

Covenant for the new Year, Eucharist. 31st December 2023

Luke 2:15-21

Father Tim Carroll

In the book 'How music works' musician and artist David Byrne argues that creativity is largely context dependant. Byrne does admit that doesn't this probably doesn't seem particularly insightful but that it does he go against conventional thought. We often think about that creative spark or going with our gut. When it comes to creativity and even with going with our conscience these are not primarily mysterious deep individualised inner light but are influenced and shaped by external factors. Likewise, the creativity in the Bible, the stories and songs and poems are all shaped by an external context.

The revelation of God didn't spring up in a vacuum; this Christmas we celebrate that god reveals himself through himself in our lives and communities. This morning we are thinking and reaffirming our faith in the covenant God has made with us. Covenant is what frames our lives as Christians and what has contextualised God and humanity throughout generations. In the Bible covenant can be a treaty between human parties

In ancient times superpowers such as Assyria or Babylon would enter treaties with other smaller nations. The treaty would be an act of favour from the more powerful actor towards the minor. Conditions would be drawn up that would promise peace and protection in return for obedience. Now when it comes to the treaty or covenant between God and Israel it could also be seen as a treaty between two unequal parties. But instead of a political arrangement, this covenant is about a loving relationship. God's grace of choosing Israel to be his people and Israel's choice to worship and love Yahweh. The Old Testament tells of a creator God choosing a particular family, promising them land and making a covenant that they will bring blessing to the world. The family grows but they end up being slaves in Egypt. God liberates them and leads them out of Egypt where he makes a covenant with them and gives them ten commandments. The family becomes a nation and possesses the land God promised.

Although Israel has become a major influence in world religion, in ancient times they were a minor player in political world. They were often occupied and under the rule of the Assyrians, Persians, and Babylonian empires. God makes a covenant between King David and his house that if the Israelite nation keep his laws. He will send someone from the house of David to extend God's blessing and peace, this blessing was not contained to the house of David but extends to all nations and peoples the world.

All are to receive this blessing of relationship with God. This covenant is fulfilled and celebrated this Christmas in Jesus Christ, who came to be with all humanity. This is the external context we have inherited. This is what frames this church. This ancient covenant, as we come into this New Year, we are reminded that as a community our relationships with each other and God. are based on this covenant God is with us, God with all people. Who Never leaves us or forsakes us. Through the birth, life death and resurrection of Christ. We are in a covenant relationship of friendship with God. Not based on how good we are but on Gods eternal initiative to be with us. Although this is a gift it's not one, we are to be passive. But we are invited to participate within this service to reaffirm our faith in this everlasting covenant. To respond with each other.

To this grace that entered our world and lives together as friends and disciples of God

Amen