

TFTD 2025.03 Friday March 7th

Luke 3.21-38: Who do you think you are?



Now when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.” So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi ... the son of Adam, the son of God.

I’m always fascinated by ancestry programmes. I guess we all have secret hopes of discovering some romantic episode in our family history! My mother was very proud of her father’s connection with the Holmes of Mardale — allegedly descendants of the outlaw Hugh Holme, a kind of Robin Hood figure who rebelled against wicked King John and lived in a cave above what is now Haweswater (who knew?). But she was equally proud of her other grandfather. He was called Stanislaus Makowski, and he brought a romantic Polish love story into the family history — though he looks very whiskery and respectable in the old photos. You never know who you might be related to!

Jesus’ genealogy traces his family history back through Joseph to David, the legendary king of Israel (v.31), to David’s great-grandfather Boaz (v.32), to Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people (v.34) — and eventually to Adam, the ancestor of the whole human race (v.38). So Jesus’ family tree roots him firmly within the Jewish people, the heirs of the promises God made to Abraham. But if you go far enough back, we’re all related to each other — we’re all part of the great family of humanity. Viking outlaw or Polish law student, the emperor Tiberius or the Jewish prophet — we all share the same ancestry, we’re all descended from Adam, created by God from the dust of the earth.

The Ash Wednesday liturgy reminds us of this at the beginning of Lent: “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Even at our most earthy and basic, we are all loved by God, made in his image and called to be his children.

Luke’s genealogy — unlike Matthew’s — is an exclusively male affair. It doesn’t mention the mothers — especially the less respectable ones, like Bathsheba, the mother of King Solomon, seduced by King David while she was still married to Uriah the Hittite (Matthew 1.6) — or was it a love story? Or Ruth the migrant from Moab who married Boaz and became David’s great-grandmother (Matt 1.5). But Luke does give us a unique insight into the women of Jesus’ family, with the stories of Mary and Elizabeth in Luke ch.1. These are women who had to fight their own battles against prejudice and shame: one too old to be a mother, the other too young – and not even married. These are stories grounded in the basics of humanity, earthed in the physicalities of pregnancy and birth — and yet shot through with the glory of God, touching human lives, transfiguring and transcending the humblest and most ordinary families. Because that’s where God does touch our lives, in the people closest to us, in the gift of life, in the places we learn to give and receive love, to live and flourish together.

Jesus’ genealogy reminds us that we are all created to be children of God, created in God’s image and called to share his love. That’s what being human means. Jesus’ baptism reminds us that Jesus is the new Adam, humanity reborn, immersed with us in the waters of creation, coming back through the waters of death to show us what it really means to be a son or daughter of Adam, a son or daughter of God. As he heads out into the wilderness, he will face his own temptations, the temptations that Adam so signally failed. As we begin our Lenten journey, we’re called to follow Jesus in a journey of discovery: who do you really think you are? What does it mean to be authentically human? What does it mean to be a son or daughter of Adam, a son or daughter of God?

God bless,
Loveday

PS Spotted this defiant explosion of life and colour on a London street earlier this week. It reminds me of Fred Kaan's Magnificat Now:

He calls us to revolt and fight With him for what is just and right:
To live and sing Magnificat In crowded street and council flat.



