

Sermon: Second Sunday before Lent: Yr B

Proverbs 8:1, 22-31; Colossians 1:15-20; St John 1: 1-14

Close your eyes if you will, and picture the scenes as I describe them:

- It's a December afternoon and the sky is flooded with the fiery red of the setting sun.
- It's early on a bright spring morning and the birds are singing their hearts out. The sunlight sparkles on heavy dew in the fields as if someone has scattered millions of diamonds.
- The face of a much loved child lights up with a smile as he sees mum or dad approaching.

Moments – each of them – when God invites us to delight in his creation, to enjoy with him the world he has made and the people who surround us. Moments when the innocence and joy that was there at the beginning are restored and we know ourselves to be children of God, walking with him in his love and light.

Perhaps, during these days of lockdown, this is a time to ask ourselves if we have lost the sense that God delights and rejoices in us, the human race, his creation. A time to reflect on how we might respond to a God whose love for us is so strong that he chooses to come and live among us to restore us and heal us.

Our Gospel reading expresses the great mystery which is at the heart of our faith: that God became human. The reading from Proverbs is full of light, beauty, and joy as the voice of Wisdom talks about rejoicing in the world at the very beginning of creation. One version of the Bible uses the word “playing” and speaks of Wisdom being God's darling and delight. It speaks of a new creation where everything is as it should be and anything is possible.

As we know only too well, things are no longer as they were at the beginning - unspoiled, but the Gospel message is that even in our battered world the light of life and beauty still shines – the darkness has not overcome it. God still delights in the human race, in each one of us.

And it's in the nature of love, in the nature of God, to want to enjoy fellowship with us, to want the very best for us. So he comes to live among us, to draw us to himself in Jesus. In Jesus we see what God is like in human form – concerned about people's lives and welfare; willing to forgive and heal; always ready to offer a new start with new possibilities opening before us, as it was in the beginning.

And if God delights in us then surely it matters to him how we respond?

Cardinal Basil Hume says, in his book “Mystery of the Incarnation”, that we mustn't worry about whether or not we have love for God. We just need to remember the simple truth that God is in love with each of us. It's an amazing thought – that each of us can say “God is in love with me” “God delights in me”. It's a mustard seed of faith which will grow and begin to change us and our lives.

It's not something that can happen overnight. We'll probably, each of us, spend our whole life receiving God's invitations and we'll probably miss a few because we can't or won't watch and listen. Or maybe we'll recognise the invitations but be too afraid of saying “yes”, because that would mean having to change and grow, and change and growth are very often uncomfortable or downright painful.

BUT we are not alone. Jesus, the Word and Wisdom of God made flesh, is with us. He is our light and his life is the life that will never die. No pandemic, no darkness in our lives, can overcome that light but sometimes it does seem as if the darkness is all there is... and that's when we need each other. Our own light may go out for a while leaving us lost in the darkness. But being part of the body of Christ means that someone else nearby is carrying a light and can hold that up for us until our darkness passes. Then it may be our turn to hold the Christ-light for someone else.

There is darkness around us: in the damage we have done to our world; in the tragedies and disasters we hear about daily; in our own lives and in the lives of others.

But in that darkness a light shines and refuses to be overcome. A light which offers us new hope, new strength, new courage and new starts.

God delights in us: there is no darkness that can overcome that light.