

Sermon Archive 182

Monday 25 December, 2017

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lesson: John 1: 1-14

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



I refuse to say “hello” to that baby. There’s no way I’m greeting that child. It’s just another brown person, born to unmarried parents who didn’t think responsibly enough about bringing a child into the world. Look, they’re already homeless, having to scrounge accommodation. Mark my word; he’ll end up in trouble, that kid - sucking up taxes through the prison system. Vasectomy, the pill, sterilisation - all better options than another unwanted, unsupported, drain on the taxpayer. There’s no way I’m receiving that child!

Next!

Oh! There’s a baby. I wonder what he’s doing there. He’s a brown little baby, but I can’t tell whether he’s Maori, Pacifica, Indian, maybe Asian - or maybe from somewhere in the Middle East. Could be any of those. He’s certainly not Caucasian – no blue eyes, blond hair! Funny place to find him, though - swaddled in an animal trough. I hope it doesn’t mean he’s been abandoned. “Hello! Is anyone there? Anyone know anything about this baby? Is he yours? He isn’t mine. No?”

Actually, he looks OK there - and I’m sure his parents must be around somewhere. So, I might just keep moving. Maybe I’ll come back later, just to see that he’s gone - or, if he hasn’t gone, that he’s still OK. Yeah; see you later little baby. Take care.

Next!

Hello baby! Wow, look at you. You’re so new. A new human being!

You have two eyes, as I have two eyes. You have a nose, as I have a nose. Ears, a mouth, fingers and toes - you're one of us! As I see you, I find myself wondering that I was that small when I began. I suppose I must have been - it's how we all begin. I guess if you're really like me, one of us, then you'll have all sorts of experiences as a child. Growing, stretching, learning to talk. You'll listen to stories, draw pictures, play games. And when you're tired or you're hurting, you'll cry. And when you cry, I hope you won't be one of those babies that the Air New Zealand booking system always puts right behind my seat! No, just joking, little baby. You fly where you want to fly, and cry when you need to. You belong to the human family, and that's what we do. We travel through the world, crying, learning, laughing, wondering. Flying, falling, rising, dying. Hello little baby; welcome to the "human race".

Next!

Hello little baby. I'll just whisper my greeting, because you're sleeping and I don't want to wake you. If you wake, then I might need to do something. See, if you wake, it might be because you're hungry, and I'll need to find you some food. Or maybe you'll wake because you've soiled your nappy, and I'll need to clean you. Or maybe you'll just cry but you won't be hungry and you won't be dirty, and I won't quite know what I'm meant to do. I don't know - I find it all a bit confusing - working out what you need.

As you grow, you'll learn to tell me what's wrong, what you need. And for a while "what you need" will be kind of simple. But then, beyond that, "what you need" may become complicated again. Because you may need things that I can't give. You may need money that I don't have. You may need time that I can't free up. You may need a kind of reassurance - that in my heart of hearts I cannot provide you. You may need me to raise you from the dead - and that's never going to happen. So, you stay sleeping, little baby. I have greeted you. I've seen your beauty. But now I'm just a wee bit

afraid - too afraid to wake you and make the commitment of saying to your woken self, "hello little baby". So, I'll suspend my speaking, and say, when they ask me did I greet the baby, "no, I didn't greet him. He's lovely when sleeping, but I didn't greet him. Sorry little baby - I'm just frightened by need.

Next!

Hello little baby. No, really; hello. They're saying the strangest things about you. Not strange bad. Strange sort of amazing! They are calling you a light in the darkness. They are calling you "life". They are calling you ancient, creative wisdom, re-expression of what brought the world into being. They are calling you "glory". They are calling you truth and grace. I see a baby.

I also see a world that could use some light. I see a world that could use some truth and grace. I see a world that could use life, wisdom, glory and creativity. In a time of captivity, a time of frustrated identity and longing, any one of my fellow human beings (eyes, ears, nose and mouth; brown or white; needing or fearing; speaking or letting sleep) - any one of my fellow human beings could use a baby like the One of whom they speak. So I'll just keep a wee vigil by your manger, and look at you some more. I'll look for the things of which they speak, and maybe - you never know - I'll see something that will move me. Hello, little baby, may I stay here a while?

Next!

Hello little baby. I receive you. I believe in your name. It's a stupid thing to say really, that I believe in your name, for in this great Johannine Prologue, your name has not yet been given. You've been called "the Word". You've been called the One without whom nothing that has been made has been made. No human parent has intruded into this version of the story yet with something so

ordinary as a human name. Yet here I am saying I receive you and believe in your name. Is this my old-fashioned way of saying “I trust you”? Trust a baby? To do what? Maybe just to be who you are - a brown-skinned little baby, a human being within the universal human family, someone who might need me, someone who might bless me. I trust you simply to be who you are - God somehow come to me.

And as I receive you, as I believe in your name, it’s like I’m no longer defined by blood, by the will of flesh, by “the will of man”, but by being a child of God. I know I share your humanity, but as I receive you here, as I meditate on what they say of you, as I trust that you are who you are, I myself see that I share with you more than our humanity. I become, as you have always been, a child of God. No wonder they always call this story of your birth the “mystery” of the incarnation. It’s a mystery many don’t get. He was in the world, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

Hello little baby - you child of God. Merry Christmas, and bless you.

Amen.