

OT: Genesis 18. 1-10a
NT: Colossians 1.15-28
Gp: Luke 10.38-42

In an effort to understand where technology is leading us, I have been listening to podcasts about AI and its possible future implications, both good and bad. I can't say I'm an expert and to be honest, I don't think I understand any of it. The other programme I heard this week broadcast some of the original transmission of the description of the launch and technology of Telstar, the first satellite in space which back in 1957 sent the first, grainy television pictures across the Atlantic from America to the UK.

So, just in my lifetime we have moved from that to the prospect of Artificial Intelligence having an integral part in our daily lives. How we communicate, how we learn about the world around us, how information can be manipulated and disseminated has changed fundamentally and swiftly. It can feel like being on an ever speeding roundabout where truth becomes more and more difficult to discern.

When I opened this Word document to begin writing, AI offered me help with producing a bedtime story for an 8 year old or a blog of a sailing trip! No mention of a sermon for the 5th Sunday after Trinity, so what follows are my own words with no contribution from any bot!

In contrast to our busy world, today's readings remind us of the need to step back, to pause, to consider what is before us. And what is before us is nothing less than God himself, waiting patiently for our attention.

The reading from Genesis describes the three unexpected visitors to Abraham who greets them with courtesy but then busies himself in running around organising refreshment for them. The story tells us that these three persons are God himself, the Trinity.

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre

There is that beautiful icon which depicts them sitting there in harmony, almost in a dance together. Only towards the end of this passage when Abraham finally stops running about and sits with his guests do we get a hint that these are no ordinary visitors when they tell of the coming birth of a son, Isaac, to this elderly couple. A birth beyond all expectation, a birth which signals the fulfilment of the promise made by God to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, a birth which marks the beginning of the Jewish race, God's chosen people.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul makes clear that Jesus who appeared as human in this world was far more than we could imagine.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,*

Emmanuel, God among us, coming now through his teaching and ministry, through his death and resurrection to open salvation to all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike.

to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

It is this Jesus who Mary sits before as her sister Martha bustles about preparing the meal. Martha who feels aggrieved that her sister is not helping.

Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'

Now I have every sympathy for Martha as someone who always ends up in the kitchen cooking while others sit around chatting. Although to be fair, with a large gin and the radio on, I'm quite content to be left alone to get on with it. But this reading is not about catering for guests, no more than the reading from Genesis was.

This is about how we allow ourselves to get caught up in the busyness of life, how the legitimate claims on our time can distract us from what is before us, from the guest who is the Lord Almighty. He waits patiently for us to remember his presence, to unwind from the tangles of life that we weave around ourselves and to rest in the knowledge that he holds us in his strength and in his peace. He calls us to trust and to leave our cares with him so that we focus not on the trivial but on our response to his overwhelming love and its power in our lives.

When Martha asks Jesus to chide Mary for sitting there, she receives this response

'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Without fully understanding, Mary knew that before her was the fullness of God in the person of Jesus, that he spoke as the Word of God made flesh, that he was the Way, the Truth and the Life. Mary understood that there are times when we must attend to the demands of this life but neither must we shun those precious moments

when we can step out from the rush to communicate with the one true God, not via any satellite or AI but through the power and grace of prayer.

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