



Pastor's Page

Choose your Christmas carefully

So there we were squeezed in between the sliced bread stand and the iron mongers stall. With keyboard, guitar, accordion and a whole host of seasoned singers we ripped into our eclectic repertoire of Christmas carols. And with each carol we sang the small cardboard box standing invitingly in front us filled up with more and more monetary contributions. We had not mentioned money at all and only had a cardboard box there because it had contained the leaflets that we had brought to give away– but still the money came (perhaps they were hoping that if they gave enough we might stop!!) Well I must say we passed all the money on to a charity that was collecting for a worthy cause Well when our hour was up we packed away and headed off out into the chilly midday air. As I walked towards the car-park chatting to a friend I was suddenly hit by some thunderous music blasting out from a stationary vehicle carrying a red-suited gentleman with a splendid white beard! No it wasn't the archbishop of Canterbury it was Santa! And I realised in that moment that the 'Holy Night in Bethlehem' was now lost in a 'winter-wonderland!'

Yesterday I also came across an article which touches on a similar point. It said; "In New York's Hayden Planetarium a special Christmas holiday show was enhanced by an added feature. A giant lollipop tree was projected onto the planetarium dome, surrounded by a horizon filled with brilliantly coloured toys which came to life and cavorted to the tune of "Jingle Bells." At the climax a huge figure of Santa Claus faded out in a snow storm, and the star of Bethlehem broke through into a sky that produced exactly the Palestine sky on the night of the nativity. The designer of this show may not realize that he dramatically staged the supreme Christmas message our world needs to understand: The recovery of the lost meaning of Christmas. This is not said in any criticism of Santa Claus; the effect must have delighted the hearts of all the children who saw it, without doing violence to their love of Bethlehem. But for adults it is a tragic loss to substitute "Jingle Bells" for "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," and a lollipop tree for the manger of Bethlehem. The instinct is right to fade out these things in the light of the Christmas star. It is about God's incarnation that the angels sing--God with us."

So once again this year we have a great opportunity to share with others the amazing message of Christmas. That the creator of the universe entered into the world that he had created by being born to a young Jewish woman in Bethlehem. God became a man. As one writer said; "God couldn't have made himself any bigger to impress us so he made himself smaller to attract us!" One of the names given to the Bethlehem boy was 'Immanuel' which means 'God is with us.' This is the wonderful truth of Christmas that God is with us. The message that was given to the shepherds on the Palestinian hillside over 2000 years ago was; 'Today a Saviour has been born to you' (Luke 2:11) That Saviour Jesus was born for you and me to save us from all that separates us from God, spoils our lives and damages our world. Jesus came to save us from ourselves! Only in finding him will we find peace with God leading to peace on earth.

So let's shout this message out lest the sound of sleigh bells drowns us out!

6th December 2009