

St Luke's in the City

Celebrating at the Crossroads **18th Sunday after Pentecost, 30 September 2007**

Dear Friends,

JESUS may seem to be making a very late appearance in these reflections, though, actually, everything I have said thus far has implicitly involved Jesus. But what can be said about Jesus explicitly, on so small a canvas and from vast libraries on this subject! Without doubt Jesus the fully alive person made a life-changing and indelible impact, wherever he went, and especially on those least acceptable to the religious and political establishments. Jesus' unswerving faithfulness to the divine calling transformed the lives of others. Moreover, this impact has endured throughout two millennia. Perhaps we struggle to come to grips with the bewildering array of titles ascribed to Jesus – 'Son of Man', 'Son of God', 'Christ' (Messiah), 'Lord' (Kyrie), 'Wisdom'. In spite of the orthodox conciliar settlement the creedal attempts to define Jesus' ontological status (the nature of his being) probably leave most of us baffled. 'Bodily resurrection' of Christ may divide Christians on party lines, nevertheless there is no Christian and no church apart from Jesus' resurrection. The 'scandal of particularity' of God being 'constricted into maleness', and all the horrendous and violent consequences of patriarchal power which this has fuelled in the history of the church, may continue to thwart the gospel proclamation – nevertheless, the ordinary fleshiness of Jesus' bodily life, death and resurrection make all the difference to theology, faith and the future. His was a real life, not the conjuring trick of a magician.

What matters about this real, faithful and sacrificial life is that the revelation in Jesus means that humankind could never conceive of God in the same way again. In five very specific ways Jesus' life, death and resurrection revolutionised human understanding of God. God could no longer be regarded as inaccessible, a distant and manipulating deity in the sky – God became one of us, taking human flesh, eating and drinking, laughing and crying with us. God's absolute One-ness, through Christ, came to be experienced as "a lover, a beloved, and love", in the saying of St Augustine. God could no longer be regarded as unchangeable – Jesus' crucifixion-resurrection revealing that God's sameness does not mean terminal monotony, does not deny evolution – for being includes becoming. In Jesus Christians realised that God could no longer be regarded as unaffected by events and history ('impassible', the technical term), that God's omnipotence is not like the human projections of power – God's absolute freedom has to be what God is in God's self-giving, even in self-abandonment, and Jesus reveals that what God does is identical with what God is, that God is Christ-like, and in God is no un-Christlikness at all. Finally, and most crucially, Jesus revealed that the Kingdom of God is not on a distant galaxy but as near as our breath – heaven, eternal life and salvation are not external, rocketship realities, rather, these are native in the human soul. The Jesus revelation makes all the difference to how we see ourselves and each other – and how we will live.

With my love,
David