

Christ plays in 10 000 places

For Christ plays in ten thousand places.

Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his

To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Well-known author, Eugene Peterson, opens his book, *Christ plays in Ten Thousand Places*, with this quote from GM Hopkins.

At the heart of the Christian life lies the conviction that God is alive, present, active, preserving and healing life, Peterson maintains. All of life, history and community is to be understood from the perspective of God's presence and action. Christ plays in 10 000 places.

Christ's birth is witnesses to the fact that all of life is meant to be holy. Insects, birds, animals, human beings – all of life is created and sustained by God's life-giving presence, Peterson says.

He continues: the cross of Christ points to God's presence in the often harsh and cruel history of the world. The cross is God's word of life and victory in a suffering world.

Christ also plays in the community, where we jointly carve out a living for ourselves in a threatening environment. There Christ sustains us and leads us to the fulness of life.

Christ also brings life and restoration for a broken South Africa through his birth, his death on the cross and the Christian community.

All is not lost, even though it seems to be lost. Chaos does not rule and justice will prevail.

Why? Christ is active, playing in the miracle of life, the pain of suffering and he life of his body, the church.

Where do we see God's life-giving presence at work?

In a broken South Africa, the wonderful Rugby World Cup success of the Springboks is a ray of light. It is possible to grow up in a rural Eastern-Cape village and yet to be catapulted onto the world stage of rugby, tasting the crowning victory of all your hard work and God-given talent.

A black youngster wondering where his net meal will come from became the unifying symbol all over the country. The downward spiral of poverty and exclusion could not hold many of our heroes down. A white coach, a black captain, black and brown wings, a team representing all of South-Africa points the way forward. Christ is at play.

All South Africans, irrespective of race, culture or class poured out onto the streets to celebrate our unity. Together we are stronger. The evil work of division, hate, violence and blaming will not succeed.

A second example. Whereas many are fleeing the country, others see potential and hope. Many South Africans commit themselves to building a flourishing society. #IamStaying has become a hashtag of hope, uniting South Africans behind the desire to create a life-giving society.

Sate capture and corrupt politicians almost broke our society. At the breakthrough of 1994 we naively thought politicians would have our best interest at heart. Accountability diminished, corruption and evil flourished.

However, justice is slowly starting to return to the public landscape in South Africa. The Zondo Commission is a sign of hope. No wonder, as the life-giving God opposes the corrupt. God is the enemy of the unjust.

A further example. When one visits a church in the drought-stricken Karoo, you see the parcels of grace being collected in other parts of the country and sent to the struggling farming communities.

All kinds of necessities, food, soap, clothing, are being distributed. Fodder and water are donated to sustain suffering animals.

Christ is at play, urging us to care, to give, to remember the suffering.

Lastly, the wonderful work of the Cradock Community Forum to uplift the community, repair the water supply and to create jobs is a sign of God's active life-giving action.

While we celebrate God at play in Christ, we need to ask: What about us? What are we to do?

The church needs to discern where is God at work. This way God calls the church to action. We are to join God in God's work in the world.

In terms of the hope-giving events mentioned above, our task is clear:

- The church is a platform to bring people across all boundaries together in order to celebrate our God-given humanity, to listen deeply to one another, to promote understanding and to identify common life-giving goals.
- The church is a community of service to the community. Christ calls us to help human life flourish. We have the power to make a difference.
- The church is called to be a prophetic witness against corruption in all sectors of society.
- The church trades in hope. God calls us to be salt, light and yeast where we live. We cannot simply flee but should encourage one another.

Take heart. Be strong. Christ plays amongst us.

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