

## St Mary's Parish Church 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, 09/12/2018

Malachi 3:1-4; Benedictus; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

What two things do Winnie the Pooh and John the Baptist have in common? They both love honey, and have the same middle name – Ta Dah! Probably the most ordinary word in the world, ‘the’ is what they have in common. And in Luke’s Gospel we can see on a human level, just how ordinary John is!

We read this:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas....” Etc., etc. Luke tells us who the important people were in that time. If anyone was important at this time in History, it was these guys.

But then the big reveal - the rest of Luke’s sentence says: “...the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.” So the Word of God didn’t come to the high priests, who alone could enter the Holy of Holies, nor the bigwig governors and power politicians, or even the Roman emperor, who exercises life-and-death power, and not even to the holy city Jerusalem. No, it comes to this lone guy in the desert.

From all the important people God could have chosen, people with big audiences and influence, he picked an ordinary, albeit very strange Baldrick-like desert wandering ranter!

And if God could use so powerfully a hippy in the desert that had no discernment in what he looked like or ate, then God can use us – me and you.

If God can send an angel to Mary and another to Joseph, both ordinary people in a small town, then somehow the ordinary seems to become the extra- ordinary, and if God can use them, He can use us.

And yet, when we are asked to bring a friend to Church or talk about our faith, we duck out. Why? Because we think God can’t use us, we are too ordinary.

We think God expects us to be spiritual, and that He has no interest in mundane ordinary events. And we create this tension of spiritual and actual. We look at our practical life as separate from the spiritual (which we keep to certain holy moments each day). But God has not made us like that – our spirit does not have divisions of what is practical and what is spiritual, he works through the whole of us. God is

with us when we go to church and He is with us when we go to Asda for the shopping!

There really is no need for inner conflict or strain or feeling not good enough, He is working through us and in us whether we recognise and understand it or not.

The Benedictus tells us we can worship without fear. I expect you think, well we do, we aren’t being persecuted or executed for our faith. But actually, there is always this inner conflict of what you think God thinks you ‘should’ be doing and what you actually do in real life. It is only when we confess our fear, when we surrender to Him and let go of all our anxieties, preparations for Christmas, family worries etc. and realise that everything that takes place in our lives, takes place in Him. He alone matters and our spiritual and practical life is His affair, because whatever we think, He chose us to work through, simple ordinary unworthy people.

And when we accept that, all our self-willed choices and the great divide between spiritual and actual is drained away, we become like John the Baptist – accepting that God’s work is done through us.

Let him act in us and through us and all around us. let him take full possession of our mind heart and body, let him dominate our daily tasks, our environment, our thoughts and situations – let us accept God’s presence even and especially in the ordinary. Just let him in this Advent, don’t be the place with no room for the life giving presence of Jesus.

So instead of expecting the word of God to come on the BBC or even in church, through important people let it flow through you

There are no special god times in the day, just special times. God is in everything. Talk to him while you read, work, eat live. Make his presence ordinary in your life because he wants to use you.

God is here in the ordinary. He expects us just to get on with our lives, but with him at the centre. He is not looking for powerful people to spread His message; he is looking for people like you and me, ordinary people, mixing and living with other ordinary people

And Jesus himself? Fully God yes, but also fully human. A human that God used to the full, not born in a hotel, but in a humble manger with ordinary people invited to welcome him into this world, and into our ordinary lives. And when we welcome Him into the whole of our lives, then we can look forward to the extra-ordinary.