

# 18th December 2005 Fourth Sunday of Advent

## Rob Lamerton

Readings:

- 2Samuel 7: 1-11, 16
- Song of Mary (p 31)
- Romans 16: 25-27
- Luke 1: 26-38

If you are ever at a gathering of parents and the discussion turns to

"What happened the night our baby was born"

There are many stories of amazing events:

How people drove for miles to hospital;  
or how the car wouldn't start;  
or what a close call it was with the baby being born five minutes after getting to hospital...

And then of course women talk of the differences between pregnancies. A friend of ours, the wife of a Baptist Pastor used to take delight in telling us how for the first three months (trimester) she spent most of her time on her knees — the room would go silent as people pondered on her holiness — and she would add — **in front of the toilet!**

Of course it was an indication of just how sick she was!

Memories flood back!

Sandy and I were recalling the fact that we were married in September 1978 and that by our wedding anniversary four years later we had three children!

By that stage we had worked out what had caused it!

We were pondering just how stressful those early years were; living in a small country town with no family nearby for support —  
the first parish failing for lack of funds —  
one of our children with a disability —

one of my parishioners was murdered [not by me!] — and we had moved house twice...

If we appear slightly insane that's where it started — and somebody once said insanity is hereditary — you catch it from your children!

And as tough as they appeared these years were **nothing** compared to some ... war/earthquake/terror/poverty...

Well, here I am only three pages into a sermon and it's come off the rails already!

That's the danger of recalling what happened when your children were expected and born.

I imagine very few people will have had the sort of experience of Mary for whom the angels brought astounding news.

Now although Mary is special because of her faith, trust and obedience to God's call, the story is really an explanation about the special nature of the child she is to bear. His name is Jesus (Joshua) meaning God Saves, or God is salvation.

He will be called the Son of the Most High — now already Israel as a people were thought of as God's first born son.

Because the nation's life/character and destiny were summed up in its ruler, the king of David's line was the particular embodiment of this son-ship.

Since the monarchy had come to an end five hundred years before Israel had been waiting for its restoration under the Lord's Anointed — the Messiah "great David's greater Son" who in a special sense would be the Son of the Most High.

As the gospel proceeds we see Jesus taking the inherited idea of the Messiah and re-modelling it in the melting pot of his own experience!

Many hundreds of years before, King David, sitting in his house of cedar, has the bright idea that God too should have a grand place to indicate his dwelling among people.

**BUT NO!** The prophet Nathan puts it to David that it is NOT

David who will build God's house — INSTEAD it will be God who will build David's house, NOT out of stone and timber, BUT out of faithful, but frail, people!

I'm reminded of the verse from "*O Worship the King*"

5 Frail children of dust and feeble as frail  
In you do we trust, nor find you to fail  
your mercies how tender, how firm to the end  
our maker, defender, redeemer and friend.

I have been moved to ponder my own frailty this week and to have the theme recur, especially

in my visit to Kankinya;  
in our Parish Council meeting where some frustration surfaced;  
in my discussion with someone from a background of emotional and physical abuse;  
and finally as I took part in Ray Broughton's funeral.

I heard and felt the fragility, pain and vulnerability

and it struck me as we read from the sermon on the mount that all the qualities of those who are blessed are about fragility:

- the poor in spirit
- those who mourn
- the meek
- those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- the merciful
- the pure in heart
- the peacemakers
- the persecuted...

And I think that somehow those who rioted in Sydney last week felt vulnerable **BUT** they were not able to sit with their vulnerability and so they attacked.

We come in this Advent season to the stories of God's vulnerability in the stories of pregnant women and small babies and we see God sharing our most fragile and tender moments — and that vulnerability, that tenderness, that fragility is called Love. (which paradoxically is profoundly strong and powerful.)

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.

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

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