

## *Shattered*

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor  
Advent 4, 22 December 2013  
Revd Linda Anshell

Isaiah 7.10-16; Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19; Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

This is a truncated version)

While there were no hymns at the 8am service, these (10am) hymns both reflected and informed my thinking:

265 O come, O come, Emmanuel;

302 The angel Gabriel from heaven came;

293 Unto us a boy is born!

666 *Siya Humba* (especially for Nelson Mandela, but also for Advent) also sung during the sermon.

Zulu:

1. *Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'*, (x4)

*Siyahamba ... Siyahamba,*

*Oo siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.*

*Siyahamba, Siyahamba,*

*Oo siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.*

2. We are marching in the light of God

3. We are moving in the power of God

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I take as my text for today:

“Blessed are the cracked,  
For they let in the light!”

No, not Leonard Cohen (one suggestion from the congregation) but Spike Milligan!

But Joseph, Joseph was more than cracked! Joseph was SHATTERED!

He could have had Mary stoned (except that only the Romans could enact capital punishment). But, being a righteous man, he resolved to put Mary away quietly.

His dreams were in pieces ...

But then another dream intruded; thrust its way in.

And he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

In the psalm: Judah is shattered

“How long will you be angry?”

[or, following Kirkpatrick:

“How long will you be fuming

At your people's prayer?”

The Book of Psalms A.F. Kirkpatrick D.D. Dean of Ely (ed) *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Cambridge: University Press 1921, p.485]

Kirkpatrick suggests that:

“Perhaps the smoke of the divine wrath Is a thick smoke between them and God.”

How often is that the human experience?

(that we feel separated from god because we feel, or think we feel, God’s wrath.)

But Isaiah has the promise, the sign:

“The Lord will give you a sign,  
a son will be born  
and be named Emmanuel.”  
God with us.

So often we are shattered, and yet a word comes.

In yesterday’s *Canberra Times* pp. 1-2 of ‘Forum’ 21 December 2013, Barney Zwartz

“Divine Inspiration” writes:

And this, says Smart, is where Christmas can come in. ‘If we take time and allow the Christmas story to work, we might find it means something incredibly powerful to us.’

Christmas is often a time of melancholy and longing, but Christian story of the birth of Jesus, he says, ‘speaks to a strange but beautiful and logical sense if we allow it to, and see what the story really is at its heart. It’s a challenge to get past the crass materialism. It’s an outrageous story of God coming to us as a child, not remaining aloof but being part of us—the baby born into obscurity in an outpost of the Roman empire turns out to be God come near to us.

Allow the Christmas story to work.

This month I have had the glorious experience of singing in The Messiah and singing in the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Music can tear the curtain between us and God. It doesn’t work like an icon, leading us up to God; a “stairway to heaven”. But, shattering us; allowing God to come in, to come near to us.

Use the Christmas stories.

I did a baptism preparation in Tumut and told the young Mum it was her job to teach the child. Did she know what to say? No... that is not until we went through the carols and pieced together the stories and their meaning. She *did* know what to teach her child, she just didn’t realise it! [we included Easter as well.]

This is not about a “stairway to heaven”,

It is not about us searching for god.

It is not about us.

Joseph was shattered.

Joseph heard God.

Mary did not understand.

Mary said, ‘yes’,  
‘yes’ to God.

This Christmas, say ‘yes’ to God.

Nelson Mandela died two weeks ago. The final hymn (We are marching in the light of God) is in Zulu so we will practise it. Mandela said that if you speak to a person in a language they understand you speak to their mind. If you speak to them in the language of their mother, you speak to their heart. (Thank you, Rebecca for learning to speak Dinka Bor ... the language of

our afternoon congregation)

*This* Christmas, (and its Easter aftermath)  
not about us.

Emmanuel, God with us, a shattered god  
born in a dirty manger, in the depth of winter.

In our griefs and in our despair.

“A young woman is with child ...”

“Show us the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.”