

Friends

This Sunday is a particularly special day for the manse family as it is Mark's 60th birthday. Indeed, in September and October we manage to have 5 immediate family members and a God-daughter with birthdays, so it's a busy old month!

Birthdays are not made much of in the Bible: Pharoah has a birthday during the time Joseph is in prison at some point around 1728 BC or 1899 BC, depending on which Biblical timeline you use, and Herod has a birthday mentioned in around 30 AD. At the birthdays of both Pharoah and Herod, someone is executed by the King (his Chief Baker in the case of Pharoah, and John the Baptist in the case of Herod). Some people have thought that this means that birthdays are either a bad thing, or not terribly important to God. However, it is more likely that these birthdays were mentioned because of the unusual and shocking aspect of the deaths that were associated with them, than that there is something unpleasant about birthdays per se. Indeed, in Job, we are told that each son would hold a family feast on his birthday, and this is in the context of what a lovely and God-fearing life Job lived.

Then of course, we must remember the greatest birthday of all – that of Jesus. Although there is no evidence as to whether Jesus' family celebrated his birthday, God must surely have known that this extraordinary event with its angels, stars, shepherds and wise men would continue to be celebrated, and indeed be a part of how the story would be passed on. Surely if he didn't approve of birthdays, he would have found a better way of ensuring that the memory of the presence of Christ in the world would be maintained. Further, special days seem to be a significant part of God's economy. The weekly Sabbath and six annual festivals are a part of the way in which the Jewish people were to organise their lives.

A happy birthday then to all those who celebrate in the coming month and let us find ways to celebrate God's great gift of life at every opportunity.

God bless, Vicci