

Sunday 31st December 2017
1st Sunday of Christmas (B)

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: Isaiah 61.10-62.3

NT: Galatians 4:4-7

G: Luke 2.15-21

At Easter time, the Church focuses on the actions of God.

His sacrifice of his son upon the cross for love of us.

His raising of this same son, Jesus, from the dead so that we might be freed from our sins and restored to eternal life in Christ.

At Christmas time, we focus more on the word of God, the Word made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

Through Advent, we were called to stay awake, to be ready, to bear witness and to believe but what were we waiting for, why were we prepared, what we were called to testify to, in what do we believe?

We were waiting for the Word of God, this Jesus who humbled himself to take on human form so that we might eventually share in his divinity.

Words can be powerful tools. We can use them to bring hurt or to comfort, to deny or to commit, to speak of hatred or of love.

We only have to look at the use of social media in our society today to understand the power of words to intimidate. Inappropriate Tweets threatening war and sparking a nuclear standoff between two nations.

People feeling free to heap menace on others with whom they disagree politically by using words of violence and abuse.

Falsehoods spread to the gullible to shore up positions of power.

But these same mechanisms of communication can be used to spread good news, enable families dispersed across the world to share their love for each other. Allow others to speak up for those who have no voice, to draw attention to the plight of those who are suffering. Become a means to share joy and good news with a wider audience.

If human words can wield such power, how much more so can the Word of God.

If the end of Jesus' earthly life was about action, then his birth and public ministry were also about words.

Words used to tell us something of our heavenly Father, words to challenge our complacency, words to speak of love for God and for our neighbour.

In order to hear these words, we must listen with open hearts and open minds.

It is not enough just to hear, listening requires that we absorb these words.

When the shepherds come to worship the new-born Jesus, they relate the story of the angels and all they had witnessed that holy night and

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Mary as the first bearer of the Word of God, gives us the example of how we should respond to this same Word.

Like Mary we should listen and consider deeply what the Word of God means to us and like Mary, we should bring forth this Word of God to share with others so that all might believe and come to know the love of God and its saving grace.

We live in a busy world, there's always something else that needs doing and we live in a noisy world too.

Silence is not fashionable, silence can be threatening, uncomfortable.

The Christmas holidays can be frantic, making sure you get round to see all your family and friends, cooking for this visit, going to that party.

But these days should also be a time for a bit of peace, some time for reflection, a few moments of silence.

This weekend you might, like many others, be looking back over this past year and making plans and resolutions for the year ahead.

It would be good if one of your resolutions was to build a bit of silence into your busy life, to listen out at all times for the word of God and to be open to his will and his grace.

So that this time next year when you're looking back over 2018 you will be able to see the journey that you have walked with Jesus, to recognise the words he has spoken to you, to be aware of his love in your life. Amen.

The Revd Michelle Montrose