

Christmas sermon 2017

John 1:18

The wonder and the challenge of Christmas

OUTLINE

1. The wonder
2. The challenge

- Christmas is a wonderful time of the year... filled with great things, happy times...
- Food, family, gifts, beach, cricket... sleep...
- Things we only ever eat at Christmas time...
- Turkey... do you ever eat that at another time of year??
- We don't have Kentucky Fried Turkey down the road so we - have you noticed that?
- Turkey - can be rather dry... you can tell that by all the stuff we put on in - cranberry sauce and gravy etc... just so we can eat it.
- And we reach that moment on Christmas day don't we, when we can't possibly fit anything in...
- ...and we make the grand announcement... I'm full!! I couldn't possibly fit another thing in!!!
- and then of course in about ½ hour - we go back for more... we pick the roast - we shave off another thin slither of pudding... and then - and then we sleep!!
- By the time we wake up from the Christmas afternoon sleep... ah - time to eat again!!!
- All great fun!! ///
- Why is Christmas so wonderful?
- That's part of our theme this year for our Christmas services - 'the wonder of Christmas...'
- So many aspects of the **story** of Christmas are wonderful...
- Imagine Mary and Joseph discovering Mary's pregnant by the wonderful work of God alone... they were engaged... they both were told by an angel that this baby on the way was no ordinary baby, conceived in no ordinary way... and they trusted the angel's message as coming from God...
- Mary says - 'may it be to me as you have said'
- Joseph took Mary home as his wife...
- Amazing!
- The **wonder** of Christmas //
- The wonder that angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds and that they rushed to worship him...
- The wonder that this baby was laid in a food trough for his bassinet...
- Wonder that a special star should hover over the place where he was born....

- But there's the thing...
- ...here's the most amazing and wonderful aspect of Christmas...
- ...that this baby born, **was God turned up on earth!**
- Here's what the last verse in that passage said...
- **"No one has ever seen God"**
- ...let's just do a quick check... any one here seen God? Didn't think so...
- *'no one has ever seen God, but the God but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.'*
- Here's the wonder of Christmas...
- That in the person of Jesus... God turned up on our planet
- Came as one of us... as a human being...
- To completely enter in to our life - our experience...
- That's who Jesus is - God visiting this planet!!
- What does the verse say? - *to make him known.*
- God **revealing himself!**
- That's why his birth is so significant. //
- I've had loads of people say to me over the years - 'well I'd believe in God if he turned up'
- ...to which I always say - great! - fantastic! - because he did! - and we have reliable eye-witness accounts.
- We don't have to **wonder** if there is a God
- We don't have to **guess** about God
- We don't have to **hope** that he's for real
- We don't have to **hope** that if there is a God he might **just** be interested in us...
- The very fact that he's turned up here... as one of us - is a **sure sign**
- ...God's **real**
- ...he's **interested**
- ...he **cares**
- he **loves** us!!!
- ...he wants to **know** us
- ...he wants **us** to know **him**
- **... he came to make himself known!!!**
- That's the **wonder** of Christmas! //
- Did you know that about Jesus?
- That he was God visiting? God in skin?
- God revealing himself. Making himself known?
- That's why the angels sang, and the shepherd ran and the wise man brought gifts...

- And that is why the world stops at this time of year – each and every year – to celebrate... that God turned up! ///
- But our Christmas theme this year... is not only the **wonder** of Christmas – but the **challenge** of Christmas...
- Because as wonderful as the Christmas message is.... It's also very **searching** and **challenging**...!
- What do I mean?
- Simply this... that if it's true God has actually turned up here in person... than that **has** to be significant!
- That has to make a difference in how we see the **world**...
- In how we view **ourselves**
- In how we **think** about God
- ...in how we **relate** to God
- how we see the **future**...
- if it's true that God has turned up to make himself known... then it would make sense for us to take **note** of that... to read **up** on that... to figure out what that **means** for us... to **listen** to him... to **hear** what he has to **say**... to **know** what he wants for our **lives**... //
- Perhaps you're here today because your family have wanted you to come... and its maybe the **last** place you wanted to come...
- ...may you've either sat on the fence for years about God or in fact you've been **opposed** to the whole notion of God...
- I get that...
- But here's a chance today to hear the Christmas message with new ears...
- ... because the historic figure of Jesus is actually the clearest **most cogent and historically reliable argument for the existence of God**...!
- and if you want to argue there is no God, then you have to work hard for an alternate explanation of Jesus – who he was and the impact he's had on the world... //
- here's what I want you to know...
- Jesus is the sure sign God is for **real**... and that he wants us to **know** him...
- And his **death and resurrection** is the sure sign that he loves us enough to bare the shame of our rebellion **himself – personally** – so with all the stuff we've mucked up wiped away by his death on the cross – we can be reconciled to him now and for eternity...! //
- there's the challenge of Christmas.
- A God who is for **real**
- A God who loves us enough to step into our world... and then step up on a cross to bear our sin and shame...
- That's worth celebrating...
- There is both the **wonder** AND the **challenge** of Christmas!!
- *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*