

Christmas Sermon

Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 25th December 2020

Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-14

This is not the Christmas that we expected or wanted. But God is among us, nonetheless, with surprising joy and surprising grace. In many ways this is part of the essence of Christmas. Of course we make all our plans, and plan all our festivities, and prepare all our family parties. But it never quite goes to plan anyway and sometimes there are disasters and things fall out. God is among us nonetheless, and really this is just part of what Christmas is all about; God with us, amid all the messiness and all the struggles of human living.

We thought this would be a Christmas of getting on top of the coronavirus, with vaccines on the way, a more relaxed time together, and with lots of hope for the future. Instead we have renewed virus worries, renewed concerns for the vulnerable, renewed concerns for future prosperity, and we know we now face another few months of gruelling restrictions. Yet we will still celebrate Christmas, albeit in more restricted ways. Yet the vaccines are still coming to the rescue. And yet Christmas is still about God coming to rescue the human race. It always has been.

The Christmas story is hardly a story of great triumphs. Joseph forgot to book ahead. Mary was embarrassingly pregnant. The shepherds were scared witless. The magi lost their way, which actually had some seriously dire consequences. And yet the love of God shines through. God with us, through all the messiness and struggles of life. Coming to the rescue. Bringing the light. In all sorts of ways.

God in Jesus Christ comes to rescue us from our hard hearts. He comes to rescue us from our disappointments with life. He comes to rescue us from our conflicts with one another. He comes to rescue us from our weakness and sin. He comes to rescue us from our exhaustion and weariness. And a tough Christmas has a way of pointing all this up, as we celebrate amid the messiness and struggles of human living. For he is already here, among us, today. God with us.

For what the baby Jesus reminds us of at Christmas, is that despite life being sometimes very tough indeed, and sometimes so very sad, and sometimes so very challenging, nevertheless the love of God is behind everything, undergirding everything, and over everything, eternally. And in the fullness of time, all will be well, for this is the sure work of God, he will do it, and we can trust him.

Because of Christmas, we can have the courage and the determination to face our struggles, and to win through, because God is with us, and ultimately we know we are all in his hands. Because of Christmas we need not lose heart, though of course sometimes we do. Because of Christmas we will not give up. Because of the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, especially at Christmas, we do not lose hope.

As we think about our New Year resolutions, perhaps this is the most important one this year. Do not lose hope. Do not give up in trying to do right and to be kind. Do not give up on letting God walk with you. For God is faithful, and there are better times to come. Merry Christmas!