

Christmas Day
25-12-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 9: 2-7 Prophecy of a Child to bring Light
Isaiah 62:6-12 Salvation is coming

Psalms 96 Sing to the Lord a new song – He comes to judge
Psalms 97 The Lord is King, Let the Earth rejoice

Titus 2: 11-14 The grace of God has appeared in Jesus
and helps us to live worthy lives until he comes again
Titus 3: 4-8a Jesus saves us and pours his Spirit on us.

Luke 2:1-14 Jesus is born and shepherds see angels
Luke 2: 8-20 Shepherds see angels and then visit Jesus

Introduction

I wanted to begin with a question for us to think about:-

“Have you ever missed out on something because you didn't realize how good it really was?”

Stories of something better than you thought

Now obviously, I've already had a chance to think about this, and an example I came up with was a fundraising event when we lived in the Burdekin. A group had organised for Steven Bradbury, the Winter Olympics Skating Gold Medalist, to come and be the Guest Speaker. I thought, that's the guy who only won because everyone else fell over, not sure it will be that good. We almost didn't go, but it was for charity, so we decided to buy tickets. It ended up being a wonderful evening. He was actually a much better public speaker than I thought he would be, with many interesting anecdotes to share. He once nearly bled to death when a skate went through his leg in a race accident. I hadn't realized how he had been at the top of the sport for a number of years and had only missed out in the past due to misfortune himself.

Now this is only quite a trivial story, and I didn't even miss out, but I believe many people actually miss out on knowing how wonderful it is to know Jesus, because they think they've heard about Jesus, and he doesn't seem to have too much to offer them in their life.

I believe knowing Jesus is better than we can even begin to imagine!!

I believe it is only in knowing Jesus that we can find real meaning and purpose for our lives.

And I believe that's why Christmas continues to be celebrated more than 2000 years after Jesus was born.

The first People who knew Jesus

So, what might it mean to know Jesus? How did those around him first respond to knowing Jesus?

Last week in the bible readings we heard how Mary and Elizabeth, knew something special was about to happen with Mary's pregnancy. And Mary and Joseph had both been visited by angels, so they were expecting something extraordinary to happen. In the biblical stories of Mary and Joseph, we hear how they were both obedient to God. And we hear how Mary pondered these things in her heart.

Do you feel a sense of obedience to Jesus, or do you often ponder the significance of Jesus, in your life?

Today we hear the story of the birth of Jesus, and we hear how the Shepherds responded. They were frightened by the angels, but went to see, and when they did see Jesus, they were amazed!!

I wonder, do you feel frightened or amazed by Jesus?

Knowing Jesus Now

We can't know Jesus now in a physical sense like people did 2000 years ago, but we can know Jesus, as Christians down the ages have, and I would like to look at the ways Christians have known Jesus, that we have explored through the Advent Season leading up to today. During Advent we have looked at the themes Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Hope

Knowing Jesus today brings us Hope.

Hope is a natural expectation around the birth of a child. It is normal for parents to be thinking about the future, for their child, and to have hopes, and plans, and dreams for them. The Hope that Jesus gives us though, is way beyond the wishful thinking we may associate with babies. Jesus obviously grew to adulthood, and in the Resurrection the first disciples of Jesus knew they had something to look forward to.

Despite the challenges that all humans face in life, those first followers had a hope and an assurance, even in the face of death. It was in the resurrection of Jesus, that they were enabled to live lives filled with Hope.

Peace

Knowing Jesus today brings us Peace.

At face value, knowing peace in our world today seems to be an extremely unrealistic goal. At an international level, there is always a war going on somewhere. At a national level our politicians are always in disagreement, and we see that even within families there is often conflict. But knowing Jesus, and knowing that we can have a relationship with God, through what Jesus has done for us on the cross, allows us to live with an inner peace. If we look to Jesus and repent, we can be assured of God's forgiveness and peace. This Peace is often described as the "Peace of God which passes all understanding".

Joy

Knowing Jesus today brings us Joy.

I think being enabled to live a Joyful life, flows from knowing the Hope and Peace that Jesus brings. But, having an inner joy does not mean that we will always be happy. The last two years have certainly not brought much happiness. We see how Jesus himself went through a range of emotions, from celebrating, to tiredness, to sadness, and even to righteous anger. Joy is not the same as happiness. Sometimes we may struggle and that is a normal part of life. Sometimes we may really have to work at it, but knowing Jesus will bring us Joy.

Love

Knowing Jesus today brings us Love.

When we hear the word Love, we often think about romantic love. But the Love God offers us in Jesus is much more significant than that. When we think of real love it involves giving of yourself for someone else.

God loves us so much, that God chose to become a human being like us. We can't say that because God is the creator of everything God can't know what it's like to be one of us. God chose to be like us, because he wanted us to be assured that we can have a relationship with God, and that relationship is all about God's love for us.

I believe we will only find true love and true fulfillment by knowing Jesus in our lives.

Conclusion

We are gathered here today because we do know something of Jesus.

And it is in knowing Jesus that we, as mere human beings, can know the way to God.

The God who created the universe, the God who brings all things into being, loves us so intently that God chose to become a human being like us. In his humanity, Jesus gives us as mere humans, a way back to God.

May we not miss out on knowing Jesus, but may we know the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love that Jesus offers us.

May we grasp with our whole hearts the significance of Jesus and never let go.

I pray that when you hear the name "Jesus "
You will not hear a swear word, or merely a name, but be filled with hope, and joy, and peace beyond understanding.

And that as you know and feel God's love for us,
that love will then overflow into all that you do.

May you all have a Happy, a Holy and a Blessed Christmas. Amen.