

## **NORTH BALWYN UNITING CHURCH**

**SUNDAY 5 JUNE 2011**

**Rev. Anneke Oppewal**

**Psalm 121; John 14: 8-21**

### **“God in Us”**

What John 14 basically tells us is that in Jesus we see God, and that if we follow Jesus, God will also show himself through us.

What Jesus also says is that, although he may not be with them for much longer, his disciples are not to despair. His death will not be the end of their journey with him, but the beginning of something new. Whoever believes in me, Jesus says, will also do the works I do, and in fact greater works than these, when I am no longer here.

On our journey through life we can sometimes get quite intimidated by what lies ahead of us. It may be because we don't feel secure about our health, or because someone we loved is no longer with us. It may be because things are changing, our community aging, our Church no longer as it used to be. It may be because there is a child or a grandchild, or a parent or grandparent we are worried about, financial trouble, concerns about the world, or any other thing.

At times like that life is a bit like the journey of the pilgrims Psalm 121 was written for: We see high mountains rise in front and beside us, we are afraid we may stumble and fall on the narrow path we are trying to negotiate and we worry about the dangers that may be lurking in the shadows and around the next corner.

For pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem as portrayed in Psalm 121 these were very real, physical, dangers. For people like us, who negotiate twenty-first century life in Western society, they are perhaps not as physical but they are definitely real.

We look up and see, like those pilgrims three or four thousand years ago, trouble looming. We worry about the road ahead and we wish someone would guarantee us that all will be right. That God will neither slumber nor sleep, that he will protect us from whatever trouble may lie ahead, that he will keep us safe from all evil. We wish we could be certain that we will not find ourselves alone and abandoned.

I will not leave you orphaned, says Jesus, there will be someone else to show you, and he will be with you forever. The word Jesus uses here is rich in meaning and may be translated as 'Advocate', or someone who will speak up for you, or a guide, or someone who will give comfort and support, or someone who will care for you and help you. An assistant in the widest sense of the word.

Even when I am no longer physically with you, says Jesus, God will not leave you alone. God will be with you. God will make sure there will be assistance. God will walk beside you and stay with you even when you're going through difficult times. God will be your shadow, and although you may not always see that shadow when it is dark, he will be with you nevertheless.

God, that assistance from God, is not only divine - as God takes up residence in our hearts, we become, to each other, sources of that same help and comfort. As a community we are given to each other so we can remind each other in word and deed of Christ's presence in the world and in our life.

We'll need double vision for this: Not look at the world and see the bare, cold facts of life, but look further and see past those bare cold facts to see the world and the people around us with God's eyes. When we look at the world like that we'll see hope, and possibilities, opportunities, and an invitation to live life to the best of our abilities. We will recognise Christ's hands and feet in others as we try to be Christ for others. And as we do so, we'll find motivation, courage and confidence to keep bringing God's Kingdom closer. Because we will see God everywhere and in everything, working, loving, healing, creating and changing the world and its people with all God's might. Waiting for us to participate and become part of a community that is prepared to live the gospel into the future and be the yeasty seed of Christ alive in the world.

In the words of the mystical writer Theresa of Avila:  
Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

It is that body that Christ longs to live in. Amen.