

Christmas Day Sermon 2018

Fr Michael

I love watching children come into church during this Christmas season. Throughout the day many come into St Peter's and come to the crib scene and talk with their parents about the characters in the story. I can't hear what is said, but I know from the pointing and the lingering looks what is happening, and it is magical.

Christmas can change us all, for good. And if it can change us, it can change our neighbours and our local communities, and then, perhaps even change the world. Christmas can change us because it reminds us that God is near, he is closer than we can imagine.

It's amazing – God comes to us in human form, as a baby – flesh and blood – and this is really good news. God has a human face, and he experiences what it is like to be a human. Whatever the challenges we face, we know that God as Jesus knows what it is like for us. He has been there, he understands. Jesus finishes his own story at the end of the gospel promising “I will be with you always”. God is close. God is here. God is with you all.

“Christmas reminds us that the small, the hidden and the local are full of possibility. God is first seen in human form as a baby gasping for breath, in an outhouse, in an unremarkable small town. And yet this small child will somehow bring together everything that is broken, and will in the words of the angelic messenger who came to Mary, usher in ‘a kingdom that will never end’, a place of goodness and peace for all peoples and for the whole of creation.”

And so we see that our own smallness like the baby in the manger, our own hidden-ness like the outhouse or stable, our own locality like Bethlehem are all holy, and are full of potential. The allure of all that is successful, all that is big, all that speaks of the celebrity, is all around us. But the Nativity reminds us that there is a better way.

Christmas reminds us that we may need to leave some things behind. The shepherds leave their flocks out in the fields and they come running. We too often realise that we may need to leave things behind. The shepherds may only leave sheep, but we must leave behind whatever is destructive in our lives.

So much in modern life jostles for our attention, and really very little of it is worthy. And so, this Christmas we may need to leave behind whatever is breaking us, eroding or diminishing us.

Christmas reminds us that there is something more worthy of our attention. A little baby born for us all, the true light coming into the world, he is worthy of all our attention and then our devotion. We like the children, the shepherds and later the wise men kneel at the crib and worship, worship the God who is close, who understands our worries and concerns and merely asks that you bring all those problems to him and he will give you peace.

Yes, this is the new beginning that we long for, the Good News that we long for, the hope and joy and peace that we long for, all wrapped up in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

We at St. Peter's wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, renewed, joyful and peaceful New Year full of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Amen.