

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sunday 18th December 2022

ADVENT 4 – 2022– 8am only

“I wish Christmas would hurry up and arrive” said one of our children to me recently. I know exactly how he feels. For me, the sermons are written, the services are all ready – I am just waiting. But then also in today’s readings, the stage is set, the timing is right – and the focus is about to shine out in the person of Jesus. Here we find God using the ordinariness of good people so that extraordinary things can be accomplished. God allows individual people to know their own part in the action exactly as and when they need to know it.

It is because Joseph is expecting God to be God, that he is prepared to alter his sensible and considerate plan to make no loud accusations about Mary when divorcing her for her assumed unfaithfulness. Whatever that dream was, it made him think again. Perhaps Mary had tried to tell him the truth and he hadn’t been able to believe her before. We can only guess at how much must have happened before Joseph changed his mind.

We may, for our own part, come to realise that God will still speak to us through our dreams, memories and feelings, if only we take the trouble to notice.

Through the willing participation of Mary and Joseph, God is poised to come among his people as their Saviour – and that is, quite simply, all that we

need to remember for now as we celebrate that it was this ready agreement by these two ordinary people that made Christmas possible.

John Betjeman helps us with his poem 'Christmas' which ends: "And is it true? And is it true, this most tremendous tale of all, Seen in a stained-glass window's hue, a Baby in an ox's stall? The Maker of the stars and sea become a Child on earth for me? And is it true? For if it is, no loving fingers tying strings around those tissued fripperies, the sweet and silly Christmas things, bath salts and inexpensive scent and hideous tie so kindly meant, no love that in a family dwells, no carolling in frosty air, nor all the steeple-shaking bells can with this single Truth compare - that God was Man in Palestine and lives today in Bread and Wine".

In the Christmas story, we find God delighting in using the ordinariness of good people so that extraordinary things can be accomplished. And he continues to accomplish extraordinary things through you and through me still today.

And for that truth, thanks be to God.