

SERMON AT APPLECRSS 28/11/1993: ADVENT SUNDAY: GEOFF CHADWICK: MK 13:31-37:

“THE MASTER COMES TO US IN OUR ORDINARINESS”

Let me tell you something. I love my bed. Bed is a great place particularly after a long, hard day. Sleep also is a great friend. It gives rest the weary, time to relax, and time to dream. Bed and sleep-two of my greatest friends: then I hear these words of Jesus:

Therefore keep awake for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: keep awake keep awake (Mk 13:35-37, NRSV)

Of course I shouldn't take this reading so literally- yet the moral of the parable is still important. I think Jesus is reminding us not to let our expectation of the coming of the Master to “fall asleep”. Our expectation is to remain awake lest the Master comes to us and we miss it because of our slumber. If we are asleep to the Master's coming we may miss it.

I think it is the case that we often are asleep to the Master,s coming. Often we're too busy looking for the miraculous or spectacular that we miss the ordinary ways in which the Master comes to us. I actually believe that the Master of the household slips into our presence every day, even quietly, even suddenly; but our slumbering eyes often miss it. Our sleepy eyes would easily be roused by a dazzling bright light, but a quiet arrival fails to draw our attention.

So we need to see the Master coming to us in the ordinary, even if not spectacular events of everyday life. In fact this is the message of the Christmas story. At incarnation the master came to us in the form of a humble lowly baby. Sure there are stories of angels, wise men,

shepherds, and a star, but essentially the story is one of ordinariness: a woman gives birth to a baby in a cattle shed. What could be more ordinary than that?

My theme for today is that “the Master comes to us in our ordinariness.”

Well what are some of the ordinary ways that God, the Master comes to us which we often miss simply because we're not awake to them?

Birth: It happens all around us everywhere, every day- not just in the maternity hospitals either. Just look in your garden. Insects are born, flowers appear, weeds spring up, baby crows are heard, and the newly hatched gecko runs across the rocks.

Life: Life is everywhere and is present in every breath of air that we take. We we're asleep we don't notice our breath, yet our life goes on. There's no coincidence that the one of the ancient metaphors for God's presence is wind and breath.

Have you ever stopped to think that perhaps every breath you take is a “little” gift of the presence of God? God is present in the very breath of our lives- so let us all live lives that bring the presence of God to others in the world. Ordinary things help us to do this. Let me give you some examples:

- Companionship - having a fellow traveller on the way
- Casseroles or a “cup of cold water” given to those in need.
- Consulting the bereaved, be it through telephone calls or sympathy cards.
- The sharing of laughter and the sharing of tears.

God is here, present in the ordinary things of life. And we know it, for surely, Jesus the Son of God, did these things when he was here on earth with us.

Death. What could be more ordinary than death? It comes to all living things. Yet even then the master will be present. Jesus faced death, drank its cup and transformed it. Even at death we know we are not abandoned, for the Master's coming is for all eternity. Even at our last sleeping- the Master comes, even if it may be suddenly.

So be not asleep at the Master's coming. Be awake, see it everywhere and remember that if we just open our slumbering eyes we will see the coming of the Master to us in our ordinariness.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.