

Communication, Care and Christ's Coming

Carol Service – Sunday 22 Dec 2019 – Charlie Boyle

Well thank you to all those who have read and sung this evening. I know some of you might be thinking wonderful, I hope the Vicar doesn't go on for too long but just indulge me with a few reflections on some of the passages read and the year nearly at its end.

2019 has been an interesting year for the country and me personally, my 50th year, a year in which a lot has happened. The country, whether or not you voted Remain or Leave back in 2016 the country has finally given the politicians a clear direction, a clear communication. To leave the institution of the European Union, which we joined back in the 1973. But as the Bible says in Psalms "*Put not your trust in princes, nor in mortal man in whom there is no help*", for we know governments and institutions come and go but the **Word of the Lord lasts forever.**

We have now communicated to our European friends and neighbours we don't want to be such an integral member of the EU club any more. A political and economic institution, of course, that was set up after the war when this country still had an Empire in the days of Churchill. There is much of course much healing, which now needs to happen in our country over the divisions that the Brexit debate has caused. Communication is the key and if we are honest with ourselves many in this country have never sat easy with the European super state, being an independent island nation of free marketeers.

So let's be honest in our communication.

Communication is the key in all relationships, in marriages, in families, in business, in Churches and in politics. But communication is a two way thing. When Alexander Graham Bell, a Scotsman, designed the telephone the amazing innovation was that both people could talk to each other. Of course if both talked at the same time, obviously neither could be listening to the other.

Now why have I been telling you this because I think we can all be better about communication and one of the things we have done as a Church this year and we are doing next year in January is helping couples communicate better to each other through the Relationship Course, and I would like to now introduce you to **Martin & Alison Watts**, who both went on the most recent course.

The primary way God communicates with us is through His word but also through the council of the saints our Christian friends, common sense, circumstantial signs and His commanding Holy Spirit.

The passages we have heard today are all about communication. God communicates to us the hope, shown in the coming of His Son as a child amongst us. Born of human parentage but also given by the Lord. The first passage we heard was one written by the prophet Isaiah being about the prophecy ...the predicting of a future event, when he says hear nowpredicting Jesus' future birth...*a virgin will be with child...will be called Immanuel.. GOD with us.* God sends his son, to be with us, to guide us. Christmas is about Christ, and as one child put it at the BPSP Christmas concert ... Christmas is for me about "*a time for sharing, for giving and receiving, for forgiveness, for family gatherings, for putting all the bad things behind you, for celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ*".

And our second passage from Isaiah talks about a child being born, *to us son is given and the government will be on his shoulders...*and it finishes with... *of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.*

Which means his rule will never end *unlike the EU or the UK government* and that Jesus' peace will be everlasting, extending to all the earth from generation to generation. Nothing could ever stop the increasing of His influence and government.

So God communicates to us.

But what does he say?

He says he cares about you and me, that's why he sent his son to die on the cross for our sins and mistakes.

Although it's fair to say we may not feel that at all times. But it is my belief that when we truly know him and meet with Him he brings peace in our hearts.

I hope you have found peace and joy in the singing of the carols and through the readings tonight...I also hope it has raised your spirits and soothed anxieties, well certainly the readers who read so well can now relax.

The final passage from Isaiah speaks of the tender care and comfort that God brings in Jesus.

He tends his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.

Like when a child is hurt or upset and a parent hugs them.

God wants us to know that he cares for us and as the carol In the Bleak midwinter says

what can I bring him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part,

Now we don't have any shepherds, unlike this morning, here tonight but we all have hearts...so as it says at the end of the carol ...yet what can I give him.....give my heart.

So what we can give God is our hearts....God cares deeply for us and wants us to give him our hearts, why else would God send his Son to die for our sins on the cross?

So God communicates, God cares and finally God comes to us in the form of Christ

In our passages from the New Testament we see the evidence from the writers of the gospels of the birth of Jesus.

We hear again that Jesus Christ's coming is predicted this time, 100's of years later, through the Angel Gabriel, direct to Mary the mother of Jesus. God comes in the form of a child to show his love for us in the Christ child.

Love is central to all that happens around Christmas time...

Now for me one of the wonderful things about Christmas is the coming together of family and friends.

But let's be honest sometimes those gatherings can produce tension and differences of opinion over the silliest of things...how to cook the Turkey, when to serve it, what presents we exchange and when etc. whether to watch the Queen's speech, now most of us have the choice of watching it live or on catch up, or we might argue over what games we play, what films we watch...

Christmas can also be a time when we miss those we love and those we have lost, whether through bereavement or families falling out, or divorce and memories of how Christmas used to be.

We know that the traditional nuclear family is less common, with many families having a more blended nature, with one or both parents being divorced. A good example of the blended nature of the modern family life is shown in the film, Mrs Doubtfire. I don't know whether you know that part of the end of the movie Mrs Doubtfire, where Robin Williams is reading out a letter from someone called

Katie....Dear Mrs Doubtfire, two months ago my mother and father decided to separate, now they live in different houses. My brother Andrew says we can't be a family any more, is this true. Did I lose my family? Is there anything I could do to get my family back again?

To which Mrs Doubtfire replies my dear Katie you know some parents when they're angry they get along much better together when they don't live together, they don't fight all the time and they can be much better people and much better mummies and daddies for you ... and sometimes they get back together, and sometimes they don't dear. And if they don'tdon't blame yourself, just because they don't love each other anymore doesn't mean that they don't love you... so there are all sorts of different families some families have one mummy some families have one daddy..or even now two daddies, some live with their grandparents some live with their uncles and aunts...or some children live with foster parents and some live in separate homes and separate areas and some don't see each other for days, weeks, months or even years at a time....

but if there's love dear .. those are the ties that bind, and you will have a family in your heart forever. You going to be all right..

So God communicates, God cares and finally God comes to us in the form of Christ

Commitment to Christ prayer Help me start afresh in 2020 with a new relationship with you and others.

Sorry I have made many mistakes this year

Thank you Jesus you died on the cross for those sins and mistakes

Please come Holy Spirit ... give me your peace and Joy in my heart again this Christmas ...

Preached at the 6pm Carol Service 2019, Martin & Alison Watts interviewed about the Relationship Course starting in Jan 2020.