

Over these last few months we have been blessed with the arrival of two grand children. At this time as people peer into the cot they look for signs of resemblance. And so we hear questions such as ‘Isn’t he the image of his father?’, ‘Isn’t he just like his mother?’ How often has that been said over many a child lying in a cot or starting to toddle around a room. Of course, we should not be surprised at this when you think of the very sharing of DNA in the bringing to birth of a child.

I know I get great amusement at looking at pictures of my own children growing up as we come to recognise ourselves and even our own parents in our children. Of course as they grow up we begin to see far more than just physical characteristics but similarities of character, of mannerisms. Sometimes as parents give off about things their children have been up to, I sometimes remind them, ‘You know, we do have our own children.’ Or, as they used to say in Laois, ‘They don’t lick it up off the ground.’

Isn’t he the image of his father? All this came to my mind as I reflected on the passage we read from Paul’s letter to the Colossians, in which he says, referring to Jesus, ‘He is the image of the invisible God’. I want to set those words alongside, the family pictures we look at, the shared characteristics we notice in parent and child. In this

context I often find myself turning back to words of that of that often misunderstood former Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, when he wrote of his understanding of Jesus as Son of God: ‘Jesus is the face of God towards us; God with us, God for us.’ And later on in the same passage; ‘..the down to earth mystery of the Incarnation – that God as Jesus spoke his last and final word about everything.’ (*Free to Believe* David & Rebecca Jenkins - pp62, 63)

Jesus – the image of God, the likeness of God, the face of God towards us.

In just a few weeks we will be celebrating Christmas, the birth of Jesus. So who is this God who we meet in the person of Jesus? I often find that hymns, with their combination of memorable words and tune, can encapsulate deep spiritual truth. For me the words of Hymn 219, ‘From heaven you came helpless babe’ do this for me as I try to get my head around the idea of God, the maker and creator of all that is, in the person of Jesus.

- 1 From heav’n you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

A God who meets us in the ordinary, in a child, in a stable. One who will kneel at the feet of his friends as he silently washes their feet.

One who will give of himself, totally and utterly – even to the point of death, death on a cross.

- 3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

This is the mystery, meekness and majesty, coming together in the person of Jesus. On Christmas Eve we will hear once more those words of St John:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,
John 1

This is the God who meets us in the face of Jesus Christ.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*