

# **God in all things**

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Nine Lessons and Carols

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## **The Usual**

I never agreed with one of Harry Secombe's famous songs. He would sing 'If I ruled the world every day would be the first day of spring'. Well I like the first day of spring but I also like the way each year passes through a variety of distinct seasons.

Yes there is the blossom of spring. But there are also the hot days of summer with long cool drinks. I like the autumn as the nights draw in and there are leaves on the pavement to kick. The winter will give us beautiful snowy days when the world has been transformed.

We are now in the season which is determined by Christmas. It might be Advent when we are full of preparation. But we are focussing on the delights to come.

All of these things are about the familiar which gives us a framework to live in, a way to live and work together, features of life that have been honed over many years and we know just how to do it.

This service of Nine Lessons and Carols is one of these delights and is always greatly appreciated. If 'everyday were the first day of spring' we wouldn't be doing it. Life is enriched by many seasons and a wide variety of delights. Perhaps we are missing the point if we just want one season we might think is 'the best'.

## **The unusual**

But you might say to me you're still doing the Harry thing in its way but cherry picking the parts of the seasons you like. You still want the world in a particular way which is only full of delight. What about the days of summer there are too hot and just leave you exhausted. Or autumn when it is just dank. And of course the winter days when you can't get warm. When it comes to Christmas so often people will gently moan about how early the commercial activity starts and how little time there is left to prepare. What do we do with the undelightful parts of life?

Harry Secombe is of course recognising this other undelightful dimension of life and he would like to

have the ability to get rid of it. Perhaps in a wistful way he is seeking to be a saviour. Life is full of the things that challenge, disappoint, breakdown and maybe enrage us. Please deliver us from these.

## **Our lessons**

This service of Nine Lessons and Carols starts with this sense of brokenness in the world. The opening lesson is famously known as The Fall. There are people who want to take this in a very literal way but I do think the writer of Genesis was wanting to make the brokenness and pain of the world something about who we are as humans. To say it is a myth is on the one hand to say it's not history but also to say it is true.

It is almost too obvious to need explanation and newspapers with the accounts of daily life show how people fail. The challenge is to recognise when it is true about us too and we stop being defensive and just blaming other people.

There is something said about car drivers, 'you are not in traffic you are traffic'. When you go to a beautiful city and feel it's full of tourists, you have to acknowledge that you're a day visitor too. Sometimes in the issues of life the person we can't see is ourselves. If there are songs that are praising the best in life and a desire to get rid of the wrong, the honest and humble thing to say is 'I'm in need of that myself for I contribute to the fallenness of the world.'

## **Salvation**

The readings in this service take us from The Fall through expressions of hope for something new to the birth of a child who is going to be the answer where 'undelight' turns into 'delight'.

Perhaps it's not the way we would go about things. But perhaps this is the point. The answer that is being offered to us is not some polished solution like the first day of spring. It is quirky and humble with shepherds who few people at the time would have bothered about but the angels call them to the stable. There are three kings or are they wise men? No they are Pagan astrologers and the church in its traditions had to tidy them up. Again in there way they hear God's call.

But at its heart there is a humble couple, who have a baby, in a poor and weak corner of a mighty empire.

This is what salvation looks like from God's point of view. It is human life he loves. He loves it in all of its variety and shame and at times glory. A baby

is a sign of glory and hope and joy. Jesus is going to be all of this and more better. But for now let us know that he brings us the delights of God. Where there is undelight he will bring salvation and the experience of true delight.

We can know this not just on the first day of Spring but on any day of the year not just the first day of spring. It is our faith that it is God who rules the world and he does this in a lavish way that can reach to each season and each person whatever their situation.