

Priest's Prattle

Jesus, who is God and a miracle worker in the Gospels, heals the blind, binds the broken hearted, gives hearing to the deaf, and even restores the dead. He casts out evil and insanity and feeds thousands with only one child's daily supply. He's always got it together, hardly ever angry, has no recorded episodes of laughter, prays and is the most pious person in scripture and to top it all off, he's best friends with God, who also happens to be his Father. He is unrealistic and unattainable, and almost inhuman, isn't he?

Peter, on the other hand, well he's more believable. He's flawed. He doubts. He gets it wrong. He misunderstands, all the time. He says, does and thinks all the wrong things at the wrong times; seemingly without learning the lessons Jesus teaches. He even denies the person he claims to love the most. He uses violence when peace and diplomacy are called for, is passionate, occasionally narcissistic, always seems to be scared, or innocent, or a bit of sap. He leaves his wife to follow an itinerant preacher; a special one, granted, but still? And, he is thoroughly, absolutely, without question, human like the rest of us. With all his faults, he is so human and because of this humanity, we can connect and empathise, or associate with him. Jesus on the other hand is God, he is more distant, more special and just more. He's more like a celebrity or a rock star, slightly unattainable. I mean he does miracles and great works and is otherworldly (transfiguration). He has the piousness and clarity of prayer to the point that, while someone was waiting with a quill to write it down, he recites that, which becomes the most famous prayer ever written, translated and prayed; 'The Lord's Prayer'. Not only did he raise others from the dead and see into people hearts and souls, he himself, didn't even stay dead. He truly was not only the Son of God as we know it, or understand it, but was God and because he was God, he is God still. Because, you know, God can't die, doesn't die and is in all, through all and within all; all the time. Right?

Now you might not completely agree with my analogies, but hear me out. We do worship in the Christian tradition. Why? If we're not connected to Jesus, precisely because he is God, then why? But what about our humanity? Some people are Christian, but they prefer to connect to the Gospel either through the Holy Spirit and behave in a more charismatic fashion, or connect to some of the characters in scripture like Peter or Paul, or Mary Mag or Mary; Jesus' mother, precisely because of their humanity. I wonder where you fall?

So we humans being humans needed to box Jesus into one of two schools of thought; either *Docetists* (*doe-seat-ists*), or *Ebionites* (*E-b-eon,ites*). What? I can hear you saying what is she going on about. Let me explain simply. Essentially, Docetism is the belief that Jesus was fully 100% God, with no humanity at all, just the visage of humanity. His looking and occasionally behaving like a man is purely the means to God's end. *Docetists* believe that Jesus was only God and that everything he did, was to prove that; no humanity at all. *Ebionites* on the other hand, believe that Jesus was 100% fully human and only became God at his adoption by God at his baptism. *Ebionites* believe that all the miracles etc are real and from God because God empowered Jesus after he passed the test God set for him (ie being sinless) and adopted him as his divine son and gave him the powers to heal, cast out etc. These two schools of thought oppose one another and of course there have been wars, violence and confrontation over them. So *Docetists* believe Jesus is only God and *Ebionites* believe that Jesus was only human until his adoption. For *Docetists* the incarnation is a

problem and for Ebionites the crucifixion is. But what do YOU believe? Are you polarised or something else?

I think modern Christianity sits in what is commonly called the *via media*, the middle ground. We have a pretty mashed up version of both views and preach, proclaim and worship the Jesus who is both human and God. We most commonly teach Jesus' humanity as our connection point; that place where God actually understands and enters into our pain and our existence, whilst recognising that Jesus' divinity gives us unfettered complete access to the one true God in heaven, the omnipotent, omnipresent, all powerful, truly divine GOD. So what?

What does all this mean? And does it matter? This week is Mary the Mother of our Lord. For some of us, say women who have had children, we can connect with Mary on a particular level. For some who are more catholic than others, Mary, Jesus mother, is also someone otherworldly who gives a way to connect with God. For others, Mary is almost incidental to the God story. But like it or not, Mary is essential in whatever image of God Jesus represents for you. Without Mary, there would be no story.

There is a wonderful book written by the Reverend Cathy Laufer, Rector of Buderim Parish, called 'What if She Said No'. If you ever get a chance to read it, I encourage you to do so. It is an amazing story, which asks the question, what if Mary had said no and also suggests that God would have kept asking until the perfect woman said yes, so that humanity and divinity could forever be connected in such a way for ever more.

No matter where you fall on the Christian spectrum of worship, of belief in who Jesus is and how you are connected to him, the truth of God's holy and selfless intervention into humanities existence through Jesus is where we begin, end and have our being.

So just because its Mary the Mother of our Lord this week, lets pray the Magnificat and praise God's intervention into humanity.

The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord: my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

Who has looked with favour on His lowly servant:

from this day all generations will call me blessed;

The Almighty has done great things for me: and holy is His name.

God has mercy on those who fear Him: from generation to generation.

The Lord has shown strength with His arm: and scattered the proud in their conceit,

Casting down the mighty from their thrones: and lifting up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things: and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of His servant Israel: to remember the promise of mercy,

The promise made to our forebears: to Abraham and his children for ever.

Luke 1.47-55

Shalom have an amazing week

Donna+