

Sermon Advent 4 Year C La Chapelle Achard

2015

There has been a quote on Facebook by Neal A. Maxwell which says “Each of us is an Innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus”

The great stories of the Bible, with all their large theological and political perspectives and significance all also depend on individuals playing their part and being obedient to God, so that his great plan can be fulfilled; that his people should be restored to him.

These three readings show us God, carefully, slowly, patiently making preparations for the revelation of his Son, our Saviour. In Micah, the prophet picks up the significance of Bethlehem, even if he may think the task has been completed by producing David. And we, with hind sight, can pick up the references to the shepherd and the bringing of peace. Micah emphasises the need for justice and peace, he lets the people know that God dislikes idolatry, injustice and empty ritual, God did not want empty sacrifice but love for him, for others and

obedience to him. One of the well-known Bible verses are found in the book of Micah “And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8)

Hebrews makes the connection using words originally ascribed to David in Psalm 40. The old sacrificial system has been superseded by another kind of sacrifice, one that never needs to be made again, one that God performs for us rather than we for him. Jesus Christ was obedient even to death.

In the gospel of Luke we hear of John’s biography before he re-enters the story as the messenger pointing to Jesus. Barren parents, God intervening in their lives, making his plans, and an angel tells Zechariah that the child will be a source of gladness, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and will bring many people back to the Lord. This baby, so filled with the Holy Spirit that he leaps in his mother’s womb when Mary in her pregnant state enters the room

which leads his mother to recognise their part in God' plan.

We know of Mary's obedience, her sacrifice, did it perhaps cheer her up, after all the gossip at home, to be recognised, for her child to be recognised? But here, in these people we find a picture, a beautiful picture of God and humanity working together, in harmony, for the good of the world. What would happen, what could happen if we all allow God to work in us, with us and through us for the good of the world?

Because that is the human story of the Bible. People like you and me allowing God to work in us. Sometimes we get it wrong, get led astray, become disobedient, stop listening; all of that and more is part of the sweeping Bible story of God's relationship with us and ours with him all of those people links in the chain of the story, just as we are.

How delayed are the outcomes God has planned for us because of all the times the links have failed? How much as our own disobedience contributed to the delay?

Thankfully we have a patient, persistent God full of mercy and grace, whose word will never return empty. His plan will be fulfilled, his people will be reconciled to him.

So we hear that God will make the ultimate, once and forever sacrifice for us. And we are asked to play our part in response, in loving obedience to this. Like John, whose role was to point the way, like the poor old Innkeeper, much derided in countless nativity plays, we have roles to play, decisions to make, we have to decide if there is room for Jesus, today and always, not just on Christmas Day; room for him in our lives, in our hearts, in all eternity.