

Advent Thought for the Day 5-8 December by Rev. Bill Church

Saturday 5 December

And he was called... 'Emmanuel'



*A virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and he shall be called Emmanuel,
a name which means "God is with us."
(Matthew 1. 23)*

Emmanuel is a Cambridge college and the first name of the President of France, and these come from one of the names with which Christians greet Jesus and proclaim him to the world.

Matthew is quoting from God's words to King Ahaz of Judah in the Greek text of Chapter 7 of Isaiah. Ahaz will

have heard the name in the First World War sense of "Gott mit uns"- God is with us and against our worldly enemies.

Matthew's hearers will first have heard the name in the sense of God is with us against our spiritual enemies; and then came to hear it more fully in the sense that God, in the person of Jesus, has come into our world.

And, thus, we celebrate Christmas as marking the incarnation, of God with us in human flesh.

*And may we praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.*

(Bishop Christopher Wordsworth)

Sunday 6 December

And he was called... 'Son of David'



Bartimaeus began to shout, "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!"

(Mark 10. 46)

Christianity is a worldwide and multicultural religion, and people have always portrayed Jesus as one of them. So, in Ethiopia, Jesus has from earliest times been pictured as an Ethiopian; and In Europe as European; and in China as Chinese. That is theologically right; but historically wrong.

We have to remember that Jesus was a Jew, and the Gospels reflect this and cannot be understood without some understanding of the Old Testament.

Jews were expecting a Messiah from the house of King David. "Son of David" was therefore a messianic title, and a dangerous one because, to the Roman empire and local powers who went along with Rome, it smacked of rebellion.

Bartimaeus was a blind beggar. He could not see Jesus, but he sensed who he was. He was the Messiah. But not the Messiah some were expecting. He did not bring independence but he did bring healing and sight to Bartimaeus.

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater son.*
(James Montgomery)

Monday 7 December

And he was called... 'Son of Abraham'



Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.
(Matthew 1. 1)

Both Matthew and Luke give family trees for Jesus. Matthew goes forward from Abraham; Luke goes back through Abraham to Adam. So, "Son of Abraham" is one of the names of Jesus.

But, more often, Jesus uses this as a name for people he meets.

When Zacchaeus, the crooked tax collector, repents, Jesus says: "Today, salvation has come to his house – for this man, too, is a son of Abraham".

When Jesus is reproached by the president of a synagogue for healing a woman on the Sabbath, he

replies: "Here is this woman, a daughter of Abraham, who has been bound by Satan for eighteen long years: was it not right for her to be loosed from her bonds on the Sabbath?".

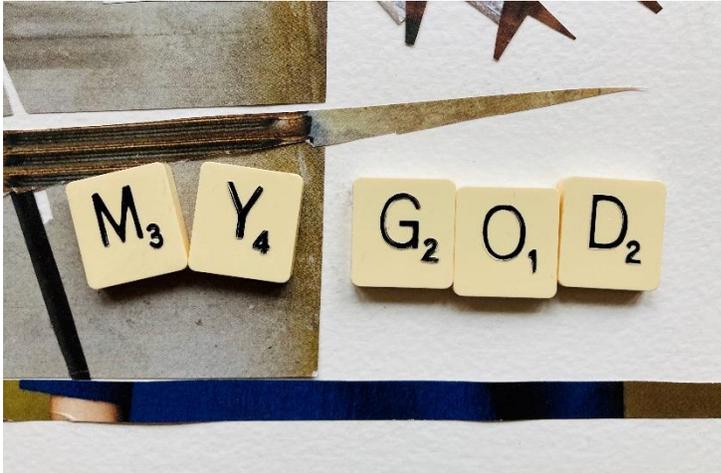
This is a name of Jesus which he gladly shares with others.

And the Lord's messenger called out to Abraham once again and He said: ... "And all the nations of the earth will be blessed through your seed."

(Genesis 22. 18)

Tuesday 8 December

And he was called... 'My God'



Thomas said: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him: "Because you have seen me, you have found faith. Happy are those who find faith without seeing me."

(John 20. 28-29)

Christians believe that Jesus was both human and divine – that he was God made flesh, which we celebrate especially at Christmas.

But only once in all the Gospels is Jesus called by the name of God, and that was by so-called 'Doubting' Thomas.

In John's gospel in particular, Jesus makes claims of divinity about himself, for instance, "Before Abraham

was, I am" (John 8. 58), which were clear and bold and deeply shocking to the religious establishment; but among his disciples, even after the resurrection, only Thomas so addresses him.

We have not had the privilege which Thomas had of being with Jesus during the three years of his earthly ministry; but Thomas' acknowledgement gave Jesus the occasion for blessing us, too, if we follow in Thomas' footsteps.

*Teach me, my God and King
In all things thee to see;
And what I do in anything
To do it as for thee.
(George Herbert)*