

God is our life and comes to us in human form, or better, as fully human as we are to reveal to us the animating, or better, enlivening principle of all creation. The culminating statement in this gospel story of the raising of Lazarus are the words

*'I am the resurrection'*

meaning that our nature isn't simply defined by the life we know from first to last breath, here only to procreate and pass on our life, our DNA, to future generations, our hope only in our own replication. Nor is Christ's coming merely a rescue job because of our sin, our moral failings with us from the very beginning and so often tied up with our desire to perpetuate the survival of our own kin, all those struggles we have to possess this or that and the power-play which becomes almost second nature. No, our primary nature is 'life' itself: God's life: God. Jesus stands before us as God's life, as God revealed not in some quasi-human form but as God always intended and intends us to be: 'fully human' made in God's image and likeness but an image and likeness we've lost sight of through sin – all that power-play to perpetuate our own likeness rather than that of God.

We had a wonderful group with us yesterday representing a whole variety of Christian Churches full of the desire to communicate better with God and with one another and with those who do not yet know Christ as their animating principle. For one person their starting point was the recognition that Christ was already at work in everyone, and there is truth in this if we see Christ as 'the way, the truth and the life', as the principle of everyone's 'resurrection' – not as a future event but as now – what or who indeed keeps us in being, makes us human. So our starting point could as well be the common humanity in which we all share – start there and whatever name you put on it you will find God.

But as this story also shows this way to God is only recoverable through the Cross. Everything in it speaks of the Passion which is to come – indeed in John's gospel it is the immediate cause of the high priest's decision to have Jesus killed; he fears that because of the popularity now of Jesus '*the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation*' - voicing that sinful focus on the survival of one's kin or ethnic or religious grouping which afflicts us all and can blind us to the wider reference that God's life has for all of us, that life of which resurrection speaks so clearly. Caiaphas casts himself off from the very source of all life by nailing it to a cross, in effect saying it is better for Jesus to die than himself but what Jesus shows us is that in the resurrection of Lazarus, and his own, the reverse is true – it is better to die with Jesus, as Thomas inchoately perceives, than to die without him.

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