

Proverbs 8.1,22-31

Colossians 1.15-20

John 1.1-14

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. Col 1.15

But to all who received him, who believed in his name he gave power to become children of God. John 1.12

'God became a human being, so that human beings might become God' Athanasius (3rd century)

'The importance of meditation is to discover from your own experience that there is only one centre and that the life task for all of us is to find our source and our meaning by discovering and living out of that one centre'. John Main, in 'Silence and Stillness in every season', p.37

Last weekend we eventually took the Christmas tree down here at St James, as the Christmas/Epiphany season came to an end with the feast of the Presentation in the temple, and here we are this morning, having just heard the prologue from John's gospel which is one of the readings at Christmas – we use it at Midnight Mass.

We are in ordinary time – and today, hearing John's prologue to his gospel again, in conjunction with the readings from the book of Proverbs and the letter to the Colossians, the focus has moved away from the incarnation – God having come among us as a human being to share our lives - to Jesus' divinity.

This morning we are invited to ponder Jesus' divinity - and what that may mean for us.

The baby Jesus, the man Jesus who walked on earth was the Son of God; he is God who has been since the beginning of time, the first born of all creation - *the image of the invisible God* as Colossians tells us.

Jesus shows us the Father, and he shows us how we are to relate to the Father.

He shows us what God is like and he has enabled us to become like him, children of God. We too, are God's sons and daughters, God is our Father, Abba, Daddy ...loving parent. We, too, may have an intimate and loving relationship with God, as Jesus had.

In John's gospel Jesus speaks time and time again about his longing for his followers, his friends, all of us, to become one with the Father as he is one with him.

In the third century Athanasius, wrote *'God became a human being, so that human beings might become God' Athanasius (3rd century)*. ... a strange/ extraordinary thing to say ...that we may become God ... we are more familiar with the phrase that we may become like Christ - and like, him, one with the Father.

As I have been pondering these readings this week I have been struck how alien the ideas they contain may seem, even to us here in Church –never mind anyone who is unchurched or has little experience of the Christian faith.

We live in a time when we are very pre-occupied with material things. We are used to gratifying our desires through material things, and our sense of meaning and well-being is easily bound up in that as well. Moreover, looking at the state of the world with all its conflicts, suffering and greed, we may struggle to relate to our readings this morning, which speak so confidently of God at the centre of creation, *'holding all things together'*. (Col 1.17)

We live in a society where the very idea of God has become alien to many and is often under attack, and I am sure, it affects us, too. And yet ...we know better ...our longing for life and meaning, our experience and reflections bring us back to this place where we come to seek God and find him.

Perhaps, that is why the lectionary places these readings here – to remind us of the bigger picture and the mystery of God, who is the Source of all being – who has become en-fleshed within a human being and walked, talked, eaten, laughed, experience rejection, suffering and death. So that we may be set free to seek and enjoy a relationship with God just like Jesus did.

Our calling is to follow Christ, to learn from him, to become like him.

On Friday in the mediation group that meets here at St James, we had a reading by John Main, the founder of the Christian Meditation Community, which spoke about this calling to become one with the Father:

I think that what we have to understand is that returning to our centre, discovering our own centre, is the first task and the first responsibility of every life that is to become fully human.

[And 'fully human' means] *being in harmony, within ourselves, with creation and with God'. (ref as above).*

Meditation is an important way to do this. It helps us *to discover from your own experience that there is only one centre and that the life task for all of us is to find our source and our meaning by discovering and living out of that one centre'.*

'Be still and know that I am God', the psalmist says – the insight we gain from those who are dedicated to meditation is precisely this: the affirmation that God is at the centre of our existence and our calling is to return there.

I am very aware that not everyone feels called to meditation, and that many, who try it find it dull and boring, and the discipline it requires, for many people is just not possible.

But at the same time I am struck how many people these days attend 'mindfulness' courses to learn to live in the here and now and to be in touch with their inner selves.

There are, of course, many other spiritual practices that enable us to be in touch with our centre, and to draw closer to God. The starting place is our longing for God, and that harmony – peace- which has become possible through Christ.

We may not be attracted to meditation – although I strongly recommend some practice of being still before God – but we all will have moments and experiences, ways of praying, that have helped us to feel close to God, moments when we have felt ‘at one’ with God and the world around us’.

For example, for many people, spending time in nature helps them feel more centred and themselves. For others, it’s making music or listening to music, writing, painting, spending time with loved ones, coming to Church – taking part in the Eucharist.

God’s invitation is there all the time to seek him. In a couple of weeks we start the season of Lent – a time for turning to God – a season to re-arrange our priorities a bit and make space for our spiritual lives. Prayer48, too, creates a space to draw closer to God.

Athanasius words ‘ God became a human being that human beings might become God’ do not mean that we take control of the world and are in charge of everything. It means that we follow Jesus’ example of self-giving love and regular prayer that we may become who God has created us to be – people who live in harmony with God, our neighbour and all creation.

In a short while when we come to the celebration of the Eucharist we will be praying ‘as we eat and drink these holy things in your presence, form us in the likeness of Christ, and build us into a living temple to your glory’.

May we indeed draw close to God in Christ and know him in his glory, full of grace and truth. Amen.