated.

A very happy Christmas to you all.