

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



A reimagining of life

“When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her (Mary) as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.”
Matthew 1:24-25

The fourth Sunday of Advent traditionally has the focus of the annunciation or the birth of Jesus, with a particular focus on Mary. But with this year’s reading from Matthew’s gospel (Matthew 1.18-25) is a fascinating choice and places far more of an emphasis on Joseph who many more column inches than Mary.

As we come to this story two thousand years later, its ever so easy for us to not fully appreciate the magnitude of what has actually happened. Choosing to amend the course of your family history as a consequence of a dream, as Joseph did, would I imagine be as unusual and bizarre then as it would undoubtedly be today.

But Matthew tells us that when Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife. In responding in the way that he did and naming the child Jesus, Joseph publicly gave the child an identity, making him a descendent of the house of David and a place in the drama of God’s salvation.

But for all this to happen, the response of Joseph is critical and should not be underestimated.

It would seem that he was a man of integrity who was sensitive to God’s guidance and willing to do God’s will irrespective of the consequences. For Joseph, the birth of Jesus brought about a total reimagining of his faith and his life, in which the unexpected power of God would begin to work in his life, his family’s life and his community’s life – but it required him to step out in faith in ways that he was not familiar with.

May be this is God’s invitation to you this Christmas. As our Advent journey nears its fulfilment and we enter the poverty of the stable to behold the child of Bethlehem once again, may be God is inviting us to trust him more and to step out in new ways, ways that we are unfamiliar with, but ways in which he can deliver afresh his salvation and blessing in our lives, our families and our community.

This Christmas, amidst the busyness and the partying, be attentive to what God might be saying to you through the reading of scripture, the singing of a carol or even in a dream.

The Very Revd Peter Howell-Jones, Dean of Blackburn

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