

THURSDAY 15TH JANUARY 2015 - EPIPHANY 2

This morning I am fortunate enough to have heard the choir sing my favourite psalm - Psalm 139.

**"Oh Lord, thou hast searched me out and know me.
Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising;
thou understandest my thoughts long before."**

The psalmist is exalting in God who knows him through and through. And these words we can pray and make our own. God has searched us out and knows each one of us, those moments when we are low and those moments when we are 'up'. (Down-sitting and up-rising). He is there in all our moods and wobbly moments.

So intimately involved with us that He has beaten a path around our bed and keeps an eye on all our ways.
He protects us when we are most vulnerable, when we are asleep.

And there is nothing about us that will surprise thou, O Lord Him **"For, knowest it all together."**

And for the psalmist this is a wonderful experience. **"Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me. I cannot attain unto it."**

The psalmist has meditated deeply on this intimate involvement God has with every aspect of his life. Nothing is too private or hidden.

"Wither shall I go then from thy spirit? Or wither shall I go then from thy presence?" There is no place where God is not present.

"Even if I go down to hell, thou art there also." God accompanies us in our darkest moments. This is the psalmist's experience and he is rejoicing in it, exalting in it, singing about it.

"Even if He takes the wings of the morning and remains in the uttermost part of the sea", the sea which for the Jew was the unpredictable, the unknowable, the scary, "Even there, also shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me."

Not only is God present, but we are being held by His right hand in all situations that we find ourselves in.

In the psalm we find a mixture of wonder and terror. The psalmist is toppling from amazement into awe. It can be quite a scary thing to be known so thoroughly, better than anyone else knows us and perhaps better than we know ourselves.

God encounters us, He sees us, exactly where we are in whatever frame of mind or whatever situation we may find ourselves in. He is with us.

We see this encounter with God expressed in today's Gospel. Jesus encountering Nathaniel. He sees Nathaniel as he truly is, like God in the psalm.

And Nathaniel is amazed, like the psalmist, how well Jesus perceives him, knows him.

"When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming, He said to him "There truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deception."

Nathaniel asked "How do you know me?" And that is the point. Nathaniel is experiencing something that the psalmist is talking about by being in the presence of Jesus.

And because he is in the presence of God incarnate, something new is about to take place.

"Behold, I make all things new," says Jesus in the Book of Revelation. For the whole purpose of God drawing close to us in whatever situation we find ourselves in is that God is always creative, bringing something new and different, something undreamt of, into that situation.

In the words of today's Collect; "**Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new.**"

It is this drawing closer to Christ that the poverty of who we are is to be enriched by Christ's presence and grace.

The Collect speaks that in the renewal of our lives we have a glimpse of the heavenly glory. Jesus wants to renew the life of Nathaniel and he promises him a vision of the glory that is to come.

"In all truth I tell you, you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of Man."

Jesus is promising that as He sees Nathaniel as he truly is, so there will be a time when Nathaniel will truly see Jesus as He is. Both Man and God.

For the most part, we do not see either God as He is, or fully understand Jesus as He is. Most of our pilgrimage, our Christian journey, can be a fumbling in the dark.

But we can have an experience of being known, being understood, being seen as we truly are. These moments come in prayer and contemplation, in the stillness of worship, or taking a long walk or listening to music.

And with the experience of being known and seen always comes a sense of acceptance and renewal, inner renewal. We are rooted back into ourselves, but ourselves not alone or isolated, but being held, sustained, by some mysterious 'other', who loves us and holds us by our right hand.

As the psalmist says, we will encounter a God who has fashioned us "**behind and before**", from one moment to the next and who is always fashioning us if we will allow Him. And this involvement of God with ourselves, with each one of us, is not for ourselves alone, but for others.

As the post-communion prayer puts it: "God of glory, you nourish us with your Word, who is the bread of life; fill us with your Holy Spirit that through us, the light of your glory may shine in all the world."

We draw close to God not for ourselves alone, but for each other and those who we will encounter in the week ahead, praying that they may catch a glimpse of His glory, through us.

AMEN.