

## SEEKING AND FINDING

St. Michael, Cornhill

Confirmation of Georgina Foggin

Epiphany II

Sunday January 15<sup>th</sup> 2017

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Christmas and all that goes with it is seen by each of us, I'd guess, quite differently. So, for example, when it comes to gifts – some find receiving gifts very difficult, some peoples' hearts will leap for joy whatever they receive – still others will be curmudgeonly and grumpy, wishing they'd been given something else! Some of you will either have read Raymond Briggs' marvellous book or seen the television film of his *Father Christmas*. One of my favourite moments is when he opens his present and exclaims: 'More bloomin' socks!'

Now, I've had a very fortunate Christmas with lots of splendid gifts, but it may turn out that one of the quirkiest and smallest gifts will be the most useful. It is a 'whistle key finder.' You can use it on your key ring – or perhaps best of all for me, in my spectacle case; I'm endlessly losing my glasses. There is something very interesting about it. You whistle and then the key finder squeaks back at you. So, in a way, *you* don't find the key – *the key* stays where it is and *the key finds you!*

Now that's an interesting reflection on human relationships. If we are married or have found a partner, did we find them or did they find us? It's probably impossible often to answer that question simply. Now, I've begun here, since our gospel passage this morning is full of seekings and findings. John the Baptist looks to Jesus and exclaims: '*Behold, or look, here is the Lamb of God.*' Moments later, Jesus asks two others of his disciples: 'What are you looking for?' Then when they ask Jesus where he is staying, he replies: 'Come and see...' Later still Andrew says to his brother Simon: 'We have found the Messiah.' Lots of seeking and finding – who finds who?

It is a very unusual piece of narrative but it's quite instructive if we reflect on our relationship with God, and especially on a day like today when we are celebrating a confirmation. For, time after time, we shall hear ourselves or others saying – 'we must reach out to God, we must find out where God is for us; and so on.' Yet here, in this gospel narrative, much of it is about God reaching out to us. God *comes among us as one of us*, in Jesus. Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, the 'anointed one' - in Greek *the Christ*. Then, this rather quaint little story we've just heard from John's gospel demonstrates it all very clearly.

Indeed, throughout both the Old and New Testaments, time and again God comes to us – either individually or in community. Think of Jacob and his ladder, or of Elijah and Moses, or of the story of Pentecost or finally, St. Paul's different accounts of the risen Christ making himself known. Today's Old Testament reading begins with God saying 'Listen to me?' and then later God giving himself as 'a light to the nations'. Or again, St. Paul in that second reading talks of 'the grace of God being given in Christ Jesus.'

As we celebrate and give thanks for God's gracious gift today in Georgina's Confirmation, we might reflect on the ways in which God has sought us out. For many of us that may have seemed unremarkable, and for others almost traumatic. St. Paul was struck down, effectively, in his conversion. So it will have been in different ways for countless others down the ages. But, then again, for many it will have been far less dramatic or traumatic. God may have been with us throughout our lives – but still it is God reaching out to us.

Georgina's Confirmation gives us an opportunity to reflect on this. Like many, her baptism happened long ago. But now, as she has prepared for Confirmation, so she is opening her heart further to God. God in Christ Jesus reaches out to us all. We don't need somehow to search for him

under every loose stone in our lives. Rather, we accept Christ's presence which is always there, but we find time and space to deepen our relationship with him.

Any friendship, partnership, marriage – any human relationship can only be deepened, sustained and become real, if we give each other time, if we listen to each other. So it is with God. Today is for Georgina almost an anticipation of her marriage, which we shall celebrate in a couple of months' time. This time, it's marriage with God, if you like. It's a moment of excitement and celebration for all of us.

Every time we experience a Baptism and Confirmation so it challenges every one of us to open our hearts more warmly and more widely to Jesus Christ. What might he be calling out of us, on this day, in this week, at this time in our lives. Time to use the whistle of prayer – God will respond!

Amen

Readings

Isaiah 49. 1-7

I. Corinthians 1. 1-9.

John 1. 29-42.