

Moderator's Christmas Message 2021

Christmas & BROKEN SIGNPOSTS

“Are we nearly there yet?”

My young children used to routinely ask this question when we would make the Christmas Day journey from Timaru to Christchurch for a family Christmas lunch. They eagerly anticipated our arrival – loving hugs from grandparents, another round of presents, plus a table heaving with their favorite food!

“When are we going to get there?” is an important existential question as well. We know we are ‘not there yet’ if we are talking about life, as we sense deep down, how it should be. COVID certainly brings that truth home. Will life ever be normal again, we lament.

Bible scholar NT Wright talks about this sense of life not quite being as we know it ought. He identifies ‘signposts’ to life as we sense it should be: things like justice, love, beauty and freedom. These are values embedded in the human condition that point us to the idea that this is a purposeful universe. Yet, we also know how often we fail in each of these things personally, collectively and globally.

Take beauty, for example. Why do we find creation so beautiful? Surely it is a sign of a creator who loves beauty and created us to appreciate it. And yet, we also observe to our shame, how we humans are leaving deep ugly scars all over the planet.

And so, Wright talks about ‘broken signposts’ and then goes on to depict the way John’s Gospel shows how God is putting things right again, and how we can be part of this restoration. The coming of Jesus brilliantly depicts this with the resounding Christmas message recorded at the beginning of John’s Gospel:

‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth’ (1:14)

Full, in Greek ‘pleres’, means “complete, perfect and lacking nothing”. John uses it here to draw attention to God’s mission to fix the broken signposts. Are we there yet? Full of grace and truth sounds to me like an important milestone – albeit there is much signpost renovation still to be done.

Could we see the coming of Jesus in this unsettled, COVID-riven Christmas time as a huge signpost in divine lettering? A majestic sign that ...

God has arrived on planet earth
Fixing broken signposts
Pointing the way
Calling us to join in

