



Pastor's Page

Thinking Outside the Box

A couple of weeks ago I went to a local residential home to book us in for some Carol singing. As I approached the premises I suddenly felt nervous remembering a traumatic experience I had there a few years ago! On this particular occasion the small group of us had finished our carols and mince pies and were about to set off to our next venue - a local pub. For reasons I don't now remember (I was probably busy signing autographs or something!!) the others went before me, leaving me to travel alone in my car. As I maneuvered out of the parking spot at the rear of the residential home my simple intentions came to a grinding halt at the presence of a massive iron gate in front of me. I got out of the car and attempted to open the thing but to no avail, it was firmly locked! I then decided to knock on the back door to try and attract someone's attention - no reply! I couldn't get to the front door because of the gate so I even tried knocking on the window at the risk of causing a cardiac arrest amongst the guests! Yes folks I was I trapped inside the car park of a 'mature people's home'! Time was moving on and I was supposed to be at the pub leading more carol singing and I was running out of ideas as to how to escape! Fortunately I had my mobile phone with me so decided to ring a church member who lived fairly near to the home. She was in, and following some stifled sniggering, she sprang into action! She arrived at the home 5 minutes later, rang the front door bell, explained the situation to the manageress who came out with the gate key and rescued me!! It was a humbling experience and had it not been for the help of that church member I may still have been trapped in that home today!

Two thousand years ago Jesus came to earth to rescue us from the grip of Satan and sin and save us from ourselves.. As the old hymn says; "*There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in*" And Jesus 'unlocked that gate of heaven' by coming amongst us, becoming one of us and eventually dying for us. His birth at Bethlehem was when it all began on the human stage. That was the moment that the creator of the universe humbled himself and became a tiny baby. Right from the start he identified with the outcast, with the poor with those who had nothing. Jesus in fact may well have been born, not in a stable, but in the open air? One theory is that he was born in the courtyard of the inn, that being the most likely place for a manger to reside. It is only a theory but if true, it further underlines the fact that Jesus strongly identifies with those on the "outside" Sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes (even shepherds) were people on the "outside" people rejected by the society in which they lived, rejected by those who also rejected Jesus himself, crucifying him outside the city walls.

In the Band Aid record of 1984 referring to those who were starving in Ethiopia Bono sang; "Thank God tonight it's them instead of you" He now regrets singing that line even though the intentions were good. However the truth about the death of Jesus is that we can 'thank God it was him instead of us!' He died in our place. Jesus was rejected by men in order that we could be accepted by God.

So what about us? Will we leave Jesus outside of our lives, still in the manger at Bethlehem, or will we invite him in to change us from the inside out?