

Sunday Thought

2nd January 2022 Second Sunday of Christmas

Readings

Jeremiah 31: 7 -14

Psalm 147: 12 - 20

Ephesians 1: 3 - 14

John 1: 1 - 18

Are we there yet?

Are we there yet? Many parents of young children will be familiar with that refrain repeated over and over again after the halfway stop on a long car journey. At Christmas it merges with that other question, *'Has he come yet?'* The accounts of Jesus' birth are about journeys -by the family and other census pilgrims, by local shepherds, eastern astrologers, Roman soldiers. It seemed appropriate then for the new Webb space telescope to be launched on Christmas day this year, beginning its million-mile mission into our universe. When in orbit it will be able to see how the universe looked thirteen billion years ago. It will witness things happening when our galaxy and solar system were being created. On our scientific trek of space discovery, the answer to *'are we there yet?'* is *'No, not by a long, long way'*. Facts like these are hard to grasp but I was thrilled to hear them. It all added to the greater splendour of Christmas.



Paul's words to Christians at Ephesus in today's reading explain how *'God had a secret plan even before the world began.'* Amazing! All that space! All that distance! All that time! All those stars and their planets! Then at one special moment in earth-time, a baby was born to a couple home for a census, joining family in a Judaeen hill village, on the earth as it circled the Sun, and the Creator's purpose behind this cosmic plan came into focus. The journey was not at its end. We were not there yet. Galaxy-creation work would continue but a new part of it was about to begin in a different, spiritual dimension. In Charles Wesley's words, *Earth and heaven combined*. God was among earth people. No wonder angel choirs were singing while shepherds were about their everyday business! Those surprised and frightened workers went to pay homage to the King of kings and learned men of science, knowledge and wealth shared their riches with a poor family while taxmen and priests went on counting their shekels; powerful armed forces murdered tiny children and another refugee family set off for Egypt under divine direction. Earth, our world was setting off on a new spiritual journey of love and new creations!

John, in the wonderful opening words of his gospel shares the same feelings of wonder. Jesus, the Son of God, co-creator of everything, the source of all life, became a living person in our world. It was like the turning on of another brighter light – a perpetual beam of truth, hope, love which could never be switched off! The Creator was with us, and nothing need be the same again! The changing world is still happening as increasingly, people accept Jesus by believing in him and opening ourselves to the power of his Spirit of love. Like facts about the cosmos, that may well be hard for our minds to take in but having believed it and knowing him, my heart says, 'Yes! *Let's rejoice with angels! Let's thrill to this wonderful moment when all of God out there and beyond is now here with us!*' We are so very far from arriving yet on this journey through universes but the Creator of it all has come to meet us on the way. Paul adds one thing more to blow our minds and thrill our spirits. All this Christmas wonder, he says, is because God loves us and longs for every one of us to live with and for him in Jesus. It is was in Christ he showed his love for us through his own gracious nature, forgiving and renewing, dying, and rising.

I am afraid my 'thought' today may seem enthusiastically jumbled. I am simply lost in wonder when I consider cosmic facts and vast galaxies and even more when I read how '*God in his wisdom and insight, had a purpose – a secret plan – to be completed in Christ.*' and you and I have been in the *plan* from the beginning of everything!! The way to be sure of that is now open to all people, of all ages, classes, races who visit a humble stable, kneel before a cross, wonder beside an empty tomb and open their lives to the power of divine love. I recall how, after early ventures into space, sceptics commented that astronauts didn't find God out there. Did they really expect to? They were still in the earth dimension. God's spirit takes us into this new life-dimension which Jesus calls *The Kingdom!* Don't worry about being blown away by facts of what is out there, let's enjoy being in the Kingdom of God's love.

A Prayer (with Psalm 147 in mind)

Lord, how can we not want to praise you?
You are wise beyond measure.
You know the numbers of the stars.
You include us in your master plan for everything.
You come in Jesus to bring us to you.
You heal the broken hearted.
You raise the humble.
You satisfy our deepest needs.
Earth and heaven are in your hands.
All who honour you and trust your constant love
join in universal wonder, singing your praise
and trusting your eternal love.

