

Thought For The Day Advent 14th December
On tiptoe



Romans 8:18 - 25

In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the

magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God's purpose it has been so limited—yet it has been given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God! [Romans 8:18-21, J.B.Phillips]

Thought: On tiptoe

Do you remember Mog's Christmas? In Judith Kerr's children's classic, Mog the cat finds Christmas very stressful. The house is full of tantalizing smells, but she's not allowed to taste any of them. Strange and unwanted visitors keep sitting in her chair. And then, to crown it all, she sees a tree walking into the house! Even Mog knows that trees belong in the garden, not in the house. It's the last straw. With an indignant yowl, Mog bolts up onto the roof and refuses to come down ...

I always think of Mog when we start the annual ritual of getting in the Christmas tree. It's got to be the right size ... nice and fresh so it will last till Twelfth Night ... lots of bushy branches to hold my eclectic collection of hand-me-down decorations (the old ones are the best!). And some mistletoe for the kissing branch (come to think of it, I haven't seen any this year — have you?). And holly from the garden (if the birds have left any berries). And a few trails of ivy to tuck behind the pictures.

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without the holly and the ivy!

I've always loved the fact that we bring a bit of the wild wood into our homes at Christmas — a few reminders of our pagan past, when our ancestors lived closer to nature. Bringing in my bits of greenery reminds me of Isaiah's vision of the natural world caught up in the peace and joy of God's kingdom: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them (Isaiah 11.6). And it reminds me of St Paul's words in today's reading from Romans ch.8, of the whole of creation on tiptoe, craning with expectation, peeking round the stable door to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.

What does that mean? It means the wonderful sight of people — ordinary people, people like you and me — finding the courage and the grace to live by the Spirit, to live out of the spirit of grace that God has sent into our hearts through the coming of his Son. It's about finding the confidence to live as children of God, children who often stumble and get it wrong, but find we can be forgiven and start again because of the new life that God has given us in Jesus (see Tom's TFTD on Tuesday!). It's about stepping out in freedom, without being weighed down and dragged back into slavery by those horrendous debts from the past (see Nick's TFTD yesterday!). It's about the human race (that's us) forgetting our greed and selfishness and reaching out in generosity and compassion to a

world that desperately needs our help—including the natural world. It's about all the gifts that we glimpse at Christmas — the peace, the love, the joy — becoming a reality and staying with us to give us hope into the New Year and beyond. It's about the greatest gift of all, lying in the manger: the wonderful sight of the Son of God coming into his own, bringing hope and joy to the whole of his creation.

That's worth a thought when you're bringing in the holly!

God bless,

Loveday

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