

Jesus the same

1 9 13

Almighty God,
whose Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence;
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and truth.

My text may be found in the letter to the Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 8:

‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’

Are you a fan of ‘Dr Who’ ? Did you watch that very first episode on 23rd November 1963 ? Were you haunted by the unearthly sounds produced by the BBC’s Electronic Workshop ? Were you intrigued by an ordinary, everyday, dark blue police box which was revealed to be a Tardis, nothing less than the time travelling machine of Dr Who, a Time Lord from Gallifrey ? Did you like William Hartnell, the very first Doctor ? Over some 40 years, Dr Who is a role which has metamorphosed a dozen times and, on Christmas Day this year, the current Doctor, Matt Smith, will be renewed in the person of Peter Capaldi who at 55 will be the same age as William Hartnell when he first assumed the role.

The thought of time travel is an idea that has captured our imagination. As human beings, we are naturally aware of the passage of time. There is so much that reminds us that time is passing. Clocks, watches, even our mobile phones,

all can tell us the time. The sun rises; the sun sets. Seasons change and inevitably, inexorably, we are all growing older by the year. So change is the order of the day and nothing really can or does stay the same forever.

Except . . . Except the wonderful claim made by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews which is our text today:

'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.'

What does it mean in a world of change that Jesus is unchanging? First and foremost that we have something that is guaranteed not only for life but for all times and, in fact, beyond time itself. It means that in this world of change and chance, of instability, we have a rock on which to rest secure, we have a sure foundation on which to build our lives.

Of course, it goes without saying that Jesus was born, a baby as we all were, and that he grew up as a boy, became a man and died, as die we all must. But not only was Jesus fully what it is to be human but he is fully what it is to be God and one of the characteristics of God is that He is eternal, unchanging, forever the same, beyond the effects and the ravages of time.

So in Jesus we have someone who is like us but someone who is wholly different from us. Jesus is someone who knows what it is like to be like us but he is also someone in a world of change who embodies something that does not change. And that unchanging certainty is the certainty that God loves us and will always love us – no matter what.

The truth of the love of God can be seen in many ways not least in the precious gift of life to us, the fact that we are embodied, that we can feel, that we are made in his image, that we can think. We are conscious creatures: alive, awake, aware.

Perhaps the unchanging love of God is best illustrated by the well known story of the Prodigal Son, by the wonderful image of the father who has let his younger son go but who never lets him go from his heart. That father watches the road for his son's return and when he does come back, he rushes out to meet him on the road. It is the compassion of God for Man embodied in that story, the image of the father hugging his son in a warm embrace, that tells us we are loved.

In churches, we can often see not only several examples of an empty cross but we may also see several crucifixes or pictures of the crucifixion itself with Jesus hanging on the cross. The image of pain and suffering, implicit in the former and graphically illustrated in the latter, is, I suggest to you, a picture of God's love for us, a love that is prepared to die for us that we might live. And that fact does not change !

And what should our response be but to love others as we know we ourselves are loved ? It is curious to reflect that those folk who are the most negative and most aggressively difficult probably have a deep loathing of themselves and, uncomfortable with their own self image, they want to make life as miserable for others as it is for themselves. But we, on the other hand, should try to practise the love of our neighbour as we love ourselves. In so doing, we are buying into and reflecting lasting, unchanging values that have stood the test of time.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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