

## JESUS, THE WORD SPOKEN BY GOD

Nicky Ing - 2nd January 2005

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147; 12-20; Ephesians 1:1-6,15-18; John 1:1-18

One of the things we may have done in this past week is to respond to many greetings and Christmas letters which we have received from friends, who live far away. I admit that I am not very pro-active about such things and seem to find that coping with the here and now, locally, is about all I can manage. Many of you are probably much better about that than I am. But it is wonderful to hear from people who I don't see often. Keeping in touch by phoning or writing is one of the ways we can overcome our separation from those whom we love and miss. And many of us have been able to visit friends and relatives over this time of Christmas, or have them to visit us...the visit is a good traditional way of overcoming distance....We talk of 'going to see' someone, and 'spending quality time together'....and in the giving and receiving of hospitality, being 'present' to one another, our relationship grows and strengthens. It's impossible, really, to have a relationship with someone who is always absent and always silent. Relationship is always a two-way thing.

So if it is difficult to live with the prolonged absence, and silence of people whom we love, it is even more difficult to live in the silence of the God who loves us. It was a truth of ancient religion that the wisdom of God was hidden, wrapped in silence. That silence was hard to bear, and caused anguish in peoples' hearts...but the ancient prophets encouraged the people to stay faithful to their commitment to God...and who would have guessed that one day God would speak a word like JESUS? At the heart of Christianity is our belief that the most precious word God spoke became a person: the word of God became flesh, in JESUS. The Gospel this morning reminds us so powerfully, in its amazing poetic language, of this wonderful truth...it is interesting too, how often this reading has come to us in our seasonal lectionary in this past week....John's Gospel speaks of Jesus as the WORD.....present from the earliest beginning...before the beginning of the world. 'Word' does not just mean verbal communication...word is speech, and here it is **God's** speech...and we know that speaking is not possible without breath.... It is through Jesus, that God shows us his own character...God speaks and **breathes** divine life in the world. When we speak, we do so in many different ways...not just in our language...but through our gestures, our body language, our clothes...we speak through the way we look at people, in love or in dislike, in trust or fear...we show who we are through rituals, through celebrations...throughout our lives, we express who we are.

God, too, communicates Godself in and through the person of Jesus. If we want to see what is being said, what is being expressed, how God loves, we just need to look at the Gospels. In and through Jesus, the Word of God, we see God feeding, weeping, loving... caring for those who are sad...we see him silent, listening, praying...in constant communication with his Father.... We also see him celebrating...enjoying good wine, special meals....with special friends... We see him angry at injustice, and we see him forgiving people, touching them...even those desperate people whom the world despises.... whom nobody else wants to touch... We see him healing people, emotionally and physically...we see him suffering....and we see him dying because

of love, for a world that rejects him. This is Jesus, the Word spoken by God, the revelation of God to us.

We in turn receive the gift of God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit; and this gift is given to us by virtue of our baptism into Jesus Christ. We have become children of God.... because of what Jesus has done for us. We can experience the presence, the nearness of God in our ordinary lives, in simple everyday things like feeding, washing, working... in our listening, even when God seems to be silent...God is near us in the silence. We can find God as we experience life's sorrows and joys, and as we travel alongside others in various stages of our life's journey. When we visit the sick, the bereaved, the lonely...God is in our midst. Where we are most broken and vulnerable, where it seems most dark....God can be found in the healing word that consoles us...in the hand that comforts us...and as we reach out in turn to offer ourselves as part of that gift for others....Gods grace, freely given. **The Light still shines in the darkness....and the darkness has not overcome it.**

We have all been appalled this week to see the unfolding of the enormous tragedy which has happened in our world...thousands of people swept away by the tidal waves, with the death toll still rising...nothing we have seen can begin to describe the anguish being felt by survivors...maybe some of us may know people who were there or had loved ones there. It seems perhaps even more tragic that such things should happen at Christmas time. What are we to do when we are confronted by such disasters....and what are we to say about God in the wake of these terrible things? Ron Nicolson wrote so wisely in the Natal Witness on Friday...and concluded his article with these words: **"Perhaps we can look for the divine in the outpouring of human concern across the world."**

Indeed, yes, God always promises us an abiding presence with us. God never promises us we will be protected from harm. The people of the Indian Ocean basin are no more or less under God's abiding love than we are...we believe God cares about all creation. God mourns with all those who mourn....in whatever the situation. The world has many who mourn today...some because of natural disasters...others because of war and displacement of innocent people. Perhaps a situation such as this is also a reminder to us of the uncertainty of all our lives.....We pray today for those many people who have lost loved ones...we ask God to show us how we may reach out in meaningful ways to those who need our care in our own society...in ways which bring love, and hope....and which point people to the truth of the Gospel. May all our lives continue to be changed as we try to live and follow Jesus.

An anonymous poet wrote:

**When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes are home, When the shepherds are back with the flocks, The work of Christmas begins:**

**"To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,**

**To bring peace among people,  
To make music with the heart.”**

The reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a special word for us today.....  
**“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.”** So let us be thankful today for the one who reveals the face of God to us, who is the Word of God for us...and as we meet him again in the sacraments of bread and wine, let us ask him to break us and bless us and use us through the power of the Holy Spirit, in ways which reveal him to all who need his love...we ask these things in His holy name. **Amen**