

Sermon 2023 25 12 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

=====

You wake in the midst of dazzling light, and you realise in a moment of utter clarity that this will be your last Christmas on Earth. But then you realise that this is not a personal, individual thing.

In that moment of light you realise that this will be the last Christmas on Earth for the whole of humanity.

=====

We come year by year in a cycle of love to give humble thanks. We come to give thanks that at a point in the theological history of this planet, God gave an extra spark to a creature that became human. We come to give thanks he made this creature for his own joy – that there might be a fulfilling relationship with this creature – a communication and a companionship that might transcend the capacity of nature and develop into a universal companionship beyond the limitations of normal science and continue on into the grounds of the impossible and unimaginable.

But in order to have the sort of relationship he needed with this creature, he needed to give it a freedom of will that surpassed the level of any other known creature.

This creature, us, had to have such freedom that we could initiate love, interdependence, and joy.

But the compromise in our design was, that in order to give us those freedoms we also had to have the capacity to behave in the ways that were completely opposite – to hate, to suppress, and to cause harm.

=====

We exercised those good characteristics in our relationship to the few of each other and sometimes with God. But most of the time we chose to act, or we allowed others to act, outside the lines that could make us the pinnacle of creation.

We permitted hatred, we permitted violence and destruction, and we allowed ourselves, and each other, to move away from God.

=====

We chose to live without that perfect relationship with God. Yet in our hearts we yearned for the beauty of that relationship.

So God allows the Christ Child to enter our journey to die, and in dying to restore, reset all that was and is good in the world.

But there was also a recognition that we could not handle such freedoms in this space. So the Christ promises to come again and take us into a space where only good may flourish.

=====

So how would we react to this celebration of the first coming if we knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that a second coming was less than a year away. We would not meet again in this space in a years' time because by then we would be in a place reserved for us in that existence we call heaven – that place

where we are physically present with the creature who made us.

Would that cause us to change our behaviour between now and then?

=====

I wonder if the wars, the hatred, the exploitation and the abuse would stop simply because this would cease to be in less than a year's time.

I suspect that, being human, we would try to negotiate some sort of extension of time to finish off some things we needed to get done; some projects that we needed to finish, some wrong that needed to be made right.

However, we seem to forget that the Christmas story is an ending. That a restored perfect peace and love between us and God and between all living humanity is not just a possibility, but it is a reality.

The events of Christmas and Easter prove that we can occupy a space where peace and love are the only commodities of absolute necessity. And the promise of that second coming make all the divisions and exploitations of our humanity irrelevant.

=====

My greatest fear is that even if we knew with absolute certainty that our world would end in less than a year it would not stop the war, hatred and violence at a national, community or individual level.

The greatest sin is that every human being believes that someone else has what is theirs by right or should be theirs by right.

It is the source of every war and every family or individual dispute.

=====

My greatest distress and fear is that we have no capacity at all to forgo our demands and live in universal love. I am afraid that, even if we are faced with the reality of the complete end of the world we would still hold anger, bitterness and a sense of righteous anger at the core of our lives.

And if that is true then what is the point of our services, of our gift giving, our family and community meals? If today does not challenge us to change, and cause us to change, then it is a pointless event.

=====

But the birth of the Christ child is the beginning, yet again, of a season of hope –Hope that love will reign, hope that the wars and the violence and the exploitation will end.

But each of us must be willing to change. For if we are not willing to change ourselves, this one small step for a man will never be one giant leap for mankind.

=====