

Sermon Advent 2 Year C 2018

One of the angelic salutations recurring through scripture is, 'Be not afraid/ fear not.' And this is what I say to you today: fear not! Fear not that you will get a normal length sermon *and* a mystery play as well... From me today as short reflection by way of introducing our performance in a moment...

You may be familiar with the TV show that has aired for a few seasons now, 'Who do you think you are?' There was originally an English version, but one has been produced here in Australia. The premise of the programme is simply to take a well known 'personality', or someone from the public sphere, and to trace something of their family tree. And in doing so identifying key or interesting persons from that family tree. In posing the question, 'who do you think you are?' inevitably leads down some strange paths. But always with the idea that by looking back through the generations, in addressing some of the gaps in the stories families tell, by trawling through dusty old documents, by looking back down the generations, we can understand something of who we are now. The reach of the ancestors is long. They continue to impact our lives. Long after they are dead, they speak to us still. If want to answer the question, who do we think we are, then it we need to look far beyond our own, limited experience.

The scriptures also pose this question to us: Who do you think you are? Of course, this is the great existential question: who are we? Are we just a clump of cells randomly making our way through this thing called life, heading towards an inevitable nothingness? Of course, for those who reject faith in God, that is the only possible conclusion: that our existence is random, meaningless and that we are heading into an eternal nothingness.

But for those who hold to faith in God, the question, *who are we?* is answered that we are created with eternal intent, that we are called into existence out the heart of God's love, that we are made for eternal union with him. Our little play, even if humorous and takes a certain poetic licence still reminds us of this. Because, by whichever way, we all need reminding of this central point: that the question of who we are is answered in reference to the God who made us for himself. We are not doomed to a random, empty, meaningless existence. But in God we find ultimate meaning, fulfilment and happiness.

God calls us into existence, breaths his life into us, calls us by name. Such is the dignity and worth of the human person in the Christian vision of things. The writer of the book of Baruch reminds us of this eternal dignity: *put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on your head: since God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven.*

Now, despite the original goodness in which we have all been created, we also know that something went wrong. Human beings have shown an instinctual knack in messing things up, and in attempting to thwart God's plan for us. But God is not thwarted. Now, he loves us too much to impose himself on us. But by grace and invitation he shows us the way back to himself. That of course is what we celebrate at Christmas: God giving of his very self in the person of Jesus, so we can make our way to God. Our play today talks of God's original creation. But in Jesus we celebrate the *new* creation. What was lost by the first Adam won back by the second. And a figure like John the Baptist emerges in the gospels as someone awake, sensitive, alert to the emergence of this new creation.

Our lives - as Christians, as disciples of Jesus - are the fruit of that new creation. Like John our very lives should be something that pints out, that heralds this new creation to the world around us.

Saint Paul today reminds us of the goal of this new creation: that we be pure and blameless, that we may reach the *'perfect goodness which Christ Jesus produces in us for the praise and glory of God.* If we live with that vision in mind, we can truly know who we are. Amen.