

Donnybrook

16 December 2021

Welcome

David Suchet, the actor, is familiar from the Poirot series. His ancestry is partly Jewish and partly Christian (Anglican). However, he was raised without religion. Once in a hotel, he picked up the Bible and chanced upon Romans 8. By the time he got to the end of the chapter, he was a Christian.

Steps

Anyone familiar with Romans 8 can see immediately why. It is the spiritual high point of the letter and the writing goes up more than one gear from prose to poetry. Towards the end of the chapter, we read:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

It is powerful and, of course, exactly what we need to hear.

What can surprise is that the very same teaching is found in the Old Testament. A good example is our first reading today:

But with everlasting love, I have taken pity on you.
My love for you will never leave you.

Each passage is talking about the same God and affirms the same unchanging love. There is one difference. When Paul is writing, he believes that God in Christ entered fully into a single fragile human life, including death, in order to speak to us from the inside of what it is like to be human. This breath-taking claim is made only by Christians and this is what we celebrate at Christmas.

Conclusion

It leaves us with a challenge too. If we are so loved, then we in turn are to love God and our neighbour with the same love. Nothing else really matters.