

Sermon Preached by Fr Jeremy for the Baptism of Muhammad at All Saints Church 24 July 2022

Texts Colossians 2. 6-15 and Luke 11. 1-13

Vs 12 - When you were buried with him in Baptism you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.'

James Cameron, director of the movie about the infamous ship that went down with 1513 people in 1912 said 'We are all on the Titanic.'

The Titanic was thought to be unsinkable because it had its hull designed with 16 watertight compartments. The belief was that as many as 4 could be flooded and still the ship would float. For years we believed that 5 of the compartments were ruptured but on the 1st September when the wreck was found there was no sign of a long gash. Only one compartment was damaged, but it was enough to affect the rest.

Many of us today believe we can compartmentalise our lives. What I do in one area of my life does not impact on the rest of my life. Equally if we think of community as long as I am ok or maybe the majority are ok then we are fine as the Body of Christ. I certainly do not need to join any of you in your weakness as that will make me vulnerable!

Our reading from Colossians which points to Muhammad's Baptism and all of our baptisms suggests that we must invite our Lord into all parts of our lives. We were buried with him and raised through him. 'It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me' says St Paul.

We are made whole to live life in all it's fulness. This is not just as an individual but as members of the Body of Christ, The People of God. We are one in communion with the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit and one with each other as we experience in the Eucharist.

On Friday evening I enjoyed a conversation at the Royal British Legion with two intelligent IT men. I raised the issues that are on my mind. We spoke about the value of work (treating humans as a commodity) and discussed companies with CEO's who employ people working long hours for terrible pay and frequently not seeing their families. The response was yes but the shareholders will demand this and there will be people abroad who will not mind working these conditions. If your company doesn't follow suit it may crash.

The other subject was one that Steven Croft has raised as the Bishop of Oxford at the House of Lords. My two companions seemed to have an increasing confidence in perfectness or the improvement of A.I. I thought about Matthew Syed's book 'Bounce' which highlighted the search for improvement leading to brilliant performance in sport and in life. The example of Kasparov the World Champion chess player taking on an IBM computer with millions of potential moves. The human won the match because the computer could not pick quickly enough from it's potentials until IBM improved the computer so that it could 'Chunk' information or throw out useless information and then beat Kasparov.

The Bishop, quotes Kevin Kelly editor of Wired Magazine. 'We will spend the next 3 decades, maybe a century in a permanent identity crisis, continually asking ourselves what humans are good for?' When we explore what it means to be human, we forget what Paul is saying here. Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, became 'Human' and through his death and then New Life gave us hope of living as members of his body. This is Christ going down into the depths of hell to raise us reunited with the divine.

This is of course a lifelong process Muhammad, and today is a beginning. We spend our life becoming more Christ -Like, through the word, through the sacrament, through helping each other in community/communion. Back to the Titanic when one component fails, we all fail. (Muhammad later that day at Sundays@4 gave thanks for his new beginning in the prayers).

In Christ our Ethnic divisions are healed, men and women, the colour of our skin, the caste systems we create, no longer exist, as we see each other made in God's image. (Read 'Caste' by Isabel Wilkerson)

Our faith can never be a hobby. A privatised religion that doesn't impact on all of our life. I recall a Catholic priest who is a friend recall at the end of one sermon he had given when he was told 'Father you must understand that when I leave church I forget until the next week!) Remember St Paul 'It's not me who lives but Christ who lives in me.

Let's look briefly at the Lord's Prayer. Our Father... - this is a prayer that believes in the presence of God, not a watchmaker who creates and forgets, or a puppeteer who seeks meritocracy but rather the loving Father of Adult Children whom we receive love from and respond to in love.

Your Kingdom come... Look at human need, let's pray for God's love/grace to bring hope. I've been asked in schools what is the Kingdom. One of my responses is 'When we all have enough but no one has too much (Daily bread). Equally we will not desire too much. The Trussell Trust gave 2.5 million food parcels in the UK in the year ending March 2021 an increase of 128% since 2016. That is in Great Britain and just look what lies ahead this Autumn.

So Muhammad, Reginald and Tyler, you are members of Christ's Body. There are no component parts to our individual life or our communal life as we are connected one with God as father, Son and Holy Spirit and one with each other.

We thank God that we are loved, valued to live life as if the best is yet to come, that's one identity humanity needs to know!