

Midnight Communion – A Reset Button (Jn 1:1-14)

Midnight Communion – 24th December 2024

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

I reached the age of 55 yesterday. Just like Christmas, it's the same date every year. The proximity of one's birthday to Christmas brings advantages and disadvantages. The **disadvantage** is clear, my birthday gets forgotten considering everything else going on. The **advantage** is also clear, my birthday gets forgotten considering everything else going on. I am getting old, poor old soul, but with it I'm *becoming* old. Another year goes by, and I feel more concerned to make all the remaining time worth it, and why do they have to keep changing everything? Christmas time, and particularly New Year, brings many of us to a place where we make our own reviews of this past year.

The gospel passage that I read earlier is the traditional one for midnight communion services, and for that reason it may seem odd that it does not even mention Jesus by name. Instead, what we are given is a description of Jesus's divine status and worthiness in a rather cryptic form. **It all seems to revolve around 'the Word of God'.**

According to John the disciple and gospel writer, this 'Word' was around *'in the beginning'*, literally at the beginning creation, like we read in The Book of Genesis. But the Word was not a created thing, it was in fact *the creator*: *'all things came into being through him'*. God spoke a word of command and creation responded, *'let there be light – and there was light'*. Therefore, the *Word* of God is powerful, active, breaking-in, carrying out God's purposes - His will and his plan; **God's Word is his agent of activity.**

John also testifies to the *'light of life'* which proceeds from the Word, shining into a dark abyss. The darkness is unable to put out the light or surpass its greatness. **This is not just a trivial darkness - a basic lack of illumination - but rather it is the darkness of denial, shame, emptiness and godlessness.** It is the place where we put all those things that we wish to hide, even sometimes from ourselves.

It is supposed that such a darkness is a place where we cannot be found; a sort of cape of invisibility into which even God's light cannot penetrate. But God's warm and protective light can shine everywhere, even into those cold and dark places in our lives, which we think are completely beyond help. **The light shines into the darkness, bringing us hope, bringing us a child.**

That same cataclysmic 'Word' that lit up the sky at the beginning of creation, making the Heavens and the Earth, that Word has now arrived as the baby Jesus. **It's like another creation event, like another Genesis, that is the potency of the matter.** *'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'*. All that divine power and purpose of God is visited upon us again, to **enlighten everyone**. **In equivalent terms, the arrival of Jesus was like pushing the reset button on creation.** Many have found that the arrival of Christ into their lives, is like a personal reset. I would agree from my own experience.

And there is the great point: Jesus Christ is not beholden to the natural systems of the physical world that we must live within. Christ *is* a creator. To personally accept Jesus Christ as God is to be recreated by Him, *regardless from all of the limitations of your life*. The Christian faith is not just another bit of the world, another part of society or another time in history. **God sweeps all that aside. He gets around all the things we can't. He has the power to change lives.**

It's a very interesting point to make that faith is on the rise in Britain. I could give you the stats, but that would be a bit tedious. Yet people are seeking the truth **because the alternative presentations of life's meaning are wearing thin.** They always were a bit thin anyway.

Nevertheless, you can spend a life resisting the good decision to follow Christ. We wish to avoid the unattractive prospects of change or doubt. Worse still are the thoughts of unworthiness, which feel a bit like saying *it's too late for me anyway*. But it's never too late for anyone. Integrity is a great trait of the human condition. Being true to ourselves, being consistent, being constant, living according to what we are and have been. **But it's perfectly possible to maintain with integrity – the wrong thing.**

If you have lived *without* faith, then it can be difficult to now handle the realisations of misplaced integrity. *I'd like to seek faith in Christ but I've not been. Maybe it's too late to change now – after all it would be inconsistent with the rest of my life. How would I explain that to myself or those around me?* The screwed-down lid on that particular jar of our lives carries the label 'regret'. **Regret is one of the most corrosive of our human emotions. It has no redeeming features whatsoever.** Regret does not even learn from its own mistakes. It grows with our age and stands by our graveside as a monument to the good decisions we knew we should have made but decided not to.

According to John, *'He came to that which was his own, but his own did not accept him'*. Jesus was rejected left, right and centre. In the end he was killed, just as any flesh could be killed. But because *Jesus was God Almighty*, he rose again, *cutting through the natural order* which He himself had made, and opened up the way to God – **announcing, in himself, an unfailing hope for the future.** Those who chose not to believe, even those who called for his crucifixion, got a second chance when he rose from the dead. **You will never be without a chance to accept Christ. You will never be without a chance of a reset.**

So why has God done all this? Well, the answer is deceptively simple – *because it's what we needed: purpose, direction, hope and meaning.* It's obvious that we need them because we always seem to be trying to create them for ourselves, and usually failing.

So if you are reviewing, taking stock of the year, considering if there is anything beyond what you yourself can understand or make, or control, or buy or wear, then ask yourself this simple question: **'does Jesus have anything to say to me at all?'** Unless you are comfortable to say, **'absolutely nothing'**, then consider to what degree you might be saying yes to Christ.

Bring your doubts and scepticism, questions and fears, because they are part of you. Jesus would not have turned you away, and neither do I or the whole Christian faith. **Someone once said that no-one ever regrets going to Church.** Regardless of what has gone before there is always the opportunity to do the next thing right – that is an invitation of Jesus Christ. **Maybe it's time for you to push your reset button, to avoid the distraction which bring cheap satisfaction and false integrity.**

So, Christmas Day is going to be a lovely day. Most of us will laugh, some of us may cry, most of us will eat too much, some of us have got to go to work! But stop and take a moment to think things through – about what God has done for us - and consider again that light shining into your inner darkness, looking for you to start something new. **At the end of this old year and the beginning of this special day, perhaps some of us need to push our reset buttons.**

The time is *always* right to respond to Jesus Christ. **Amen**