

Year B Christmas 2

Ephesians 1: 1-14

Glory! What shall I do?

Ephesians 1.14 Let us praise his glory

In the Good News Bible this passage has an accompanying picture of people waving palms and sounding trumpets. Praise is the key-note to these verses.

The praises come tumbling together in Paul's mind blowing statements:

In Christ we have EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavenly world!

God chose us to be united to Christ - holy and faultless in him!

God, our Father has called us to be his children!

God is gracious - he has loved us for free! Love fulfilled in the forgiving, redeeming work of Christ and the Cross!

God is bringing all creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

*God chose us to be his own people
a fellowship united to Jesus
a fellowship marked by the Holy Spirit at work in and through us!*

God has given us his Spirit as assurance of all these things!

WOW!!

Before any great moment of glory our natural human response is to ask
What do I do? Where do I go with this?

Paul's answer is *Let us praise his glory!*

Enjoy it - be thrilled by it

Hold on to it - let it affect this moment ... today ... tomorrow ... my whole life.

Live in the reflected Light of God's glory

for ourselves - growing in holiness - personal and social (v4)

for others - creating holy lives all round us - family - community - society



John 1: 1 - 18

Unwrapping God

John 1.18 *The only Son who is the same as God .. he has made him known*

John's first verses remind me of the unwrapping at a party game of *pass the parcel*. Every new stripping back of the wrappings reveals another gift - a deeper layer. The excitement increases

For John it is no party game

It is the most amazing, wonderful exposure of more and more of God

until with John we can say:

The Word - we have heard it! We have seen it with our own eyes! Our hands have touched it! [1John 1.1]

The first unwrapping (v.14)

We have sensed the TRUTH - the mind and heart of everything

- the highest and best thoughts and actions throughout the cosmos

The second unwrapping (v.1)

Creation

We have seen God in his universal,

worldwide,

person centred,

people assisted

creative works

The third unwrapping (v.4-5)

Like morning light stirring our sleepy eyes

- our minds have been opened to his truth

- our hearts stirred to life as we **believe** him

The fourth and final unwrapping (v.14)

Jesus!

God with us The Word become flesh

God, real in us and in our daily living

This is no party game

This is the most important thing we can ever do

Take the gift - God unwrapped - for me



Year B Ordinary 1

Acts 19: 1-7

A Half-life (Get a Life!)

Acts 19 What kind of baptism did you receive?

The background to this scripture record is in the previous chapter: Paul's brief visit to Ephesus where he leaves Priscilla and Aquila who encounter the Christians brought to discipleship by Apollos from Alexandria. Apollos, though a brilliant preacher, well steeped in the scriptures and in the Christian way seems to have been preaching for repentance as John the Baptist did. Priscilla and Aquila taught him the whole Gospel. Ephesus was a vast city and when Paul returned to it these disciples of John's baptism still had not met up with those who could tell the whole story.

Get a life!

Cotemporary expression addressed to someone who is devoting an inordinate amount of time to trivial or hopeless matters. - missing the best of life.

The half-life Christian

IS a Christian - a disciple of Jesus missing the best of life

They have the Christian experience of:

- repentance - turning from sin
- faith - belief in Jesus as Saviour and Lord
- baptism - in or with water

involving them in the fellowship, duties and service of the church
but missing the best!

There is so much more!

The full-life Christian

John himself said: *(Luke 3.16) I baptise you with water..... He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

- baptised in or into the Spirit of Jesus
 - filled with the Holy Spirit
 - immersed in the Spirit of Jesus
- entering into a deep spiritual relationship with Him - with God
which opens us to experiences of him as our Helper and Teacher *(John 14)*
which leads us to the gifts of the Spirit *(1 Corinthians 12.7-11)*
for Christian service
and the fruits of the Spirit / Christlikeness *(Galatians 5)*

In short - to real full-life in Christ!

Get a Life

Why be content with half-life when Jesus is offering full life
simply for believing and taking it!
Then comes the fire!!



Year B Ordinary 2

[Psalm 139: 1 - 6, 13 - 18]

Beyond Understanding

Psalm 139.17 God, how difficult I find your thoughts!

Questions

Ageing is all about knowing - knowing how little you know!

That is not the comment of a teenage grandchild.

I knew an elderly preacher, well read and with a vast experience of life, who said *I feel as though I am still walking around the edge of knowledge and of God's word.*

Faith Questions

Even with years of searching, faith questions do not go away, or get fully satisfactory answers

There is always the *mystery of God*

This is reflected in the questioning of the psalmist

About the Mystery

How difficult I find your thoughts - there are so many of them - more than grains of sand Lord, all you do is strange and wonderful

About the Personal Touch

Your knowledge of me is too deep - beyond my understanding

God, you have examined me! You know me! - everything I think or do!

You see **ME!**

You made me

My days are in your records

You protect me with your power

You are round me on all sides

ME and seven billion others !! ??

What to do about the questions

Ask them

Go on searching - deepening insights

Listen to the words of Jesus

Hold on to the answers you have (especially through Christ)

Our awareness of him *You know me* v6 Intimations of God in my life

Our love for him *I know it with (all) my heart* (v15)

Our trust in him *When I awake I am still with you* (v18)



[Jonah 3: 1 - 5 and 4.1]

Unhappy with God!?

Jonah 4.1 Jonah was very unhappy

*Some good Christians tell me it is right to shout at God and be angry with him.
Jonah did when he was unhappy with the way God had treated him.*

*But I am not sure shouting at God is any more than a selfish relief of tension!
(Of course, I'm sure he understands)*

Jonah was unhappy ...

Because God had a fresh expression which Jonah believed possible, but he was unprepared for the way God brought it about.

Because God's grace, mercy and justice, embracing patience, love and forgiveness is wider and deeper than could conceive

This is a contemporary mind-set
*God is only as big as my mind - my thinking
God's love is only as great as can fit into my heart.*

The Lord's reply:

What right have you to be unhappy - and angry? (4.4)



Year B Ordinary 3

[Mark 1: 14 - 20]

Can I? or Can't I

John's ministry is ended. Jesus begins his preaching in Galilee and calls the first of his close band of disciples.

These men received their **call** from him
They responded immediately
But there had been a great deal of **'pre-call'** preparation
which provides us with a guide to some of the things which lead up to a **vocation**

Circumstances

The right time

Galilee was ready in terms of culture and morality, politics, religious questions
The first disciples were party to all that - hence their interest in John the Baptists
preaching and other political and religious challenges
They were dissatisfied - yearning for new things - for change

The Challenge of the Kingdom

John had come
He challenged people - *change your life - be right with God - and change your world!*

Now Jesus arrived with the challenging hope of *Good News*
the fulfilment of John's prophetic dreams

*The Kingdom of God! It's here. It's **me**.
It's in my teaching and living.
It's near enough for you to embrace it!*

The Call

Circumstances and Challenge lead to Calling for four fishermen
Typically, Jesus uses their present circumstances to make his point
'Fishing'
*You're minds and hearts are bursting for the Kingdom to come. Come and do another
kind of fishing with me. People-fishing. Changing lives to change the world!*

Our Calling

The same principles apply now
What do I have to do to be ready for God's call?

Be aware of the circumstances - the events
The world and society - with all its challenges
with its need for Good News - God's Kingdom

Be excited - thrilled - with the news of the Kingdom - be immersed in it

Be ready for the unexpected
It may be a call to a very different sort of fishing to what we do now
It may involved risk - *giving up the boats and the business - upsetting the boss*

A vocation is not the same as being a volunteer!

Get close to Jesus

Ask not ***Can I go with him.*** Ask ***Can I NOT go with him?***

