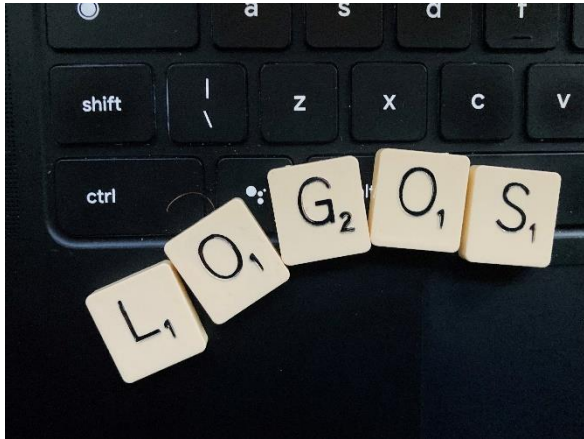


Advent Thoughts for the Day 9-12 December by Forbes Mutch, Lay Leader of Worship

Wednesday 9 December



And he was called... 'Logos'

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

(John 1. 1)

This familiar passage from the beginning of John's Gospel has always confused me. It's only recently that I have understood what it means. It's a case of 'lost in translation'.

The original books of the New Testament were written in a form of Koine Greek, the common language of the Eastern Mediterranean around the time of Christ.

In the original transcripts of John's Gospel, the word 'logos' is used instead of 'word'. In Greek philosophy, Logos was more of a concept than a one-word translation. It broadly defines the principle of divine reason and creative order.

Translated literally from the Greek, the familiar opening sentence of John's Gospel would read: 'In the beginning was Logos, and Logos was with God, and God was Logos'. It's John's way of defining the Holy Trinity, which includes the spirit of Jesus Christ. So, in John's opening sentence, for 'Word' read 'Jesus'.

The more you research the translation and the meaning of Logos, the more complicated it becomes. Maybe that's for a dark evening by the fire?

In the meantime, when I hear the opening lines of John's Gospel this Christmas, I will just enjoy its familiarity.

*Father, grant us understanding of your Word
And help us to enjoy its rich history and splendour.*

Thursday 10 December



*And he was called... **'Prince of Peace'***

*For to us a child is born... And he will be called Wonderful
Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9. 6)*

On old music hall posters, the top act was always billed last. So I rather like the idea that 'Prince of Peace' is the final adoration in Isaiah's list of what Jesus represents.

Peace means different things to different people. It can mean the resolution of a personal conflict or the opportunity to have a day off; to be alone by the window watching the snow falling or sitting around a noisy dinner table with the family. There's no universal definition for personal peace.

I wonder, what is God's definition of peace?

The word that is used in the Old Testament for peace is 'Shalom' and it means so much more than the absence of conflict or the presence of comfort. It means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies.

According to theologian Cornelius Plantinga, Shalom means 'universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts are fruitfully employed'.

In other words, Shalom is the way things ought to be.

*Loving Father, may we all experience
True Shalom this Christmas*

Friday 11 December



And he was called... 'Light of the World'

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life".

(John 8. 12)

Back in the early 1970s (some of you will remember) the Government introduced a three-day week as one of several measures issued to conserve electricity. Domestic power cuts were scheduled around the country and everyone had to prepare for periods of darkness on specified evenings every week.

Growing up in Nottingham at the time, my sister and I used to run up a local hill that overlooked the city and we'd watch the lights go out in waves, leaving streets, estates and suburbs in inky darkness. We'd go home by torchlight and sit by a fire, next to a blank TV.

Jesus calls himself the Light of the World and this obviously resonates with John because he mentions it three times in his Gospel. It appears, too, in Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, but here Jesus is saying: You are the light of the world... people do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.'

And that's probably a more important point. If Christ is the light of the world and we believe in the spirit of Christ, then we should reflect his light so that other people can see it, too.

Be Christ-like in your life; be Christ-light in your world.

*Help us, Lord, not just to follow your light
But to reflect it, too.*

Saturday 12 December



And he is called... 'King of the Jews'

Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

(Matthew 2. 1-3)

In the Gospels, the life of Jesus is framed by kingship. After he is born, three kings come to see the new-born King of the Jews. And at his crucifixion, the notice pinned to the top of his cross echoes the same nomenclature, but this time taunting: 'This is Jesus, King of the Jews.'

For many Jewish people at that time, Christ was a disappointment. They were looking for a Messiah who fitted the mould of a warrior king like David; a leader who was going to overthrow the governing Roman administration and lead the People of Israel to freedom. They didn't listen to Jesus, they didn't understand that he was leading them to a different kind of freedom. When Pilate asks, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' (John 18. 36), Jesus replies: 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

Christ the King did not come to promote worldly authority, but to challenge it; challenge it where it is unjust and divisive and discriminatory. He came to establish a dominion of love and peace and justice. Yes, he is a king, but a magisterial ruler who exercises the power of grace and mercy.

*Lord, help us understand the true nature
of your son's kingship,
Help us see how he rules gently and doesn't dictate.*