

## The Great Discovery

**Job 23: 3** *Oh that I knew where I might find Him!*

**John 1: 45** *We have found Him*

Even a most cursory glance along the shelves of religious books will reveal that people are often desperate to find God. They echo the suffering Job. The God whom Christians worship seems to be a past master at hiding Himself. The Psalmist was right; "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself."

"Where is God when it hurts?" (Philip Yancy) There's a picture on the cover of the book of a man gripped in a vice.

"Suffering Man, Loving God?"

"Why do Bad things happen to good people?" An agonising book by a Jewish Rabbi whose baby son has died.

"How can I find God?" - an evangelistic booklet penned by a Diocesan Bishop. (Not that he seems himself to have lost God!)

Job's question is very apt. Following the death of his wife, C S Lewis wrote a moving testimony "A Grief Observed". He asks: *"Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing him, if you turn to him then with praise, you will be welcomed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You might as well turn away."*

Many will have experienced that feeling of emptiness, rejection - God, if there is a God, just doesn't care. Some fight with God, but really our arms are far too short to box with God.

But conversely, others in pain, surprisingly find God.

In "The Gulag Archipelago" Alexander Solzhenitsyn testified that it was only when he lay on rotting prison straw that he sensed within himself the first stirrings of good. He discovered that the line separating good from evil does not pass through State or class or political parties, but through the human heart.

*"So bless you. Prison, for having been in my life."*

Some do find blessings out of buffetings - read the Psalms - others find it emotionally or intellectually impossible to find God.

Julian Huxley spoke for many when he said, *“We live in an age where there is neither need nor room for the supernatural.”*

I have a bad dream that one day in the future someone will look at my tombstone and see “John Simpson, Priest.” and the date, and they are saying “Oh, yes, one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century believers in God.”

In much the same way I look at an 18<sup>th</sup> century stone and reflect that these people did not know what electricity or a motor car is

So we turn to today’s Gospel and find that some of those first disciple claim to have found God, in Jesus.

“We have found him”

That is the best testimony that we can give. We have found God in Jesus. At home we have packed away our Christmas decorations for another year, except for the crib figures which we leave on display until Candlemass, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Carol and I usually place the baby Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve, but not this year. We have lost Jesus. Well, we have lost something this year - meeting with the family, singing carols, not being at Midnight Mass. Coincidentally, our daughter in law gave me a book called “Finding Jesus” - a kind of “Where’s Wally” children’s book. We have not really lost him - only an image. Jesus shows us God, and tells us that he is with us, always.

At home, we carry on looking. And we shall find.