

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent - 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Last Sunday was the 4<sup>th</sup> of Epiphany. Candlemas has passed. We are now in the season of preparation for Lent so this **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February** is the second Sunday before Lent  
**Proverbs 8:1, 22-31; Psalm 104:26-end; Colossians 1:15-20 and John 1:1-14**

**Proverbs 8:** *1 Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? 22... The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts long ago....30: ...then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31: rejoicing in his world and delighting in the human race.'*

**Psalm 104: 26-end:** *In wisdom you have created them all: Leviathan, life and dust, the earth trembles, I will look to the Lord...Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!*

**Col 1: 15-20:** *[Jesus, the Son] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and before him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning; the first born from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

**John 1:1-14:** *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14 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.*

*'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.'* Psalm 19

*I invite you to look into the icon while I speak.*

For me, a treasured moment in BCD Ministry was Gregg inviting me to read John's Prologue at Christmas Midnight Mass. I felt the tingling power of a moment in time because John's Gospel and I have a long history.

For this moment however, I admit to being lost for words. My past, and continuing, Biblical studies lead me to agree with the 2014 Israeli tour guide when he said, 'After two weeks in Israel you might write a brief explanation about what is happening in the Middle East. After two months of living here you may write several pages but, after a year, you wouldn't write one word.' By the time I left Israel, I understood what he meant and feel the same about these awe-inspiring words.

Maybe the five verses from Colossians are easier to understand. Ummm... The letter Paul wrote to the Colossian Church was to tell them what they badly needed to know: that no-one and nothing was more important than Jesus. We all know this... but do we really know it, in our hearts, in our souls and with all our strength? Professor Tom Wright put it like this: If the Colossians were to continue growing in wisdom, power, patience and thanksgiving they needed to know *'the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ'*. I wonder, what would that look like in a church community? I wonder if the Colossians ever found out. How would we know if our churches were living up to this measure?

Do you remember where in the Bible you've heard the words 'knowing something with all your hearts, souls and strength? No, it's not another quiz question! It's from the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomy 6, when Moses explains God's Great Commandment to the people of Israel as they approach the land promised 40 years beforehand: *4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.*

New Testament writing was born from and through the Hebrew Bible, a rich tapestry of Jewish History and Wisdom, which not only paved the way for Good News about Jesus Christ but which remains integral to understanding its underlying message.

'Wisdom' for example, from Genesis 1, threads its golden way through the Law, the Prophets and the Writings and it connects today's readings. There is an abundant Hebrew History of Wisdom literature including Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. Today's reading from Proverbs 8 for example, says this: *30] Then I [Wisdom] was beside Him [God], like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31] rejoicing in His world and delighting in the human race.'*

Wisdom knows we and the world are *'delightful'* because God and Wisdom worked together, from the beginning, creating the world and blessing the human race. St. Paul is at pains to remind the Colossians that Jesus was there too. Jesus, he wrote, *'is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created'*.

In the next 5.59 seconds Paul extends this image to place Jesus' life, death, resurrection and his new body, the baby church, to be where *'all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell'*.

How, you may ask, could this be? It could be because, through Jesus, *'God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross'*. Paul deftly knitted together the golden strands of Hebrew Wisdom and what he knew the Colossian church needed to know about Jesus.

And only now, dear friends, are we ready to come closer to the mystery of the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel. These verses mirror Hebrew Wisdom Literature and Greek thought [which I have no space to mention]. In so doing they proclaim, as if in a great, stained-glass Cathedral window that we **can** know, and draw near, to God; not as we think God is, but as God truly is. When we turn and look at Jesus, we **can** see the mirror-image of the invisible God we can't see.

How to sum this up? Ummm... with apologies to our Mathematicians, here is the formula John sets before us:

The Word + God = Life + Light – darkness x witness = God's name/children of God + Word + flesh + glory + grace + truth = Good News/Emmanuel, God is dwelling with us.

The icon you have been looking at speaks more profoundly of this than I ever could so, as I re-read some verses from John, I invite you to wonder at Jesus, our Emmanuel:

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God  
3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.  
5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.  
7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.  
9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.  
11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.  
12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,  
14 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.*

Teach us to look at Jesus and to see you Lord, God of all Creation. Teach us to love You with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our strength. Amen.