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CHRISTMAS 2020

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Christmas 2020

December 25, 2020  
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

## CHRISTMAS 2020

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



The Christmas story is well known – but it is worth noting the economy with which it is told. There is a lack of embellishment – which has ultimately, unwittingly, encouraged the adding of embellishments which aren't in the original and which mask the narrative beauty of the story; and hide the reality and theological significance. It is impossible to underestimate the theology in Luke's brief account.

The angel speaks of GOOD NEWS – a term rich in Old Testament overtones. In Isaiah 52:7 it says: <sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.' And further, in Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has

sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners – where it is used to describe a military victory or the birth of an heir to the emperor. In the Town of David – Bethlehem – is the fulfilment of prophecy. The Saviour is significant in that saving was the defining activity of GOD in the Old Testament. Messiah means the promised, anointed King and “The LORD” was the term used for GOD in the Old Testament. Every word is richly significant. No wonder the angels sing GLORY! And then, in the middle of all this richness, the startling truth – the subject of the good news – the Saviour of the World, the LORD, the promised Messiah, is lying in a feeding trough. Glory and humility, meekness and majesty – this is our GOD the Servant King. There has to be a couple of songs in amongst those!

Today is a day for us to join the shepherds in wonder and praise, the angels in singing GLORY, and Mary in quiet reflection. Or was Mary in quiet reflection? She had,

after all, just given birth to a Son. The literature of the period and since gives us a sanitised version of what happened. Kaitlin Hardy-Shetler – an American writer – recently published the following about her musings on the subject of Mary the mother of JESUS bringing Him up – especially in the early days of his earthly life.

"Sometimes I wonder if Mary breastfed Jesus. If she cried out when he bit her or if she sobbed when he would not latch. And sometimes I wonder if this is all too vulgar to ask in a church full of men without milk stains on their shirts or coconut oil on their breasts preaching from pulpits off limits to the Mother of God. But then I think of feeding Jesus, birthing Jesus, the expulsion of blood and smell of sweat, the salt of a mother's tears onto the soft head of the Salt of the Earth, feeling lonely and tired hungry, annoyed, overwhelmed, loving, and I think, if (the reality), the vulgarity of birth, is not honestly preached by men who carry power but not burden, who carry privilege but not labour, then it should not be preached at all. because the real scandal of the Birth of God lies in the

cracked nipples of a 14 year old and not in the sermons of ministers who say women are too delicate to lead." Pretty powerful words that bring us a reality check

It is a tragedy that much of this will be lost in the celebration and that even our worship may be invaded by the superficial focus on the presents we have received rather than the wonder of the incarnation. Paul helps us in our reflection as he points out exactly what GOD has done – underlining the message of Luke. In His love, GOD has sent JESUS to ensure that we can be His friends. This is the truth to grasp today – and it can be appreciated – albeit in different ways, by all ages.



JESUS is a gift to us this Christmas. If you have ever received a gift certificate – and let's face it they have become more convenient and numerous in recent times – and they enable the purchaser to not think much about the purchase. You will probably be aware that many of them have an expiry date. Many people have been caught with gift certificates that have expired. Where I

get my car serviced gives a voucher for a free car wash that expires within 7 days of the service – and to take advantage, I would have to drive a further 20 minutes each way. I have not been able to use these vouchers within the time allowed and so, have lost the gift of a free car wash. GOD is giving us a gift this Christmas – JESUS. It is up to each of us to accept this invitation to come into a relationship with JESUS. If we leave this invitation on the table for too long, time might run out and such opportunity might be lost for all of eternity. I can suffer an unwashed car – but I'm not prepared to forego a relationship with JESUS for eternity.



**May we pray:**

O GOD of eternal light and love, we rejoice in the birth of JESUS. May the glory announced by the angels bring new hope to the peoples of the whole world; and may the promise of the Messiah be fulfilled in every heart. This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen

Daily Prayer 2020

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