

The Miracle of Sharing!

Nehemiah 8^{1-3,5-6,8-10}; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12¹²⁻³¹; Luke 4¹⁴⁻²¹

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of the sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

[Luke 4¹⁸⁻¹⁹]

The Epiphany Season is defined by three themes:

- i. The visit of the Magi who brought gifts to honour the one's whose birth they read in the stars and worshipped the infant Jesus.
- ii. The Baptism of Jesus, when Jesus is audibly affirmed by the voice of God confirming that this is his Son and the physical descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.
- iii. The miracle of water into wine, revealing Jesus' power over all things.

If Epiphany is about miracles, then perhaps the miracle would be if we told people about Jesus, if we shared our faith.

The simple fact is that worship transforms Christians – we cannot enter this building, engage honestly with God and then leave as if nothing had ever happened!

- ✘ The Psalm shows us that nature inspires worship – **the heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.** Certainly, we know the awe of the full moon or the wind, but, however inspirational that may be, that isn't necessarily transformative.
- ✘ Nehemiah records the reading of the **Book of the Law of Moses** after the returning exiles had rebuilt the walls and there was relative security in Jerusalem. It was clearly a moving event for **all the people wept.** Two things happen as a result of reading the Scriptures: i) The people were told to go away and eat the best food and drink the best wine **for the joy of the Lord is your strength** and, ii) they had to share it! **Send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared.** Worship opens our hearts to one another.

- ✘ Just before Paul launches into 1 Corinthians 13 (which lies between 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 – both about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so we know that love as Paul describes it is a gift of the Holy Spirit too) he speaks about the body of Christ. It doesn't matter who we are or where we come from, **we were all baptised into one body – and were all made to drink of one Spirit.** The simple message is that we need each other and can't do without each other. Worshipping together gets us to the point where **there is no dissention within the body; the members have the same care for one another; and if one member suffers, all suffer together – if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.**
- ✘ All of this is the foundation on which we can build and affirms us so that we can then, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, do what Jesus says! He fulfilled the prophecy that said the power of the **Spirit would bring good news to the poor; proclaim release to captives; recovery of sight to the blind; let the oppressed go free.** So must we.

I noticed for the first time the little phrase about Jesus attending the synagogue, **as was his custom.** But Jesus encountered the problem that hinders our evangelism and faith-sharing: home isn't the easiest place to do it! When Jesus said, **today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,** the passage beyond our reading tells us that **they drove him out of town.... So that they might hurl him off the cliff.** The text then simply says, **but he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.**

The **Good News** that we live will bring **release, sight** and **freedom** to all who will accept it. Yet we know, from Jesus' experience as well as our own, that the Good News is divisive: our families may not want to throw us off a cliff for going on about faith, but they may come close to it! The more passionate the response against faith, the closer to faith they are: the great enemy is indifference.

Sharing together gives us the resources, the confidence and the impetus to go and share the Good News about Jesus – and to do so where we are with those who are closest to us.