

Book Review

***The Greatest Love Story Ever Told and then some!* Rosie Rushton Kevin Mayhew 2011**

The sub title of the book is 'The Gospel retold for teenagers'. As an adult I found it impossible to put down. It retells the Gospels through the eyes of four very different teenagers, three of them living on the margins of society, who find their way into following Jesus. It is well researched, vividly re-creating the story of Jesus. Rosie as well as being a Reader at Weston Favell is a well known writer; she is a born story teller, and her account reminds us what a fascinating and powerful story the Gospels tell. I have already used extracts in the morning office to bring colour and depth to the annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth, and will look for occasions to use other extracts. Rosie's aim, as with the original Gospel writers, is for her readers to come into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and her book could be a powerful tool both for bringing people to faith and for deepening faith.

Any attempt to 'rewrite' the Gospels runs into dangers and this book is no exception. In collating the accounts of four very different Gospels nuances are lost and an artificial cohesion imposed. Any re-telling is in itself an interpretation, and although there are many Gospel passages printed out in the text, incidents are given a particular 'spin' with which I often wanted to argue. That 'spin' is further underlined by the discussion questions/notes which follow each chapter. While some of the notes helpfully fill in background information, others give the author's particular viewpoint with an apparent authority which is not warranted by the biblical text itself. The notes also break the flow of the story and would be better as an appendix.

However, those drawbacks in no way detract from a superb tour de force which I recommend you buy, enjoy reading, be stimulated by and use. This is one book which Rosie has wanted to write for many years and it is a fitting culmination of her work to date. Although not in the same league in terms of scholarship as Gerd Thiesson's 'The Shadow of the Galilean', it can stand with pride alongside it – and in my view is an even better read!

Chris Peck

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