

Higgs boson and all that jazz - Sunday 8th July 2012 – The Rev Keith King

Well Science has discovered God – or at least that is what the media would like to have you believe.

‘Strong evidence’ of the existence of the Higgs boson or the ‘God Particle’ as it has been labeled, has been uncovered by scientists working on the massive Hadron Collider located under the mountains of Geneva.

And I must say it is an incredible discovery and assists greatly in our understanding of how matter is formed.

As I understand it the Higgs field was, until now, a theoretical field in which sub atomic particles move.

Without it they would move so fast that they would be unable to bind together to form matter – one analogy is that the field is rather like the way water in a swimming pool makes it harder to move when wading through it – so the Higgs field slows down sub atomic particles and allows them to form matter.

It really is quite an incredible discovery and certainly stretches the mind.

But what I love about it all is there is still an element of mystery and uncertainty.

Interviews that I have heard have said that there is only ‘strong evidence’ of its existence – 99.99% to be sure, but not absolute, and that the field behaves in ways in which scientists did not expect.

How like God to keep that edge of mystery....

And of course the discovery of this field still does not explain how or why these sub atomic particles form matter in the way they do – in the intricacy of a planet or person or working eyeball or a thinking brain or a beating heart...

There is still that sense of the unknown – of mystery which is at the very heart of God.

Sam Keene once wrote in his book ‘Hymns to an unknown God’:

‘God is not an object to be known or a problem to be solved by human intelligence; but is the ground beneath our capacity to understand anything, the totality within which we live, move and have our being.’

In other words we exist not through the knowledge of science, but in the essence of Love, which is God...

And Jesus is the embodiment of that love and in the stories handed down to us through our tradition expresses that love in acts of healing and in words of wisdom.

Mark’s Gospel presents us with the simplest and most direct account of the life of Jesus. Indeed Scholars tell us that Mark and another lost source which they call ‘Q’ is the basis on which the other gospel writers tell the story in a more embellished way.

In last week’s reading from Mark we heard the story of the healing power of love directed towards those on the vary margins of the community of Jesus – a young girl was thought to be dead and an older woman who had been suffering hemorrhages for over 12 years. Both would have been ritually ‘unclean’ and of course as females they were of lesser account in the social hierarchy of the time.

As he heads towards the child’s bedside Jesus senses the woman’s plight in the crowd around him and with a single word the bleeding stops.

Similarly he arrives at the child’s house and with a single word the child is restored...

Acts of power, wisdom and love.

This week’s reading from Mark offers us a different scenario.

Jesus is back in his home town where he is known as an eldest son to what seems like a widowed mother; a brother to a large brood – it is worth noting that the four brothers are named but none of the sisters, again indicative of the place of women in these times; and he is a lowly carpenter – one who certainly does not have the standing to be teaching in the synagogue.

He is considered by the locals to be an upstart who is acting well beyond his social standing and as result of their attitude his words and actions fall on deaf ears and hard hearts.

The text tells us that Jesus 'was amazed at their unbelief'...

But as well as being amazed it is also clearly a learning experience.

In the next little vignette Jesus sends his disciples out in pairs telling them to simply rely on the hospitality that is offered them and to shake the dust of their feet if they are not made welcome or are not listened to – clearly a response to his own experience at Nazareth.

Jesus realises that sometimes it is better to simply let things go and move on...

And that is certainly a salutary lesson for us all to learn.

The search for justice, wholeness and peace often does not translate into miraculous transformation of the world around us. Often our efforts are met with rejection, suffering and failure.

And yet God is continuing to work in and through our weakness and human limitations.

Our call is to follow God's lead – as shown to us in Christ Jesus – and to continue to work toward a more loving, peaceful and equitable world.

The discovery of the Higgs boson is a momentous discovery. I love allowing my mind to be stretched by these frontiers of science and physics.

But the 'God particle' is still ours to proclaim and to live through...

The God particle is at the heart of Love and will continue to be illusive and mysterious...

Again in Sam Keene's words:

It is in plain sight, but cannot be seen;
It is never silent, but cannot be heard;
It is not lost, but cannot be found;

God is unknowable, the soul unfathomable;
But the holy may appear in any moment.
(from Hymns to an Unknown God)

May we continue to move within that mysterious field of Love to bring a fuller
life to all creation....