

*Steek êrens in jou woonplek 'n kers aan terwyl jy lees.*

Tema: Herberg en stal; plekke, ruimtes en tyd

Skriflesing: Lukas 2:1-20



### Broodjies vir die pad

“...And then, just when everything is bearing down on us to such an extent that we can scarcely withstand it, the Christmas message comes to tell us that all our ideas are wrong, and that what we take to be evil and dark is really good and light because it comes from God. Our eyes are at fault, that is all. God is in the manger, wealth in poverty, light in darkness, succor in abandonment. No evil can befall us; whatever men may do to us, they cannot but serve the God who is secretly revealed as love and rules the world and our lives.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*

### Kersliedjie

Drie outas het in die haai Karoo  
die ster gesien en die engel geglo,  
hul keries en drie bondels gevat  
en aangestryk met 'n jakkalspad  
al agter die ding wat skuiwend skyn  
op 'n plakkie, 'n klip, 'n syferfontein,  
oor die sink en die sak van Distrik Ses  
waar 'n kersie brand in 'n stukkende fles,  
en daar tussen esels en makriel  
die krip gesien en neergekniel.  
Die skaapvet, eiers en biltong  
nederig gelê voor God se klong  
en die Here gedank in gesang en gebed  
vir 'n kindjie wat ook dié volk sou red . . .  
Oor die hele affêre het uit 'n hoek  
'n broeis bantam agterdogtig gekloek.

*D.J. Opperman (1914–1985)*

“The lack of mystery in our modern life is our downfall and our poverty. A human life is worth as much as the respect it holds for the mystery. We retain the child in us to the extent that we honor the mystery. Therefore, children have open, wide-awake eyes, because they know that they are surrounded by the mystery. They are not yet finished with this world; they still don't know how to struggle along and avoid the mystery, as we do. We destroy the mystery because we sense that here we reach the boundary of our being, because we want to be lord over everything and have it at our disposal, and that's just what we cannot do with the mystery.... Living without mystery means knowing nothing of the mystery of our own life, nothing of the mystery of another person, nothing of the mystery of the world; it means passing over our own hidden qualities and those of others and the world. It means remaining on the surface, taking the world seriously only to the extent that it can be calculated and exploited, and not going beyond the world of calculation and exploitation. Living without mystery means not seeing the crucial processes of life at all and even denying them.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*

“Perhaps it's true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that when they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged

remains of a burned house—the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture—must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for. Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story.”

— Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

“Have you ever heard the wonderful silence just before the dawn? Or the quiet and calm just as a storm ends? Or perhaps you know the silence when you haven't the answer to a question you've been asked, or the hush of a country road at night, or the expectant pause of a room full of people when someone is just about to speak, or, most beautiful of all, the moment after the door closes and you're alone in the whole house? Each one is different, you know, and all very beautiful if you listen carefully.”

— Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*

“If you have been in the vicinity of the sacred - ever brushed against the holy - you retain it more in your bones than in your head; and if you haven't, no description of the experience will ever be satisfactory.”

— Daniel Taylor, *In Search of Sacred Places*

“Taking off your shoes is a sacred ritual. It is a hallowed moment of remembering the goodness of space and time. It is a way of celebrating the holy ground on which you stand.”

— Macrina Wiederkehr

“The key to the seeker's quest is not in finding just the right piece of holy real estate on which to stand, but rather in so preparing his or her awareness that any space he or she occupies can become thin through faith.”

— Steven Charleston, *The Four Vision Quests of Jesus*

---

## The Innkeeper

*Frederick Buechner*

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

*Luke 2:7*

“That was a long, long time ago,” said the Innkeeper, “and a long, long way away. But the memories of men are also long, and nobody has forgotten anything about my own sad, queer part in it all unless maybe they have forgotten the truth about it. But you can never blame people for forgetting the truth because it is, after all, such a subtle and evasive commodity. In fact, all that distinguishes a truth from a lie may finally be no more than just the flutter of an eyelid or the tone of a voice. If I were to say, ‘I BELIEVE!’ that would be a lie, but if I were to say, ‘I believe...,’ that might be the truth. So I do not blame posterity for forgetting the subtleties and making me out to be the black villain of the piece—the heartless one who said, ‘No room! No room!’ I’ll even grant you that a kind of villainy may be part of the truth. But if you want to speak the whole truth, then you will have to call me a villain with a catch in your voice, at least a

tremor, a hesitation maybe, with even the glitter of almost a tear in your eye. Because nothing is entirely black, you know. Not even the human heart.

“I speak to you as men of the world,” said the Innkeeper. “Not as idealists, but as realists. Do you know what it is like to run an inn—to run a business, a family, to run anything in this world for that matter, even your own life? It is like being lost in a forest of a million trees,” said the Innkeeper, “and each tree is a thing to be done. Is there fresh linen on all the beds? Did the children put on their coats before they went out? Has the letter been written, the book read? Is there money enough left in the bank? Today we have food in our bellies and clothes on our backs, but what can we do to make sure that we will have them still tomorrow? A million trees. A million things.

“Until finally we have eyes for nothing else, and whatever we see turns into a thing. The sparrow lying in the dust at your feet—just a thing to be kicked out of the way, not the mystery of death. The calling of children outside your window—just a distraction, an irrelevance, not life, not the wildest miracle of them all. That whispering in the air that comes sudden and soft from nowhere—only the wind, the wind...”

“Of course I remember very well the evening they arrived. I was working on my accounts and looked up just in time to see the woman coming through the door. She walked in that slow, heavy-footed way that women have in the last months, as though they are walking in a dream or at the bottom of the sea. Her husband stood a little behind her—a tongue-tied, helpless kind of man, I thought. I cannot remember either of them saying anything, although I suppose some words must have passed. But at least it was mostly silence. The clumsy silence of the poor. You know what I mean. It was clear enough what they wanted.

“The stars had come out. I remember the stars perfectly though I don't know why I should, sitting inside as I was. And my wife's cat jumped up onto the table where I was sitting. I had not stood up, of course. There was mainly just silence. Then it happened much in the way that you have heard. I did not lie about there being no room left—there really was none—though perhaps if there had been a room, I might have lied. As much for their sakes as for the sake of the inn. Their kind would have felt more at home in a stable, that's all, and I do not mean that unkindly either. God knows.

“Later that night, when the baby came, I was not there,” the Innkeeper said. “I was lost in the forest somewhere, the unenchanted forest of a million trees. Fifteen steps to the cellar, and watch out for your head going down. Firewood to the left. If the fire goes out, the heart freezes. Only the wind, the wind. I speak to you as men of the world. So when the baby came, I was not around, and I saw none of it. As for what I heard—just at that moment itself of birth when nobody turns into somebody—I do not rightly know what I heard.

“But this I do know. My own true love. All your life long, you wait for your own true love to come—we all of us do—our destiny, our joy, our heart's desire. So how am I to say it, gentlemen? When he came, I missed him.

“Pray for me, brothers and sisters. Pray for the Innkeeper. Pray for me, and for us all, my own true love.”

## Só kry geloof lyf en word die Woord vlees

*Wilhelm Jordaan*

As ek in Desember “Kersfees” hoor, dink ek spontaan aan ’n grimmige Hompie Kedompie wat in Alice in Wonderland sê jy kan ’n woord laat beteken wat jy dit wil laat beteken. Want só gaan dit mos wêreldwyd in mense se gesprekke oor ’n “geseënde Kersfees”.

En juis só het ’n enkelwoord van my besit geneem: Immanuel – God met ons. Drie woorde in my moeder se taal. Saam met die mistiek én lyflikheid daarvan: “God”, eienaam vir ’n onpeilbare geheim; “met” ’n voorsetsel wat iets naby bring tot die punt van aanraking. En “ons”, die insluitende eerste persoon meervoud: Niemand staan buite nie; almal saam in ’n intieme kring. Alles wat is, is daar binne-in. Sodat die ganse kosmos met Kersfees begin gloei van opwinding, asem ophou en uitroep: “Immanuel!”

Deel van die “asem ophou” is die verwagting van iets meer as ’n fraai geboorteverhaal van ’n kindjie in ’n stal omring deur strooi en skaap en stof, engolkore en wyse manne met geskenke: ’n dieper wete van God se gesant wat “ingebreek” het in die mens se geskiedenis om as mens vir die medemens tussen ons te kom woon – as “die Woord wat vlees geword het”.

’n Engelse vertaling daarvan bevestig die radikale lyflikheid: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.” Wat sê Christus is die inkommer in jou buurt, sommer baie naby daar waar jy woon, werk, speel en sterf. Miskien hou jy nie eintlik van dié inkommer nie, soos ons soms maar maak met “inkommers”, maar jy bly nie onaangeraak nie; kyk tog vasgenaël na hom, vasgespyker aan ’n kruis.

Met hom as prototipe van “God se mens” in jou neighbourhood kry geloof gestalte – nie as ’n swewende vae idee nie, maar wat lyf kry deur oë wat pleitend, liefdevol en met genade kyk; deur hande en vingers wat ’n ander se vel met sorg en teerheid aanraak; deur voete wat jou laat beweeg, nader aan ’n ander.

Alles daarvan word uitgebeeld in die Deense flik Italiensk for Bygyndere. Andreas, ’n jong predikant, word deel van ’n groepie wat ’n aandklas (“Italiaans vir beginners”) bywoon – om geen ander rede nie as dat elkeen daar op eie manier eensaam, verlate en weerloos voel, en troos soek in tussenmenslike warmte en onderskraging. Hul lewens raak algaande vervleg.

So dat Andreas se “teologie” dat God se Koninkryk binne en tussen mense bestaan, gestalte vind in dit wat mét en tússe hulle gebeur: In die sagte aanraking wanneer een ’n ander se hare sny; in die aangee van ’n sakdoek om ’n ander se trane af te vee; in saam lag oor iets. En in die vraag wat jy vra aan ’n mens wat in ’n donker uur die diepste verlatenheid beleef: “Het jy vannag iemand om mee te praat?”

Waar dít gebeur, gebeur God in die teenwoordige tyd – die Een na wie ons Kersfees verlang en oor wie ons sing: Ubi caritas et amor / Ibi Deus est – waar daar liefde is en deernis, daar is God: Lyflik, tasbaar, Immanuel!

\* *Jordaan is ’n emeritus professor in sielkunde.*

<https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/stemme/menings/so-kry-geloof-lyf-en-word-die-woord-vlees-20211221>

## Brood vir die pad

### Barmhartige betaal die prys in pruimtwak

*Abraham de Vries*

Dis Winkelplaas se plaaswinkel wat my geleer het om nooit te vra wat het dít nou te doen met dát nie; as jy nuuskierig genoeg is, kry die een altyd iets met die ander te make. Dis buitendien ook hoe stories werk.

Die eerste ding van hierdie storie was die winkelier wat ’n bietjie moedeloos van die dorp af teruggekom het en aan die etenstafel gewonder het wat het dan van Oudtshoorn se pruimtwak geword. Op die dorp was daar nog net by Nissens ’n halwe rolletjie wat hy kon oorkoop, en Gerrie Joubert sê op Calitzdorp is daar niks meer nie.

En dan was daar ’n pomp. Kyk, die paaie tussen plase en die pad dorp toe was nog nie geteer nie; op die werf voor byna elke plaaswinkel het ’n petrolpomp gestaan, van die ou soort met die twee glashouers van ’n gelling elk wat met die handpomp volgestoot word.

Die winkelier het halfagt Dinsdagaand van die vorige week al gewonder wie is dit dan nou wat op so ’n onwelkom tyd petrol wil hê. Gelukkig was dit ’n Engelse egpaar wat net wou weet waar Hansie en Kathleen se huis is, net mooi toe die kenwysie op die radio begin wat ek later sou leer ken as Rachmaninoff se 18de variasie op ’n tema van Paganini.

’n Mens kon met die hand wys waar Hans hulle gewoon het en Pa se Engels was nie die swakste op die plaas nie.

“Baie dankie,” het die man op Afrikaans gesê en toe hy haastig terugklim in sy motor, vriendelik bygevoeg: “I would not dream of keeping anyone from Soetmelksvlei.”

Pa het sy radio’tjie harder gestel en die winkeldeur toegemaak, Ma het gehekel aan ’n patroontjie op ’n linnekopkussing (my suster-hulle was op pad huis toe vir die somervakansie), ek het in ’n boek van P.J. Schoeman gelê en lees voor die derde ding goed op dreef kon kom: oom Bartel of Tant Hybie wat begin redekawel in Jan Schutte se *Du Plooy van Soetmelksvlei*, die gewildste radiovervolgverhaal van die vyftigerjare.

Letterlik derduisende luisteraars van oor die hele land heen het geluister en saamgeleef met dié familie.

As een van die Du Plooy iets oorgekom het, het die boerate ingestroom.

Wie onredelik was, is gou reggehelp. Wat sou gebeur het as vandag se kommunikasie moontlik was, kan ’n mens net raai.

Twee weke ná die Hansie-episode, op byna presies dieselfde tyd, het die derde ding gebeur. ’n Motor het voor die winkel deur langs die petrolpomp stilgehou.

As hy kon, sou Pa die winkel net daar verkoop het.

Maar dit was ook weer ’n ander soort familie; die pa het uitgespring, met die trappies opgehardloop na die winkel se voordeur toe en oor sy skouer vir die familie in die motor geroep: “Dié mense luister ook na die Du Plooy. Oom, kan ons maar saamluister, asseblief? My kar se draadloos is morsdood van Lemoenshoek af al.”

In daardie winkel van Winkelplaas was die aand sewe van die 50 000 luisteraars. Ek en die twee vreemde seuns, en die vier volwassenes.

Van ons drie wat agtergebly het toe die besoekers weer weg was, het nie een gesien wie die rol pruimtwak van die kruidenierstoombank af laat verdwyn het nie.

\* *Abraham de Vries is ’n kortverhaalskrywer.*

<https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/stemme/menings/barmhartige-betaal-die-prys-in-pruimtwak-20180304>

wynandgnel@outlook.com 082 901 5877