
Sunday 7th February – Second Sunday before Lent

Readings: Colossians 1:15-20 & John 1:1-14

Colossians 1:15-20

The supremacy of the Son of God

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

John 1:1-14

The Word became flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Reflection

This week's Gospel reading from the first chapter of John's Gospel is probably familiar to anyone who has ever been to, or watched, a carol service. But, as with anything else that is familiar, it can be easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that we know it and not taking the time to look at it, listen to it and see its deep truth and beauty. Before you continue to read my words, can I encourage you to pause, re-read these Bible passages and allow God to speak to you through his Word; and if you don't return to what I have to say, that's fine!

Both of our passages this week remind me of the tension, the dichotomy, even the contradiction, and the mystery, of the transcendence and the intimacy of God. The transcendence of the God who was there in the beginning and through whom all things were made, the God who sustains everything by his power, the God who is invisible, and has established justice, authority and nations to rule on the earth.

And the God who is intimate, the God who came to dwell among us, the people whom he loves, so that he might make a way for us, through his life, death and resurrection, to be reconciled to him and live in relationship with him, and that he may dwell in us by his Holy Spirit. The God who knows every hair on each of our heads, every thought of our hearts, every hope, every fear, every joy and every disappointment.

The fact that God is transcendent means that he is not surprised by a global pandemic, and he knows what is going to happen over the coming months and years, he knows how this ends, and he knows what is coming next. Knowing that God is transcendent can be a great comfort to us in times of trouble as we trust in him, know that he is our rock and our salvation and ask him to guide us as we pray for those in authority in our nation and the world.

The fact that God is intimate means that he also knows and cares for each of our situations, he knows when we are lonely or when we just need some space, he knows when we are tired or stressed, when working from home has become too much or home schooling is threatening to overcome us, he knows when we lose someone close to us and it seems like our world has stopped, but everything else is just carrying on, he knows when we are at a loss, unsure, depressed, hurting and grieving.

The transcendence and intimacy of God can also encourage us to lift our heads from our own situations and consider the needs of others around us and in other parts of the world, God knows all the details of the intricate and complicated economic, political and social situations happening across the world, but he also knows and loves every individual involved and he is grieved by each injustice they face, and he delights in the seemingly small moments of love and charity between neighbours.

Yes, it may be difficult for us to comprehend the mystery of the transcendence and the intimacy of God, but we know that they are true from his story we read in the Bible and from our experience; and knowing this truth can sustain us, encourage us and inspire us to action. It can be easy to unintentionally concentrate on one of these aspects of God at the neglect of the other, this week ask God to help you know both these truths more fully and have them transform your life and experience.

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