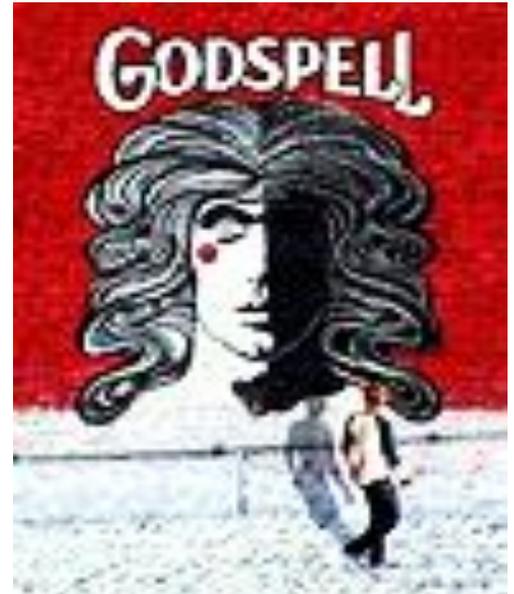


Advent 3

John the Baptist – “Prepare ye the way of the Lord”

I don't know about you, but I can still feel the sense of electricity that went through me at the very start of the musical *Godspell* that opened on 17 November 1971 starring David Essex.

The lights went out; the stage curtains remained closed and in darkness; and a total hush descended on the audience. Then suddenly, a powerful voice came from behind us singing “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” as David Essex processed to the front of the theatre, and then mounted the steps onto the stage as the curtain went up and he turned to face us. It was dramatic. I was reminded forcibly of that Greek work ‘theatron’ – it was a powerful moment and introduction to what came later. It left its mark on me, and for some years, on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, I sang those opening words as I walked from the back of a church to the front. I think it was around 2012 when I did the same thing here at our own Harborough Methodist Church.



I've never been much of an actor, but by golly that grabbed hold of me, and to this day I wish I could come up with something as attention-grabbing as that moment!



So, it is appropriate for us to remember that the figure of John the Baptist was a powerful character. OK, a bit eccentric being garbed in strange attire, probably looking like the wild-eyed Rasputin of Czarist nightmares, but he was doing God's will and proclaiming the imminent arrival of the Messiah, the Saviour of the World – Emmanuel, God with us and for us, the one who wanted to save us from our destructive ways!

Godspell went on to trace a story-line that has been part of God's continuing call to His people throughout the ages. A story of love for God's creation and its people in particular who he thought should act as good stewards of all that creation had to offer – including care of all people regardless of colour, race or creed.

It follows a line from God desiring us to live our lives according to His creation plan. For us to live in harmony and at peace. We certainly are struggling to discern how peace and harmony fit into our current world situation; but that is why the story looks at our need to change, to forswear our current ways, and turn back to the ways that lead to happiness, fulfilment and harmony, so that we may live at peace and share what creation offers equitably among all peoples throughout the world.

One of the striking things about the story-line as it unfolds is that it repeats (reprises) the song 'Day by Day'. It does not allow us to forget that it is each and every day that we should focus on the 'Way of our Lord', and return to carrying out God's will in our every word and action as we respond to those, both around us, and those in far off places that we don't stop to consider!

Our resources are finite. Renewables may be less so and something that we now should focus more on so that we have a future that sustains both us and those who will follow on after us.

God's mercy and grace provides enough for all our needs. Our grace and mercy in response to God's call to be Good News to others is to prevail against those who oppress the poor, the sick, the prisoners, and to love our global neighbours as we love ourselves.

Live the 'Way' of our Lord Jesus and you live the life of God among his people.

"Prepare ye the Way of the Lord!" Will YOU this Advent, Christmastide, New Year, and Easter, by the power of Pentecost, transform the turmoil into the peace and harmony that God so longs for in His World, our world?

I pray that John the Baptist's task might now be ours for the sake of all - and the Kingdom of God! Amen.

Dave Tomlin

November 2020