

Title: The wonder and the challenge of Christmas

Text: '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. '
John 1:18

Intro:

Meeting famous people...There's the wonder element but would it be life changing?? **Link:** Because of Jesus, we can meet and know and have a close relationship with God. That is life changing

- Well, it's Christmas Eve/Day.
- Have you had a great time so far in the Christmas season?
- Received all the presents you wanted?
- Now I know I'm not getting this present and probably will never receive this present..
- BUT I would really love the band members from U2
 - I've been a massive fan of them ever since I've been alive!!
- I can only imagine, but I'm pretty sure I would just be overwhelmed with being in the same room as them
 - I'd become tongue tied, say something stupid and make a fool of myself
 - and I'd probably do that thing where you think of exactly what to say about an hour after you should've said it!!
- BUT would it be life changing? I'm not so sure.
- It would be wonderful, but not challenging

- Well, This Christmas, we are saying that Christmas is more wonderful, and more challenging than we could ever imagine.

- Now why exactly is it wonderful? Why should we be filled with wonder or awe about Christmas?
 - I know some people who are filled with dread about Christmas given the amount of shopping, cooking, cleaning, cleaning, shopping and cooking that needs to be done!!

- But...Why does the majority of the population of the earth stop for this day?
- Why are you here at church this afternoon/morning
- But why is the Christmas message a jaw dropping message?
- Well here it is.
 - God turned up and made himself known.
- I'm sure we've heard the story many times before
 - but when we put it in the perspective of God turning up, it's mind-blowing!
- Can you imagine the scandal of Mary being pregnant when she wasn't actually married yet?
 - It was a big deal back in the first century!
- Can you see Joseph and Mary frantically looking around Bethlehem, looking for somewhere that this baby could be born?
 - But, there was no room anywhere except for a dirty stable, and a food box for animals!
 - And then some random shepherds appear, seemingly out of nowhere to worship this baby.
- But if that isn't crazy enough, here's the truly amazing thing.
- That baby that was born in that dirty, smelly, stable was God. Yes God.
- In our short reading before, we heard that:
 - 'No one has ever seen God'
 - Just doing a quick check just to make sure, has anyone here seen God face to face? Nope? Okay.
 - BUT If no one has seen God,
 - how are we to know him,
 - How can we know who he is and have any sort of relationship with him?
 - Well, the verse continues:
 - 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.

- This is the wonderful news of Christmas!
- That God has come down onto this earth...
 - In the person of Jesus, God became one of us.
- And what did Jesus do?
 - Jesus has made God known!

- Now, if you want to really know someone, facebook or instagram stalking can only go so far and it's not recommended because its creepy.
- To really know someone, they have to talk to you, reveal themselves to you and make themselves known to you

- And here's the awesome news.
- God has made himself known to you.
- The great news about Christmas is that Jesus, has made God known!
- We have in our hands here accurate accounts of the life of Jesus.
 - And this means that:
 - We don't have to **guess** about God
 - We don't have to try and **imagine** God
 - We don't have to cross our fingers and **hope** that he is real
 - We don't have to **wonder** if God is at all interested in us because we know that he is.
- The very fact that God has become one of us and made himself known means that
 - He is **interested** in you
 - He **cares** about you
 - He **loves** you
 - He **wants** to be known
 - He **wants us to know him**
- Because he came to make himself known!!

- Not just for a one off famous encounter that you get for a Christmas present,
- But for an eternity-long relationship with him.
- That's the wonderful news of Christmas.

- It's more wonderful than we could ever imagine

- But, it's also more challenging than we might expect.

- What do I mean?
- Well, if it's true God has actually turned up here in person... then 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
 - 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 **know** what God wants for our lives...

- *Now, sometimes I find myself on YouTube looking at an interesting video. Probably on a random subject like ship building*
- *And then something else related and interesting comes up and I click on it and watch it*
- *And then something else related and interesting comes up and I click on it and watch it*
- *And again and again and before I know it, I'm well down the rabbit-hole*
 - *Has anyone done this or is it just me?*
- *I now know a lot of information about ship building, but is it useful? Nope.*

- Well instead of YouTube, we have Jesus.
- Because of Jesus, we can investigate God! We can know God!
- Because Jesus has made him known, we can go down the rabbit hole of finding out who God is by looking at Jesus and the bible.
 - And this is the most useful news that could ever be!

- And if you look at Jesus and investigate God, what or who will you find?
 - You will find that God loves the world that he created
 - But, You will find that humans don't love God and reject him
 - However, you will find that God doesn't reject humankind
 - You will find that at Christmas time, God stepped into the world, to make himself known
 - To live the perfect, blameless life that we can't possibly live
 - To be put on a cross, to bear the punishment that we deserve for rejecting God
 - But to rise again, to defeat death

- So what does this mean for us this Christmas?
 - Well, it means that because of Jesus, we can be in a perfect relationship with God for eternity.
 - Because of Jesus we can know God and we can be right with God.
- The challenge is,
 - Do you trust God?
 - Do you trust in Jesus who has made God known?

- Do you want to be in a right relationship with the creator of the universe?
- Well ask him. Say sorry for rejecting him and forgiveness will be given.
- That's the best Christmas present that you will ever receive in your lifetime.