

The Second Sunday before Lent 7th February 2021

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

I've found it very difficult not to become frustrated with the constant reports and press conferences of the past year. This time last year when we were just beginning to be aware of a potential killer virus there was a great deal of speculation so maybe we weren't hanging on to every pronouncement but since it's become clear that we're in the midst of a pandemic we've bombarded with data, both in words and numbers.

I admit, being a former Maths teacher, my frustrations are mainly with the numbers. Sometimes because there are just so many, but mostly because with each new fresh initiative we're no longer comparing like with like so I wonder whether they really make sense. It's just the same with words, because what I'm really looking for is the thinking behind the numbers and the thinking behind the words. I'm hoping for some wisdom.

Perhaps though, I'm looking in the wrong place. John in this first chapter of his gospel gets straight to the point. As far as he is concerned true wisdom lies with one being and one being only, 'the Word was with God and the Word was God'. We lose a bit in translation in that first verse with the Greek word *Logos* being interpreted as Word. When the gospel was written *logos* conveyed much more than what we think of as a word. *Logos* meant more than just text. It indicated complete understanding so when John began his gospel as he did he was telling his readers that complete understanding, or wisdom, lies entirely with and in God. Absolute wisdom has existed since the world began but only in God. But that's a bit nebulous for ordinary people even though every single bit of creation, people included, shows the presence of God.

According to John enlightenment had to be brought to earth in another way – in the person of Jesus. John had lived alongside Jesus and had seen the glory of God in him. By living the life of an ordinary person in Jesus, God was establishing his closeness to all creation and all who lived in it. As Paul wrote to the Colossians 'through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through the blood of the cross' (Colossians 1:15-20).

So if I'm to find some wisdom in our circumstances at the moment, maybe I should stop trying to make sense of the numbers and look at the places where wisdom really lies. As I look at God's creation, where snowdrops are once again raising their heads and even the daffodils are beginning to open, I see a divine creator who has never forgotten his world, and who restores life from year to year. Then I am reminded, in my reading of John's gospel, that God loved us so much that he gave his only Son to die for us so that we might have eternal life. Having reflected on that, I realise I'm not going to find answers to my concerns and anxieties simply by looking at data in words and numbers. Instead I need to place my hope in something far greater, 'the light which shines in darkness', the Word which has been with humanity from the beginning, God almighty. Amen

Ann Barlow