

25th December Christmas Day

Luke 2:1-14

Fr Tim Carroll

I don't know if it's impressive or sad that I have honestly never heard a Christmas number one by Lad Baby, who apparently had 5 in a row until this year. Looking back at previous years number one songs at Christmas you will see that cartoonish novelty songs are actually a common occurrence. For those old enough to remember 1993, you may recall the number one entry was by Mr Blobby, imaginatively entitled 'Mr Blobby'. Things settle down for a while, with artists such as East 17, Spice Girls and West Life, being Top of the Tops. Until the year 2000, when another cartoonish song entered number one. A Cartoon character by the name Bob The Builder comes storming in with the mega hit theme tune 'Can we fix it' – lyrics such as 'Bob and the gang, have so much fun, working together to get the job done'

Not all Christmas number ones are Christmassy, not many are, except for the likes of 'Do they now it's Christmas? 'Mistletoe and Wine' by Cliff. Bob the Builder 'Can we fix it' doesn't sound particularly Christmassy but actually when it comes to Christianity sometimes this idea of fixing can become a common theme is Christ being born about getting a job done.

The way we would call out a handyman, does Jesus turn up, sort out humanities issues and off he pops. Job done. This is too short a story. It's gets things the wrong way around. As passages such as Ephesians tell us, before the world began God loved us and chose us in Christ. Theologian Sam Wells claims that 'written into the DNA' of creation for God to be with us in Christ'. This is quite thought. It is quite a claim. If the universe is around 14 Billion years old, the earth around 4.5 billion, modern Humanity around 300,000. It is quite a claim that for all this time and beyond time into eternity that God always intended to show up Bethlehem in this way to take on human form, so God can be with us. For friendship. That at Christmas time the god given gift we celebrate to quote Karl Barth

'Is not a something, but himself, in giving his only son, God gives us everything'

That this isn't God showing up to merely sort out a problem that needs fixing, but to draw near, to be friends. Whatever your idea around sin, maybe you don't have one, but before anything came into being, before the earth evolved, before humanity came on the scene. It was also the intention of God of to give us the richest gift that can be given

Himself

No matter how excited or disappointed you are with your presents this morning, we come this morning to recapture the revelation of a God. Who is not distant but is intimate, who is present, we live in a traumatic world. We hear constant stories of violence and war, knife crime and random attacks on people in the street, in universities in schools, suffering remains with us.

Suffering does not go away – in our minds and our bodies. Popular culture often wants to tell us that suffering turns into joy, victims become survivors and perpetrators are always punished. When after a traumatic event, we are left diminished, and it is difficult to reconnect with the world. We want this fixed now.

But Christianity makes claim that in this side of eternity conquest and wholeness are not promised but what is is that God is with us. That as much is diminished – love remains with us. Love is with us.

When we rage at God, which in fact is a Biblical stance, we say you're supposed to be in control, but this suffering is with us – The reply we get at Christmas is 'I am a helpless baby before your eyes, I am an infant, vulnerable to rejection and hatred'. Do we want that - the fragility, the embrace that does not dominate or control but is present, remains when so much falls away is lost, is truly a deeply with us in a loving friendship that is with us forever

We do not only witness the suffering that persists but also bear witness in our lives that love remains with us. God daily comes to us with the gift of himself. We hear throughout the Bible that this is what we long for. Moses was a friend of God because he sought this presence. We long for that not just a pillar of cloud Or in a moment of dazzling glory. But to share our humanity. To be truly intimate, truly present.

Presence is what counts. We know this in our own lives – no matter the rise of social media the quality of really being present beats any virtual communication. God with you. God with the person sat next to you

We all fit into this story of friendship this Christmas – I am with you. Even if you don't have many friends. Even if you've proved yourself not be a particularly good friend. God continually comes to us with the richest of gifts

The gift of God himself – whose love and presence persists with us – shown in the fragility and vulnerability of a child

Which remains with us this morning and forever. Amen