**Christmas Day Family Service Talk 25th December 2021**

**Luke 2:1-20**

### ***The birth of Jesus***

***2****In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.****2****(This was the first census that took place while[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A1-20&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-24976a)*] Quirinius was governor of Syria.)****3****And everyone went to their own town to register.*

***4****So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.****5****He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.****6****While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,****7****and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

***8****And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night.****9****An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.****10****But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.****11****Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.****12****This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’*

***13****Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

***14****‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
    and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.’*

***15****When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’*

***16****So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.****17****When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,****18****and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.****19****But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.****20****The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

I don’t know about you but one of the somewhat frustrating jobs at Christmas starts when you open a box like this. It is often actually bulging and not properly shut or maybe covered in Sellotape to prevent the mice in the loft getting in and chewing the wires for the 50 weeks in the year that the lights spend in the loft. Often the lights don’t even make it back into the box but end up scrunched up in a bag along with the other strings of lights.

And that, of course, is where the problem lies because somehow in the 50 weeks in the loft – on their own and untouched – the strings of lights become tangled. It is one of life’s great mysteries as to how this happens but it certainly does …. year on year. In our house Alan, who has the patience of a saint, is i/c sorting the lights … all I manage to do is make the situation worse!

Bearing all that in mind, you may wonder why I have risked bringing a box of lights to church on Christmas Day. And why would I need to when the Christmas tree has been so beautifully decorated by Hilary and Loreen and is covered in so many lovely, twinkling lights. Both good questions….

Well, I have to admit that I do actually really love Christmas lights (our house has them everywhere!) They are so cheerful and make a room feel alive and glowing …. and, more importantly, they are a symbol of real hope. They bring light and life into dark dreary places.

This year there have, for many people, been a lot of dark dreary places and sometimes it has been very hard to see any light to dispel the gloom and sadness. This makes the Christmas lights even more important ….. because this is the time of year when we are remembering and celebrating the birth of Jesus, the baby born in the stable in Bethlehem just over 2000 years ago. And Jesus was spoken of by John in his gospel as the light coming into the world. In a reading in last night’s service, we heard that the darkness (all the bad things in the world) has **not** overcome the light (Jesus) which is great news! Jesus is the light that will shine in the dark and difficult place

Even more excitingly, Jesus - the light, is coming to bring us light too so that he can shine through us to others. Because although it is wonderful and very important that the lights remind us that Jesus is the light of the world, they also remind us of our place in God’s plan for the world.

Let’s now spread the lights out *(spread lights across the front) ….* We can see now that each small bulb is separate from the rest but is linked together by the wire. The source of power for each light comes from the wire along the bottom which is a very exciting picture of how God works in our lives!

Who can tell me what is the power that lights these little bulbs? Yes, electricity from a battery which goes along the wire up into the bulb which lights up and shines out for all to see, taking away the darkness and gloom. God’s power is a bit like the electricity only so much more powerful and it doesn’t need to be in a wire.

So, when I look at a string of Christmas lights, I imagine each bulb to be someone who loves and obeys Jesus – a Christian. And I look at the wire and remember that God is the power that fills each Christian (by his Holy Spirit). Then I see the light of Jesus shining out through the bulb and overcoming the darkness. And people are drawn to the light because it is so strong and full of life.

In our reading this morning, Mary and Joseph were filled with God’s power so that they could become Jesus’ earthly parents. An angel brought them both a message from God which they obeyed and so God’s promise of a king to save the world came true – Jesus was born. It can’t have been easy but they trusted God and the light shone out of them for all to see.

Maybe these 2 lights could remind us of Mary and Joseph…

Then we heard how the shepherds – the lowest of the low folk in 1st century Judea – had an amazing message from God, via an angel shining with God’s light, to tell them that Jesus had been born. They straight away ran off to find Jesus and then went and told anyone they could find what had happened. That can’t have been easy for simple shepherds, more used to talking to sheep than other people but with God’s power in them, the light of Christ shone out from them and they did it.

Maybe these next few lights could remind us of the shepherds.

And what about the rest of the lights on our string? Each one reminds me of someone who knows and loves Jesus, who is filled with God’s power and who shines Jesus’ light out to those around them. Maybe this one is Ron, still responding to God’s call to lead the church when he can; this one is a lady I know who is housebound and can’t ever go to church but prays faithfully for all that her local church is doing; these ones remind me of the retired people who go into primary schools to tell Bible stories to children who have never heard them before; with this one I think of the man who walks the streets in London looking out for those who need help; this one reminds me of a young single mum who is exhausted and has nothing but who every night with her last ounce of energy, tells her children about God’s love for them.

Maybe this one is you or someone you know…. Each one represented here is filled with God’s power and shining out Jesus’s light into a dark world, desperate for hope. God calls each one of us, whether we think we have anything to offer or not, to be part of his plan in some way to fill the world with his light and glory.

If you see yourself as one of those lights in the string that isn’t yet shining out and would like to know more about Jesus’ light, do come and chat afterwards.

And as we go home from church to our scrummy Christmas dinners and I’m sure lots of presents, let us remember what it is we are celebrating … the birth of Jesus … God’s light coming into the world. May his light shine through each one of us as we believe and trust in him this Christmas time.