

# Sunday Sermon

**Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – Candlemas**

*Proverbs 8.1,22-31; Psalm 104.26-end; Colossians 1.15-20; John 1.1-14*

In these two Sundays before the beginning of Lent, we are being reminded as to who Jesus is, that he is a message from the Creator. This is one way of understanding the language of the Word which we encounter at the start of St John's Gospel. Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, because he is part of that true light that existed before this universe ever existed. The rest of St John's gospel is then about this message, about the meaning and purpose of this light, this living message from the Creator.

Next Sunday we will hear of one of the occasions when the Disciples realised that Jesus was much more than a great prophet and teacher and healer, when he began to shine with a strange light on the mountain. And in our first reading today, we have one of the earliest written teachings of the Christian faith, showing how much it was a regular teaching in the early Church, that Jesus was so much more than just a great prophet.

Interestingly, Jesus himself was reticent about his true identity during his ministry in Galilee. He preferred to let the message speak for itself. That's actually how the best evangelism works too. It doesn't work by bigging ourselves up as followers of Jesus, though people do notice as to how well we have heard the message and how much it has changed our lives. Effective evangelism doesn't really work either by simply bigging Jesus up, although for faithful Christians that's often difficult not to do. Real evangelism is about helping people hear the message itself.

Jesus is the Word of God, the true and radical message from the Creator to all humankind. And the question for us is, how well are we listening? The forthcoming season of Lent is a time for checking this out. How well are we listening to the message of the light that shines in the darkness of this world, and the darkness of our lives?

It is a message of peace and reconciliation, about God, about ourselves, and about our neighbours. Can you hear that message of peace; will you let it heal your life? It is a message of love, from the Creator of an often frightening and confusing world. Can you receive that message of love, and let it inspire your heart? It is a message of light, about new vision and new purpose; will you let it change your life? It is a message too of justice and judgment, about how well we are using the gifts that God has given us.

Above all the Word is a personal message, from the Creator, to each of us, to be heard uniquely by each person, to lighten your own particular darkness. This is not to say that each of us can simply invent what the message is for ourselves; our listening must be rooted in the Jesus of the Gospels. But all we need to do to be able to listen well, is close our eyes and think of that Jesus.

In the beginning was the Message, and the Message is still with us.

CJ. 07.02.21