Reflection for Epiphany 8th Jan 2017

Now that Balthazar, Melchior and Casper have taken their place in the crib the message of Christmas is complete. God has not just called the chosen people of Israel but all people, of all places and of all times. Recently there has been a campaign called – Black Lives Matter -, and they have taken some drastic actions to make their point. Would that we lived in a world where every life matters. I have heard it said that problems begin when one life is valued more than another.

It goes back to the question I like to ask ‘are all people equal?’ If you cannot answer yes then one life is valued more than another. The significance of Jesus being born under the care of a carpenter is God identifying with what scripture calls ‘the lowly’. He was not born to a kingly or priestly clan or family. Not only has Jesus a message of Good News for humankind, HE IS THE MESSAGE and the message is ‘I am one of you’. We are one and the same in the eyes of our Heavenly Father.

What is the first question we ask a stranger, even before we ask for a name - ‘what do you do?’ We want to know what class or tribe the person belongs to.

The Queen in her New Years message talked up ‘ordinary people doing extraordinary things.’ The lowly people of Jesus’ time were the faithful called The Anaweim, ordinary people with extraordinary devotion; Patiently waiting for the coming of the Messiah, one generation after the next, without complaint from Sabbath to Shabat, faithfully performing their devotions, rituals and prayers, outlasting the Babylonian and Roman Empires.

We live in God’s time; to forget this we can easily get caught up in finding our significance and satisfaction in the cult of being busy or having the need to feed the voice in our head to be useful. Today’s feast of epiphany is to help us keep the big picture; the journey of the Magi took them beyond the security of their own lands and the mercy of strangers. They set out, and maybe their wives asked ‘what time will you be back?’

By setting out they were entering into God’s time scale, so had no way of calculating when and if they ever might return. And when they did return, they returned seeing their world in a different perspective. This is brought out in T.S. Elliot’s poem ‘Journey of the Magi’ – ‘we returned to our places, these kingdoms, but no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, with an alien people clutching their gods. I should be glad of another death.’

All their previous assumptions have been overturned and the world as they has been changed, even though the people did not yet know it. I want to conclude with the quote, ‘the only thing that is permanent is change.’