

## Sermon 25<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Luke 2:1-20 and Isaiah 9: 2-7

I have heard a lot of people comment that Christmas seems to have snuck up on us this year. Perhaps it is because of the unseasonable weather or because this is the first Christmas we have celebrated without covid restrictions. Or maybe it is because we are all getting older and for some strange reason time seems to speed up. But there is one group of people who may have spent the last six weeks or so constantly asking, “is it Christmas yet? When is it going to be Christmas?” Parents and Grandparents does that ring a bell?

Looking forward to unwrapping Christmas gifts on Christmas morning is a great joy for many children, most of whom in this country will ponder about that jolly, white -bearded fellow in a red suit, who filled their Christmas stockings. They will be unaware that the filling of the stocking, or pillowcase and all the other gifts presented to friends and relatives takes a lot of effort and time, and if you have left things to the last minute loads of patience as you wait in queues from the shops to the car park. So why do we do it, why all the gift giving?

In the reading we just heard from Isaiah there are two verses which the early church, many centuries ago jumped upon as a prediction of the birth of Jesus, “A child will be born to us. God will give a son to us.” So there it is the penultimate gift, the child who will make all things right, the child who will grow into a leader and become a Wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace and be as powerful and eternal as Godself. Throughout the book of prophet Isaiah who lived and prophesied during the kingdom days of Israel and Judah, some two and half thousand years ago, are visions of a peaceful kingdom, no more war, no more violence or bloodshed, no more nightly news broadcast in which we see humans inflicting pain and suffering upon other humans, no more tensions between one another, no more awkward Christmas’ that have simmering undercurrents of discontent.

The loaded question I want to bring to Isaiah and his visions today is “when” So when is everything going to be put right Isaiah? Is it time yet? It is a loaded question because no one, not even Jesus knows when all things will be

reconciled. We, in the church call this the Second Coming and in our denomination we tend to leave this doctrine alone, probably because of our interest in social justice and making a difference in the here and now.

I do wonder however if Isaiah catches a glimpse of the fullness of time, the end time, when he utters his prophecies of a peaceful world, did he get tingles up and down his spine and did the hairs on his arms stand on end as he sees beyond time itself towards God's ultimate plan for all creation? The 'so when' remains a mystery but what about the in the meantime, what impact does the 'son given unto us' today have on us, those of us living in the time between Jesus first incarnation as a babe in Bethlehem and his return in the fullness of time?

The next kind of loaded question I want to pose, is 'So what?' Here lies the baby Jesus, and today we celebrate his entrance into the world, God in the flesh. What difference does that make to me and to you and this broken world of ours? I invite you to ponder on this, follow Mary's example and think on these things. We know that when the cute little infant, Jesus, we love to make a fuss of today, grows up and begins his ministry, he does not change the world in an instant; he did not fix everything that is wrong, he did not bring an army of angels, the host of heaven, with him and take over the place. Instead Jesus begins a movement, a revolution, or perhaps in modern terms the most in depth , comprehensive lifestyle change. Jesus shows us a different way of being, a different way of living with and relating to one another, he offers us different priorities and values, and then he invites us to follow his example. He showed us what it means and looks like to be human, to be the dwelling place of God."<sup>1</sup> to be human is to be the dwelling place of God! hoe does that strike you?

I am going to unpack that "dwelling place of God' with two quotes. The first is from a German mystic monk, Meister Eckhart who lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He seems to have posed the same question I have, the 'So what?' As I read it I will unpack it.

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Morrell

**“What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within myself? So in modern speak, so what Jesus is born today, and every year we celebrate it, what good is it if it doesn’t make an impact on my life? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? Okay so very Catholic terms here, but that is all Meister Eckhart knew, so in modern speak, what good is it if we hear of Mary’s example, of faith and trust in God and do not allow God to be born in us as she did? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to their Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is begotten in us.”**

I am going to use a C. S .Lewis quote here to sum up that last bit, the much loved author of the Narnia series put it this way,

“The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”

Or again in modern speak, “the loving and righteous God become human so that humans can become as loving and righteous as God.”

Perhaps therein lies the way in which we will begin to see our world transformed.

This is the true miracle of Christmas. May you ponder this and may the God’s Holy Spirit lead you into all wisdom and understanding.

**Amen.**