

A Voice from Heaven

Revd Ian Chaplin
9 January 2005, The Baptism of our Lord

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

[These notes were scribbled (at 10am) by Linda, knowing that Ian's sermons do not come from notes! Hopefully I have put down some of the special words that Ian gave us this morning.]

Matthew 3:17 A voice from heaven said. "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The voice ... the voice that Jesus heard was part of the Eternal God, an amazing event; people were "blown away"

The readings today are all full of voices.

The **voice** of the Lord **does** things. In the Psalm... "breaks the cedar, rends the terebinth trees" To the Hebrew mind, the voice of the Lord was a "big deal", not just wind passing over vocal chords.

Isaiah's suffering servant does not raise his voice; his is a gentle voice.

What is God's voice?

In the first chapter of Genesis: God **SAID**. This well known creation myth is an attempt by the wonderful deep Hebrew mind to come to grips with what is creation.

A wonderful leap of the imagination, wonderfully deep...

We say "God is Love". We can see creation as part of love, as an expression of Love. Or (I like to say) as **Congeaed Love** as God's self expression

We are little blobs of God's love!

To the Hebrews, everything is shot through with God's Love. They thought that God was in control, that God controlled...

But... Jesus came, and we understood: **freedom**

Jesus is described not as "the voice" but as "The Word"

in the beginning was the Word...a fundamental principle...scientists like to describe them in equations, like the emk equation... $E=MC^2$.

We can say more...We would want to say more, more than the equation, we would include **God's Love**...

Love, God, is the essence of **EVERYTHING**.

Later on, Jesus came like Isaiah's gentle, suffering servant, gentle, creative, he worked in people's lives to bring fulfillment. This is very different from the Voice of God that rends the terebinth, and perhaps, makes tsunamis...

Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say that Jesus/God was in the people on the beach..."Where is God in the tsunami?"(Some in the Anglican Church say it is God's Judgement!)

When at St Mary's in the Valley some years ago, they had just relocated a small church from Mannus to be their worship centre. While it was being put up, a huge willy willy, a mini tornado, in Richardson(!) came and knocked it all flat! Totally destroyed!

Bishop Ian George came the next week and told the congregation: “God did not do this to you”

Say it very seriously: “God did not do this to you”

The voice of God is in creation, but it is the voice of **love!** Love is a tricky thing!

For true love to exist, there has to be true freedom. A truly free creation, a truly free universe. A truly free ocean will do what God does not want it to do.

We, in our freedom, we do what God does not want us to do...

God sings a love song to us through the cosmos, through creation. We hear that. The voice that drives and creates the universe is a love song.

Jesus came to tell us that we are loved, and we are free. We are caught up in that love song. In Jesus, we are invited...we listen for that love song and, we **sing a love song back.** (in our prayers, our hymns, our relationships...)

We sing back to God.

Now, I have a spiritual exercise for you to do. Pick a pop song, a modern love song, and...**sing it back to God!** This can be very powerful, and very embarrassing!

At the 8am service, my wife was there, and I said I sing: “Peggy Sue”.

Sarah said “why not sing from West Side Story: ‘There’s a place for us’?” a place for God and you together... somewhere...

God has been singing to us all our lives. Always a love song, full of pain and poignancy. God is waiting, yearning for us to sing back.

And now, to the god who sings to us,
the God who sings most painfully from the cross,
to Jesus Christ our Lord,
be glory for ever and ever,
Amen.