

## Midnight Mass 2023

*The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.*

What's John trying to say?

Well, he might say, read the rest of my Gospel and then you'll know – and that's not a bad answer actually. A project, perhaps, for 2024.

But for a quicker answer, perhaps this.

By 'the word' John means the reason, the purpose, the energy, the meaning behind everything.

The reason, the purpose, the energy, the meaning, behind everything.

Now, that for lots of us, even that has become quite a difficult idea to get our heads round. The idea that there *is* a reason, a purpose, meaning behind everything. Many of us have got used to think that the world just is, that's it just a brute fact, that there *is* no 'why' behind the world's existence. Nobody made it, nobody loves it, nobody has a plan for it. There is nobody behind it all ... just blind, pitiless, indifference.

Well, the first piece of Good News at Christmas is that that's not true. There's a point to the world. None of it – none of us – are just random, just brute fact. No, no: we're *made*. And the maker had a reason, a plan, a purpose. That's the word we translate as 'Word' actually means... reason, plan, purpose.

And the second piece of Christmas Good News is that we now know what that reason is. The Word became flesh, and lived among us, and we have seen his glory. We have seen his glory: we know what he's like. We know the mind of the Maker: we know what He wants, what He's trying to do, what He *is*.

How do we know? Because we've seen him. Later in John's Gospel, one of his followers will ask Jesus, 'Lord, show us the Father; and we will be satisfied.' And Jesus says in reply, 'have you been with me all this time, and you still do not know me? How can you say, 'show us the Father'. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'

Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father.

Whoever has seen me, knows what it is all about. Knows who made the universe. Knows what He wants. Knows what the universe is meant to be. Knows the One who goes on working, who will make it so. Knows what the Power at the heart of everything is like.

What's he like? Well, look at Jesus.

He's like feeding the hungry. He's like mercy to the broken, and justice to the arrogant. He is like bodies made whole. He's like being set free from the past. He's like utter, utter peacefulness. He's like the marriage of truth and love. He is like a great wedding feast. He is like storms made still. He is like the dead brought back to life.

That's God. That's the one who at Christmas time came as one human life. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.

And here's the *third* piece of Good News. From his fullness, says John, we have all received grace upon grace. From his fullness, we have all received, grace upon grace.

In other words, what began in one human life is not content to stay there.

Everything you see in Jesus was given to be shared. Was given to be put inside *you*.

All the beauty, all the joy, all the strength and courage and wisdom and grace, all the fullness, is meant for you.

It is what you are meant to be. What you were always meant to be, but somehow lost along the way, somehow got beaten down, or distracted, or stifled. What you were always meant to be, but seemed impossible and gone forever.

Well, the Good News of Christmas is that it has come for you. The One made you is not giving up on you. Despite all that's gone wrong with you, all the myriad ways in which you have stuffed life up, all your failures and sins and general inadequacy, despite all of that, glory is here and ready to give itself to you. Ready to pour itself inside you. Ready to remake you from the inside out. That's what the Gospel says happens in prayer, in worship, above all here in bread and wine. We receive from his fullness, grace upon grace. Everything in Jesus Christ that makes our hearts sing – everything – He pours it into you.

You cannot begin to imagine what God wants to make of you. What He will make of you, if you let him. You are not some random piece of rubbish, some chemical accident. You are a human being – the highest, most wonderful, most astonishing of all God's creatures. However much you have messed it up; however much other people have messed *you* up, nothing can take the Christmas Gospel from you: you were made out of love, and you are destined for glory.

That's why angels sing, why shepherds rejoice, why wise men wonder; why this night is simply the most glorious night of history, the most glorious night of our lives. Rejoice. We're on our way to beauty and joy beyond imagining.

Thanks be to God!