

December 2008

To our neighbours near the church in Friston village and our neighbours close to where we individually live.

Dear neighbours,

Time has not dimmed the significance of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor the wonder of its detail.

In the majestic, understated words of the Bible describing the unique joining of God and man in the womb of the virgin it is recalled, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1.35).

Such a stupendous achievement. God was not at all compromised. In Christ He remained fully God, but united to human flesh. But neither was Jesus Christ less than, or more than, human. Simply perfectly human. That power of the Highest so worked, not only to cause conception but to guard against any taint of Mary's innate human sinfulness passing on to Jesus Christ.

Adam was created sinless but capable of sinning and when he sinned all his descendants inherited that capacity. Jesus Christ was born sinless and incapable of sinning, thereby bestowing more blessings than we lost by Adam's fall.

This is the true Christmas celebration.

John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, 6-months pregnant, declared when Mary visited her to stay for a time, "Whence is this that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1.43) It may seem almost a throwaway line, but she was thereby acknowledging her sinfulness and her need of a Saviour. Indeed, she was acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ, though He was yet a child and His work not yet accomplished, to be the One she trusted for eternal salvation. In other words, to be her Lord.

Mary, in that glorious acclamation called the Magnificat, poured out the rejoicing of her heart in the power of the same Holy Ghost by whom she had conceived, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour...for He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name" (Luke 1.49). In it she, too, speaks of being saved through the provision of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels at His lowly birth, those messengers from heaven bringing heaven's pure instruction, announced, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2.10-14).

Here was a Saviour for all sorts and conditions of people in all nations down all the periods of time, even retrospectively. "He is able...to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7.25). His work at all times, especially in its final accomplishment, declares God's good will in reconciling sinners to Himself. "We have peace with God" (Romans 5.1), for this is the peace meant, a relationship of reconciliation and love, through the forgiveness of sins by Christ's atoning, sacrificial death.

This is the purpose of such a miraculous birth and such uniqueness.

"Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2. 34-35).

These are the words of Simeon to Mary when he took the child Jesus in his arms, a few days after His birth, when He was presented in the temple. First "the fall" and then "the rising." That is to say the work of salvation takes place like this:-

First our consciences, moved by the same Holy Ghost, stir the thoughts of our hearts with the hidden sins we know are there. That brings us low with shame, even anger; and men and women often resist the strivings of the Holy Ghost viciously. But when after such a struggle (though not all have struggles), He brings us through to a reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of our sins by the atoning work of Christ on the cross of Calvary then we are lifted up again and life begins anew with prospects of heaven to brighten the remainder of our path through life. Some will hate Him and speak against Him nevertheless. But not you, I trust.

We do urge you and plead with you to take such stupendous matters seriously. We invite you to come to our services when you will always hear an explanation of a Bible passage. Week by week they are at 1045 and 1400hrs on a Sunday and at 1930hrs on Tuesdays.

Or visit our website (address above) where sermons may be downloaded, perhaps as tasters!

We would love to meet you especially over Christmas. The Sunday before Christmas is the 21<sup>st</sup> and at the 1045 and 1400hr services we will sing well-known Christmas hymns. The afternoon service is especially denoted our invitation, guest service, with refreshments to follow. Please do take this as an invitation and come and sample our welcome.

On Christmas Day itself we hold a service, lasting approximately one hour, at 1030. Again you are very welcome.

Yours sincerely,