



Pastor's Page

"More than a Winter's Tale "

On Friday morning I drove off to a local school to take an advent assembly. Armed with guitar, acetates and a solitary Christmas Cracker I felt well prepared for this seasonal shindig. As I walked in the building I quickly headed for the main hall where the familiar Friday morning feeling filled the air. Some of the staff smiled and said "good morning" whilst others were busily occupied with 'interpersonal pupil-teacher disciplinary activity!' As I waited for proceedings to begin one teacher came up to me and asked me if I was doing an Advent Assembly. "Yes, "I am" I said, at which she promptly left the hall! I felt slightly unnerved as I wondered what I had said to offend her! As I pondered this another teacher mouthed something to me, which I didn't quite get. Following an action reply I twigged it. This lady (the one who had walked out) belonged to a well known religious sect who don't believe in the divinity of Christ and so don't celebrate Christmas. I was relieved that it wasn't anything that I had done to upset her but was sad that she didn't feel able to stay and listen. Missing the assembly may not have been a tragedy but missing out on the most important birth of all time is.

George Stringer Rowe wrote a carol in which he said;

***And to those who never listened, to the message of his birth
Who have winter but no Christmas, bringing them Thy peace on earth
Send to these the joyful tidings, by all people in each home
Be there heard the Christmas anthem: Praise to God the Christ has come***

Winter without Christmas (a Christ-centred Christmas) is a tragedy. This is the darkest time of the year and whether or not you suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder winter offers little or no hope. Statistics show that at Christmas suicide rates go up, more people die from natural causes, marriages fall apart, psychiatrists' patients suffer regressions and family feuds begin. All this plus more than 40 nations tearing each other apart in war situations and we soon realise that something has gone wrong. So much for peace on earth! And yet it is for this very reason that the son of God came to earth. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul describes his readers before they knew Jesus as being 'without hope and without God in the world' Then goes on to say "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.." (Eph 2:12-14) This is a message worth listening to and this is why at our darkest time of year (25 December) we celebrate the birth of Christ.

You see the nativity is not a sentimental story about cardboard characters crowding round a cosy crib, but rather it is the historical account of the creator God stepping into the world that he made in order to save it. The life of Jesus had a tough beginning in a cold cowshed and a tragic end on a cruel cross. But this was God's way of salvation. In life, Jesus experienced the pain of the human condition and by his death he paid the price for human rebellion. His resurrection proves this amazing victory over sin and death.

Jesus, the babe in Bethlehem, the saviour of the world offers real hope today to all who are imprisoned by sin and despair, to all who have 'winter but no CHRISTmas'

9th December 2007