

In all our deeds and days we are instructed and governed by all that has happened in the past. Our disappointments make us wary, sometimes close us down; our successes give us confidence. The encouragement of those who have loved us inspires us; the punishment and hatred of others kill our spontaneity and generosity.

The Church looks back in Advent, remembering the promises of God and the disasters of human history. For us, history is dominated by one great event, the coming of Jesus Christ to our side. He took to himself all the promise of our human family, and he also took to himself the whole history of our crushing and frustration. In the Crucified Jesus we see utter love meeting utter defeat. He drinks the whole cup of being human. God has made himself one of us.

Our life now does not need to be redeemed any more. The deed is done, and our story from now on is to let the truth of the redemption engage the new history we are helping to make; we are not simply undergoing history, but helping to make it. Jesus did not change history by assuming power. He changed history by assuming weakness - *our* weakness.

So none of us should say, *I can't help it, I can change nothing and achieve nothing*. It isn't, in the end, a matter of finding the power to save the situation. It is a matter of accepting the effortless power of God, who enters the world as a helpless child, and who, taking us to himself, saves our story from the flood and the fire of hell, and fills the world with eternal love.