

## Christmas Sermon

Well Christmas is upon us and we ask, where has the last year gone? It can seem to go very quick, but a lot of course can happen in 12 months. How has your year been? Are there things that stand out for good or bad? Or did your year follow more of a steady line of normalness and routine? For some in our world, events of the past year have brought unwelcome things into their lives like war and conflict and we think of Israel/Gaza and the continuing war in Ukraine and let's not forget other scarred places that are less highlighted. Scars do indeed come in all shapes and forms and maybe this past year we've been dealt a blow, which has left a bit of a scar. Whatever our year, good or bad, it's important to keep in sight the good news that something very special and holy can live alongside our ups and downs. Our joys and our sorrows. The predictable and the unpredictable.

Jesus our Saviour is the one who lives alongside us in the myriad of life and world events. He shares in our celebrations and commiserations, our hopes and our fears. Jesus is after all the Word made flesh and he came all the way from heaven to be born into poverty and live with us. It's quite something to leave the safety of heaven to be part of an earthy world. It's quite something to come to earthly parents who weren't quite expecting things to happen like this and just a year before would not have predicted such a happening that God would be with us. That's how it would have been for Mary and Joseph as they looked back on their year. Not quite the steady line of normalness and routine! And then we have the shepherds, 'keeping watch of their flock by night' for whom normalness and routine was completely tossed aside. At least for a time anyway. The angel and 'a multitude of the heavenly host', was not part of a normal shepherds night. I think more earthy and practical things would have been on their minds.

So what's on our minds? Are we thinking of the enjoyment of Christmas dinner? I know I am! Turkey and trimmings and yes I do like sprouts! Or are we thinking if the present we got for a certain someone is maybe not what they'd like after all? Perhaps we're feeling a bit lonely and yearn the company of Christmas's past. If we're struggling a bit with bills and the cost of living, that might not be too far away from our thoughts. Whatever it is on minds, might we just allow something special to come into our lives tonight. Like the shepherds, may our eyes be opened, so that we see the glory of the Lord shining around us, and hear the angels message. 'Do not be afraid; I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people.' Yes, let's receive that joy and if we don't quite understand it, let's just let it be with us, sit with us and find out more about it. For there is joy to be had in celebrating the birth of Jesus and it's a joy that lasts. It's not confined to one day or the 12 days of Christmas. Might it stay with us even for the next 12 months? And beyond? Jesus did actually die for us and that means a lot to him and a difference to us. Because Jesus wants to be with us and help us through this life so we can be with him and God in all his fullness. We hear in our reading from Titus. 'But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.' Through the love of our Saviour, the waters of baptism and the Holy Spirit bring in a new creation and we can live in that new creation with all our joys and sorrows, our pains and our pleasures, our fears and our hopes. The wonderment of gazing on the Christ child doesn't have to stay at the stable because there is more awesomeness to come. It's good to stay around, watch the child grow through the struggles of the Holy Family, tough beginnings, exile in Egypt, journeying to Nazareth where he becomes a man. And then Jesus' ministry, his signs, his healings, his miracles, his teachings, his sacrifice, his love for us. We can be a part of his life as he can be a part of our life as Jesus lives in us and we in him. Ups and downs there might be and even worse. Or maybe normalness and routine are the order of the day. Jesus would know about that. But in Jesus heaven comes into ordinary, which means something special and holy lives alongside us. Perhaps in this coming year we could all try and speak to him more, and in doing so we might find Jesus has a lot to say to us.

Amen