

## **Sermon for Advent 4**

### **Christ Church, Colliers Wood**

In a normal year at Christmas there is a time when everyone has to make plans and decide who they are going to visit this year. Married couples or partners will be making sure to take it in turns between parents, Aunts and Uncles which part of the family to be with on what day. We have a theory in our house about how this is decided. Somewhere in the country is a lady called Mabel and at a certain point Mabel decides when she is visiting her nephew. When Aunty Mabel decides the rest of that nephew's family can make their move and then the rest of the country falls into place, like a wonderful domino effect. Well it seems that this Christmas Mabel's going nowhere and nor are her nephews.

Christmas and relationships can be tricky and yet we want to get together and more than ever, this year, with all the separation we have had: the deprivation of contact, makes this latest blow very hard. I wonder too if, thinking about those you have not been able to be with this year, there are any of your relationships that, you plan to build back better.

In our readings today we hear about two people and their relationship with God. One relationship is a healthy one, Mary the other is unhealthy, David.

David has an apparently natural desire to do something for God, to build a Temple. But his motives are mixed: a Temple in his capital city would help him consolidate control over his kingdom. He tries to use God for his own political purposes, but God, none too gently, reminds David who exactly is in control. We can all be tempted like David. Tempted to see God as an extension of our plans, to make God in our own image instead of the other way around. It means that God always sees things our way and so we can be comfortable. This way God doesn't challenge us or ask awkward questions about our lives.

When we look at Mary, her situation is a happy one, she's going to get married she has great plans for the future no doubt. Enter the angel Gabriel with a message that confuses and disturbs her. Yet, after asking for some clarification, she accepts God's plan for her. It will be a challenge but Mary has a healthy relationship with God who is other and greater than her. God who can be demanding and who can open up huge possibilities that are way beyond our imaginings. So Mary surrenders herself and her whole life fully to God's plan.

So as we look forward to the birth of Christ this Christmas, we are very aware of the uncomfortable challenges in our lives. We may want to blame the government or people who haven't behaved as they should, but this will not help. Here we are, how will we respond, how will we show our love for our neighbours in this situation.

Let's start with our relationship with God. In prayer we move closer to God and we can be honest to God in our prayers we can tell God of our concerns, anxieties, and fears, we can express our anger and frustration. We can put God in charge and seek how God would like us to get through this extraordinary and distressing time.

Like Mary we are offered the opportunity every day to say 'Yes' to God. We too are his servants. And our charge is to share God's love with all those that God gives us to love, and when we are in lockdown that can be difficult. We are also called to share the hope we have that nothing can separate us from God's love - we are surrounded by it and so are all those whom we know and would dearly loved to be with at this time.

Christmas will come and Christ will come, Emmanuel, God is with us.

Amen