

# Advent Thought for the Day 21-25 December

## by Rev. Alan Stewart

### 21 December



And he was called... *'Alpha and Omega; the beginning and the end'*. (Revelation 22. 13)

These words appear in that strange apocalyptic book, right at the end of the Bible, called Revelation. Alpha and Omega are the equivalent of the Greek A to Z, so many Christians interpret

this as referring to the eternal nature of Christ; the belief that he has existed for all time; 'from infinity to beyond', to misquote a certain intergalactic toy space ranger!

That's quite a lot to get our heads around. A bit cosmological.

As I ponder the meaning of these words, I'm reminded of those extraordinary lines from the hymn In Christ Alone: 'From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny'. Surely, the greatest comfort we can know is that Christ is not only eternal, but also eternally with us; forever within the alpha and omega of our own lives. Through it all, he is always there, for us, with us, within us.

Today, remember that God holds this day, its past, its present and its future, in his hands. And no matter what happens, he will have the final word. Because, in the end, everything will be OK. If it isn't... then it's not the end.

## 22 December



And he was called... *'My son, the beloved'* (Matthew 3. 17)

These tender and affirming words were spoken by the Father over Jesus as he stepped out of the waters of baptism; 'This is my son, the beloved with whom I am so pleased'.

A father's blessing is a powerful thing.

Artist, priest and composer of blessings Jan Richardson writes, 'Within the struggle, joy, pain, and delight that attend our life, there is an invisible circle of grace that enfolds and encompasses us in every moment. Blessings help us to perceive this circle of grace, to find our place of belonging within it, and to receive the strength the circle holds for us'.

It was these words of blessing that Jesus took with him as he went from the river into 40 days of desert. These were the words that sustained him through heat, cold and hunger; through temptation and disorientation. These same words travel through the ages to bless and sustain us today. Still, they call us into and hold us within the circle of the Father's grace. They give us strength to walk through whatever deserts we find ourselves in.

Today, may we each hear those same words spoken tenderly over us. 'You are my child, the beloved. With you I am so pleased'.

## 23 December



And he was called... *'My Son, my Chosen'* (Luke 9. 35)

These words come from the story of the Transfiguration. Jesus climbs a mountain with his three closest friends and then, as if out of time, encounters two great fathers of the faith, Moses and

Elijah. These two Old Testament heavyweights are seen as the ultimate endorsement of the mission and ministry of Jesus.

As if that's not enough, God himself speaks up confirming that Jesus is indeed the Chosen One through whom he has chosen to speak, so... 'listen to him'.

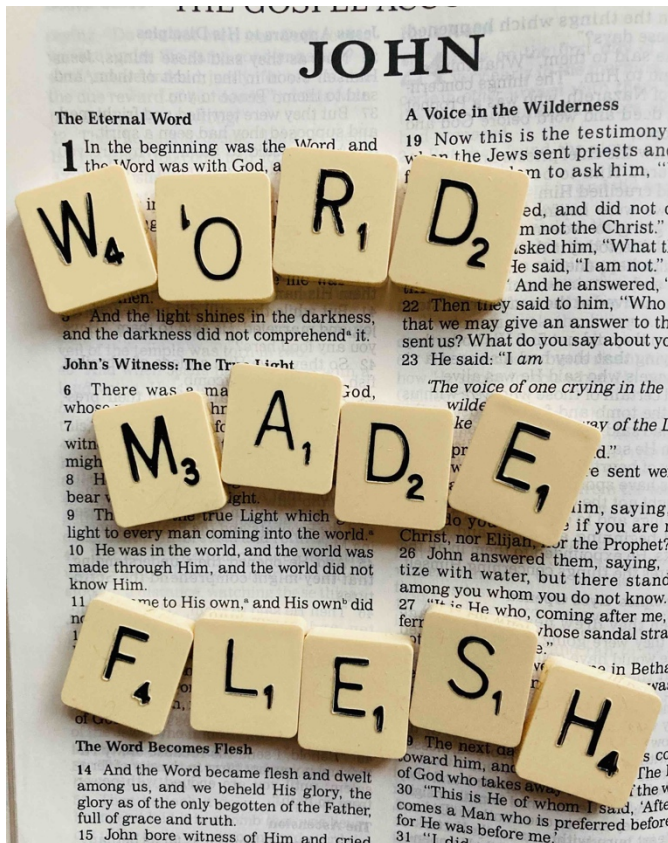
After centuries of trying to speak through prophets and scriptures, through miracles and circumstance, through landscape and conscience, God now chooses to speak through his Son.

God still speaks in many ways and through many channels. How do we know it's him? Well, each time we go back to the Son: What did he say? What did he do? What didn't he say? What didn't he do? Do these words bring the life and freedom he spoke so powerfully of?

Today, may we choose to listen for and act upon the life-giving, life-freeing words of the Son, the Chosen One.



## 24 December



And he was called... *'the Word made flesh'* (John 1. 14)

These words appear in what is for many the most beautiful and profound passage in all scripture. Rather than beginning with nativities or genealogies, John introduces his gospel with a mind-blowing cosmic attempt to connect this man Jesus with the Word or 'divine reason that orders the universe'.

This divine Word, this cosmic Christ, chose to take human flesh;

to become one of us. The power and reason behind the universe chose to become the most powerless, most vulnerable thing in the universe; a baby. Our God is born helpless, born needing us.

If Jesus came to show us in language that we can understand what God is really like, then what does 'the Word made flesh' teach us about our God? For me, it suggests that God intimately longs to identify with your life and mine. It tells me that this is a God of vulnerability, a God who risks; a God who never forces himself upon us, but through the outstretched hands of a newborn asks, 'Will you receive me?'.

Today, how will we receive and respond to the Word who comes to us in the outstretched hands of those who need us?

## 25 December



*'For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given'* (Isaiah 9. 6)

As we have contemplated the many names of our Saviour Christ, on this Christmas Day, may we know that it was for us he came.

Whatever our celebrations today, however different they may be, may we stop to rejoice in the One who rejoices in us.

Wherever and however we are today, whether with or without the ones we love, may we know the

presence of the One who has loved us from the beginning.

Today, may joy and wonder surprise us, may each moment be received as a gift, and may we have eyes to see the Christ that is, and always has been, among us.

Happy Christmas!