

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve  
Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20

Is there anyone in your family who is difficult to buy Christmas presents for? Or are you yourself difficult to buy for, and dread the question: what do you want for Christmas?

It is often almost impossible to come up with gift ideas for adults today, because we tend to buy what we need or think we need when we think of it, and they tend to be the practical items and what we are going to use or wear.

But children and those on the margins are not able to do so. We tend to think of Christmas as for children.

I think it is police who when scheduling gives married members with children Christmas off and singles get New Years.

But maybe Christmas is for the child in all of us. This seems to suggest because it is children who exemplify the joy and wonder of Christmas. That may be true, but it is more than that.....

But it is also the sense of vulnerability. Last Sunday we heard about the naming of Jesus, Joseph giving him the name Jesus and the name of Emmanuel is mentioned as well.

Forgiveness of sins and God with us. Humility and possibility. And the sense of connectedness and belonging.

But it's not all joy and peace and happiness.

I always liked the phrase, and Mary pondered all these things in her heart. And the question; what was she pondering?

Wondering what has she got herself into?

There is not only that her son is crucified on a cross,

But even before that, when they left Jerusalem after the Passover, they cannot find him for three days.

And when she and her other sons want to speak to Jesus, he responds with; whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

But it is not all bad news, there is the resurrection and Jesus turning water into wine at her request.

So, we need to remember that Christmas is filled with wonder and joy for many, but it is not so for everyone, but everyone belongs, belongs as children. Not only those who cannot provide gifts for themselves all year round, but also cannot contribute to community and society the same as most of us.

We don't have to prove ourselves to belong. And psalm 23 comes to mind and: You prepare a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me. For me this means all are welcome at the table including those we don't like and make us uncomfortable. (In some cases, it is members of our own family)

Isn't it interesting that the angels came not to the rich and powerful mentioned at the beginning of the gospel, but to shepherds who were social outcasts on the fringe of the community.

Something to ponder ourselves this Christmas.

Amen

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. Amen