

It's difficult not to see something new in the garden every day and, it's often, something entirely new to me, never seen before, despite thirty-five years in this same garden. Yesterday, the tail and remains of a slow-worm. And the day before the intricate leaf mines of a leaf-miner moth on a species of rose – perhaps of *Stigmella anomalella*. And, the day before that, a Lesser Whitethroat rattling its way through the evergreen hedge or line of trees that now dominate and divide the centre of the garden. And so on. All there as a result of human decision or, in my case, by default – allowing the garden to simply grow up with occasional interventions to maintain a semblance of civilisation: an open path or cultivated piece of ground here and there. The writer and naturalist Richard Mabey writes well of this in his latest book, *The Accidental Garden* where he muses on his desire to control both as a writer and a conservationist and is puzzled why we both acknowledge our need to participate in the natural world, in the process of nature, and yet at the very same time, want to stand at a distance from it as a sort of overseer, making sure that we control it and it doesn't control us. He concludes with the thought that, *'just to complicate matters, we aspire to be included in this throng, not just re-connected but recognising, belatedly, that we are part of nature ourselves; reconnection is redundant – it is implicit in the human condition. (P.30)'*

Well, you may well be wondering *'what on earth?'*, or *'in heaven's name!'* this has got to do with Philip and James? You're not alone. Let's see if we can make a connection. It's something to do with all those prepositions and conjunctions that we spoke about on Sunday which pepper our faith and understanding of who we are, vis á vis God and one another. The key, of course, is Christ and specifically, the connective tissue of the incarnation, restoring us to that re-connection implicit in the human condition: made in the image of God. So we are fully implicit in the condition of the world, one might say: fully human and fully implicit in the condition of God, that is, in some way taken up into the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our more developed understanding. Philip and James and the other disciples are still at the very beginning of this understanding and Jesus expresses a certain exasperation that they do not, as yet, understand more. But they will, as they follow the trajectory of the incarnation through a life that is fully lived in the flesh, for others, as much as oneself; culminating in a death fully lived, for others as much as oneself, and in a Resurrection, fully lived, for others as much as oneself. From one garden to another; fully part of both.

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