

3 Wisdom unsearchable,  
God the invisible,  
Love indestructible  
In frailty appears.  
Lord of infinity,  
Stooping so tenderly,  
Lifts our humanity  
To the heights of His throne.

*vs 3 'Meekness and majesty' Hymn 228*

I have referred on several occasions to the power of a hymn to convey deep spiritual truth. There is the combination of poetry and a memorable tune that stays in the mind long after the most eloquent of sermons have disappeared into the recesses of memory.

The hymn that I have in mind this morning is hymn 228 in our hymn books, Graham Kendrick's hymn 'Meekness and majesty'. In a wonderful economy of language, Kendrick holds together two apparently contrasting, complementary truths concerning Jesus, who we confess as

God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.

*and*

incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,  
and ... made man.

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This hymn came to mind because it seemed to hold together the various strands in the Psalm and Lessons appointed for the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. We have on the one hand the message of Malachi:

the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? *Malachi 3:1,2*

along with the words of Psalm 24, associated with enthronement:

9 Lift up your heads, O gates;  
be lifted up, you ever|lasting | doors; ♦  
and the King of | glory | shall come | in.

10 ‘Who is this | King of | glory?’ ♦  
‘The Lord of hosts, |  
he ~ is the | King of | glory.’

We put that alongside the picture of Simeon recognising in the first born child a young couple bring to the Temple ‘the Lord coming suddenly to his Temple’, as he confesses to those who will hear him:

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.’

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Love indestructible  
In frailty appears.

The meekness and the majesty, the manhood and the deity.

Which leads me to the portion we read from the Letter to the Hebrews.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, .....<sup>18</sup>Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. *Heb 2:17,18*

This for me goes to the very core of what I understand by Incarnation; God becoming like us, God becoming one with us in the person of Jesus. God in Christ emptying himself, God holding nothing back. God in the person of Jesus knowing, really knowing, what it is to be human.

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This child, presented in the Temple will come to know what it is to laugh, to enjoy the company of friends, the sharing of a meal, the love of family. He will know what it is to be lonely, to be frightened, to feel loss, the experience rejection, to experience death.

He is the one of whom Simeon will say on that day in the Temple

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

He who is the ‘salvation of God’ is the one who will call men and women to follow him; follow him not as passive admirers but as participants. In the Old Testament Abraham is promised the blessing of descendants, so that through him all mankind might be blessed.

We who have seen the ‘salvation of God’ are called in our own day to show Christ to the world. Irenaeus, a Bishop and martyr of the early Church, speaking of the Incarnation, the coming of God into the world in the person of Jesus, declared:

He became like us so that we might become more like him

So the Church is called not just to show Christ but to be Christ; to be the Body of Christ in the world of today; to be an instrument of healing in a broken world, to be there in our hospitals and prisons, alongside those who have lost their way in life, alongside the lonely. The Church is called to be a beacon of truth and justice in the face of fake news and alternative facts.

**Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

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