

SERMON: 13 December 2020 – Rev Alistair Cowper

Advent - The Joy in God's Coming

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Let's begin with a question:

John's life pointed clearly to Jesus the Messiah. Who or what does your life point to?

If we're honest with ourselves the answer to that question is probably, 'to me, myself'.

So perhaps a better question might be:

For who or what does our life make room for?

Does it make room for new life? Does it long for good news? Is it prepared to carry the burden and go through with the pain that might result from delivering new life?

Well don't let that thought put you off.

Because John the Baptist's Christmas message is about shouting and announcing new life.

John was a herald. He thundered in the desert the message of change.

God sent him to prepare the way, to tell everyone that light that was coming.

John was a witness, a martyr, to the light, the light that gives light to everyone.

John knew who he wasn't. He wasn't Elijah. He wasn't the Prophet. He wasn't the Messiah.

And he knew who he was.

He was a voice shouting in the wilderness, prepare a way for the Lord's coming, the Lord who will baptise with the Spirit of new birth and new life.

Many are weary today.

They need to hear good news.

They need to have their broken hearts comforted.

They need to hear that's it's possible for beauty to come out of the ashes of their mourning and despair.

Tired of carrying heavy loads people need good news.

How people long to be, as the prophet says, overwhelmed with joy in the Lord their God.

Draped in a robe of righteousness like a bride or groom dressed for their wedding; or like a garden in early spring, full of young plants springing up everywhere.

The message of John and the Christmas message points to the Author of this new life, the Godhead veiled in flesh.

John pointed to new life in Christ; life that waits to be born in hearts that are open and make room for Christ life.

I read a lovely article this week about Christmas being all about ordinary people being invited to become pregnant with the Holy Spirit and birth Christ in their lives. Here's part of what that commentary said:

"We can read the history of our 13.7-billion-year-old universe as the rising up of Divine Love incarnate, which bursts forth in the person of Jesus, who reveals love's urge toward wholeness through reconciliation, mercy, peace, and forgiveness.

Jesus is the love of God incarnate, the wholemaker who shows the way of evolution toward unity in love.

In Jesus, God breaks through and points us in a new direction; not one of chance or blindness but one of ever-deepening wholeness in love.

In Jesus, God comes to us from the future to be our future. Those who follow Jesus are to become wholemakers, uniting what is scattered, creating a deeper unity in love.

Christian life is a commitment to love, to give birth to God in one's own life and to become midwives of divinity in this evolving cosmos. We are to be wholemakers of love in a world of change."

Ilia Delio *"Love at the Heart of the Universe"* (2013)

We have the opportunity to become midwives of divinity and wholemakers of love in our ever changing world.

That's the difference the Spirit makes to humanity.

As someone else put it,

Christ "comes again" whenever we are able to see the spiritual and the material coexisting, in any moment, in any event, and in any person. This is how God continually breaks into history.

May we make room for Christ to be born in us afresh this Christmas.