

31st JAN 2021 – '**Ordinary & Extraordinary**' by Carolyn Carter

Reading John 1 : 9-14

This reading from John's gospel is often read at Christmas and it's the reading for the second Sunday before Lent – but I thought I'd have this reading today as it struck me that this reading and that story of Candlemas (2nd Feb) have quite a bit in common.

Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth into the world that was made through Him but most did not recognise His coming. Some who were waiting on God DID - and on that day that Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple they had 2 encounters with people who were astounded to see the Him! Simeon and Anna had spent much of their lives in worship and prayer at the temple, waiting for God's promised Messiah – they were now pretty old. But on THIS day they independently felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to this little family. And when they did they saw Jesus and recognised Him as the promised salvation from God that they'd prayed so long to see! They recognised the extraordinary in what looked very ordinary!

We may feel very limited and life seems very mundane at the moment - especially in lockdown! But let's shift our attention away from the news and on to the Father's purposes. Let's actively look out for God amongst the ordinary everyday of our lives!

As I mentioned a few weeks ago Jesus taught that His kingdom is like a seed – starting small, often unseen and in obscurity. This shows us that smallness doesn't mean fruitlessness! It's important we don't overlook the small things God is doing that might not look how we expect them to! If we pay attention, as Anna and Simeon did, and recognise God is at work in the small things, they will lead us to see the extraordinary things of God's Kingdom!

No-one expected God to come in this ordinary way! As a baby to a teenage girl, arriving at the temple without fanfare, quietly, but these two faithful saints were listening each day to the Holy Spirit and saw what God was doing and celebrated His arrival! Many others would have walked right past Him – they saw the ordinary and missed the extraordinary ONE who was right in front of them! Are we attentive to the Spirit? Even in this time where we feel the waiting is going on endlessly and it's easy to get jaded, as it must have felt for Anna or Simeon, are we expectant for God to show up?

Jacki shared last week about the first miracle of Jesus changing gallons of water into wine. He always transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary! Jesus performed this miracle when they'd run out of options to do anything about the situation themselves – that's when God steps in, producing an outcome that's better than what we could've ever imagined! The wine He made was not ordinary but the best they'd ever tasted!

The way the miracle happened looked, on the face of it, very ordinary. I love 'The Chosen's' dramatised version of it onscreen, the stress of the wine merchants is palpable as they have NO idea how to solve their problem and

were at their wits end when Jesus stepped in! What He instructed to them to do - filling the jars up with water - sounded quite frankly ridiculous – as if THAT would sort it out?! This again shows us that the way God works often doesn't look anything like what we think! He uses ordinary things to do the extraordinary. And that is what He is going to do with US too!

Roman's 12 says (in The Message version) 'Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, working, walking around life - and if you place it before God as an offering... you'll be changed from the inside out!' we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds – God's Spirit working in us changes our thinking to be more like His! God doesn't need much to work with just a willing attentive heart.

Are we willing, like the servants and wine merchants at the wedding, and like Simeon & Anna, to put our opinions to the side and simply listen, recognise Him and obey what He says? If we are - we might just see a miracle! As we make ourselves available to God each day – even in this strange time – even when it might feel like our prayers are fruitless as it must have felt sometimes to Simeon and Anna. If we follow the leading of HIS Spirit and HIS ways rather than following social media, God promises to transform us from the Ordinary to the Extraordinary! From the natural to the supernatural. We become children of God, born of His Spirit so that we can bring the things of heaven to earth and demonstrate His life-changing love to the world around us!

Even at the Last Supper Jesus took the ordinary regular things on the meal table and gave them new meaning. He showed through the simple bread and wine the deep truth of what He was about to do not only for the 12 gathered there but for ALL.

Lord Jesus thank You for what You did for us and as You offered yourself for us - we now offer ourselves, our ordinary lives back to You, to work in us, to do the extraordinary things of Your Kingdom! Give us expectant hearts and help us to be ready to recognise You in the everyday. Amen.