

Sunday 15th May
Summarising the Christian life in a 12 word rhyme - for Rose Odeh's baptism
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Who watched the royal wedding?

Right at the beginning, before Kate began her long, slow walk down the aisle, what sounded out?
Trumpets in a F..... Fanfare

Fanfares are one way of getting attention and making a splash in public. There are others.

Many years ago, for instance, before newspapers and other forms of mass media were common, public announcements would be made by someone with a loud voice and a bell walking round crying
.....? 'Oyez, oyez!'. These people were called? Town Criers

Then, especially with the development of cheap printing, political parties and social movements began to bring their ideas to public attention by producing a – 9 letters beginning with M and ending with O – a Manifesto

For quite a while now people have described something Jesus said as 'Jesus' Manifesto'. What they are thinking of is found in Luke chapter 4. This is the moment, after his baptism and after getting clear about his mission in the wilderness, Jesus goes public. He attends the synagogue in his own home town of Nazareth. Then, in an act which was ripe for being introduced with a fanfare, he stood up to read a portion of Isaiah's prophecy. And this piece of Isaiah has been called 'Jesus' Manifesto.' It goes like this:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.
He has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

It's a statement of purpose. The words express the tasks Jesus wants to do, the results he wants to achieve, the difference he wants to make.

Now there are theologians who say that Luke clearly puts this public proclamation, a re-iteration of God's Kingdom Manifesto first issued by Isaiah, at the start of his gospel. The rest of the gospel is then an outworking, a description of Jesus' implementation of this manifesto for liberation and salvation thereafter. Moreover, they go on to say, Luke repeats the pattern again in the sequel to his gospel, the book we know as 'The Acts of the Apostles'.

Acts chapter 2 sees Jesus' successor, Peter, recite another prophecy from the Old Testament. It's about the gift of God's Spirit to the community. This time the prophet is Joel – and it can be said that the rest of the Acts of the Apostles is the outworking of the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah and Joel together. The Christian life then can, in many ways, be said to lie in implementing Jesus' Manifesto in Luke 4 and Peter, the chief disciple's Manifesto, in Acts 2.

If we all lived them thoroughly, what a fanfare there would be in heaven!

So: let's see how this links in to Acts chapter 2 verses 42-46, the bit we had heard a few minutes ago.

We can start by turning to A5 paper you were offered with the Weekly Sheet. Let's have a look at the image that looks like a clock and fill in the blank spaces. We'll discover that the 12 words going 1- 12 round the clock face are a summary of Acts 2.42-47 – and act also as a summary of the whole Christian life – the Christian life which God welcomes baby Rose to today, in this baptism service.

Let's start with the word at position 1. What's a four letter word beginning with SH... that rhymes with 'Glow'?... SHOW. That's answer number 1.

Number 2: a four letter word beginning with L that encapsulates God's feeling and generosity: LOVE

Word number 3 is given to us

Word number 4: Another word associated with God's Love, 4 letters beginning with C – rhymes with air and bear.... CARE!

So we get one whole phrase: Show Love and Care

Now numbers 5 – 8: A five letter word beginning with SH, much associated with Christian living, that rhymes with 'care'.... SHARE. Then a five letter word beginning with B that we will be eating soon.... BREAD ... and something we'll soon be drinking WINE. So now we have another phrase: Share Bread and Wine

Finally, position 9: a third word beginning with SH, associated with light and rhyming with 'Wine' – SHINE... gives us a third phrase: 'Shine with God's Glow!'

Read from 1 -12 round the clock and what have you got? Can you remember? Show Love and Care, Share Bread and Wine, Shine with God's Glow.

Here are 12 words which, I suggest, summarise this morning's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Check out the passage on the other side of the page and judge for yourself! But don't just read. You might find it helpful to learn and remember the words and their rhymes. Then, whenever anyone asks you what Christianity is about, what Rose and everyone else who is baptised is being introduced into, you can hit them with this summary of Jesus' Kingdom manifesto. How does it go???

Show Love and Care, Share Bread and Wine, Shine with God's Glow.

Armed with this summary, let's put God's kingdom manifesto into action – together. Amen.