

Reflection – Christmas Day  
25/12/2023  
St Cuthberts Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 9: 2-7	Prophecy of a Child to bring Light
Isaiah 62:6-12	Salvation is coming
Psalm 96	Sing to the Lord a new song – He comes to judge
Psalm 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

Today I'd like us to look at Babies.

And, of course, I'd like us to think about the baby Jesus, and how his coming into the world, assures us, that we can have hope.

### Babies

Firstly, Babies. They're pretty common aren't they?

We were all one once, weren't we?

I once met a cute little baby called Dean, strange that his name is Dean because his mother is Mary and his father is Joseph. But his mother told me they already had a daughter, so Dean wasn't their first born. One of our parishioners recently told me they had a new great grandchild, and it was amazing to see the new baby. Our Grandson is one and a half now, so he's not a baby anymore.

We all enter the world as babies. But why is it that we still gather to celebrate the Birth of the Baby Jesus?

You would think that after 2000 years the excitement would have calmed down a little. But in churches all around the World today, people will gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

At the time of Jesus birth, the Israelites were waiting for a Messiah. They were waiting in Hope that God would fulfill his promises to them and sent the Messiah to make things right.

Christians believe that Jesus is the one who fulfilled this HOPE, and not only for Israel, but for the Whole World.

## What is Hope?

But what is HOPE? What do we mean when we use the word HOPE?

Dictionaries give a variety of meanings, the first one I came across was this:-  
“Expectation of something desired”

and other similar ones, they go along the lines of wanting something, like the latest phone or gadget for Christmas, but I like this definition a lot more:-

“HOPE is Confidence in a future event”

This definition seems to take Hope to a higher level, of something more important. In the Bible HOPE seems to go hand in hand with Faith and Love. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 8 verses 24 and 25 it says this:-

<sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

And later on, it says faith is being sure of what we hope for. Hope is basic to the Christian way of life. In the Christian context Hope involves confidence, and Hope involves looking to the future.

## What do you hope for?

So, what do you hope for?  
What do you have confidence in, for the future.

Here in Australia, we live in what is known as the Western World. The society and time in which we now live is based on the period of time historians refer to as modernity. The underlying theme of modernity is that things would continually get better and better.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century proved that Modernity had hopes that weren’t based in reality. There were 2 World Wars and countless other tragedies of human making. Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new term of Postmodernity started to come into use. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Anglican Priest and Academic Gary Bouma, described the spirituality of many Australians as having :-

“a shy hope in the heart”

It describes how many Australians are reticent to talk about matters of faith. Here in Australia, our Hope mainly extends to material things like houses, cars or maybe where we will have our next holiday. Sometimes our hopes are tied up with family and friends.

It is good for us to consider such things, but not at the expense of what is really important in life. Rarely do our Hopes get a bigger, clearer, airing on the weightier, more fundamental questions of life.

Why was I born?

Why am I here?

What is my purpose in life?

What happens when I die?

These hopes are so often not even considered, or if they do come up, they are pushed swiftly to the side.

What are you hoping for in your life?

Are you living your life as though these hopes will become a reality?

What did the angel tell the Shepherds

Now let's get back to the nativity story, and the story of the baby Jesus.

What did the angel say to those shepherds, who, as we heard, were terrified by this stage:-

<sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

The angel said this birth was good news.

The angel said this birth would bring great Joy for ALL the people.

In Jesus, God has come among us so that we can have access to God.

John's Gospel puts it like this:-

**"And the Word became flesh and lived among us"**

That sounds like something based in reality.

Something to really put your hope into.

How does this Hope continue

But can you imagine how we might react to the birth of a child today, in the context of such Hope. Can you imagine if the world leaders of today got together for one of their high powered meetings – Summit's, I think they call them, so they could work out what to do in the face of all the world's challenges with financial crisis, and wars, and natural disasters, and someone says "Good News", I've got the answer – a baby has just been born.

I can't see it going down too well myself, and yet around 2000 years after the event, we are gathered here in this church celebrating the birth of a child.

It says something of the Hope that Jesus must have instilled into his first followers. It says something that down the ages this hope has continued to give meaning and purpose to the lives of so many people.

Jesus didn't remain a little baby, He called people to follow him, and he taught them how to live. He died on a Cross on a day we call Good Friday, so that although we do things that cut us off from God, we can be assured that our relationship with God can be restored. And Jesus rose from the dead to give us Hope for the future.

Just as the birth of Jesus offered hope to the shepherds, Jesus offers Hope to us, here, today.

Now this doesn't mean that we will be immune from the challenges and struggles of life. In fact, when we choose to follow Jesus, we may face greater obstacles and challenges in life. But with Jesus we know we can face whatever challenges there are with HOPE.

And though we know we can live in HOPE, we know the world we live in is still not right. As Christians are called to live into this hope we have grasped, to follow Jesus and in doing so bring about God's plans of peace and justice for our world, until Jesus comes again.

### Conclusion

As unlikely as it may seem. God the creator of the universe, decided to become a human being, just like us, and for our sake. So that our lives might have HOPE.

God used the Ordinary to bring about the extraordinary. That is why 2000 years after He was born, we still celebrate the birth of Jesus today.

The take home message for us today is this:-

God has a plan for our world.

As part of this plan God sent Jesus to give us HOPE.

Not a "shy hope in the heart", but rather a HOPE of confidence based on the reality of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And God also wants to use you, to live into this HOPE, and to share this HOPE with a world that still badly needs it today.

The question before us today is – Will you live in this HOPE, and will you let God use you to share this HOPE?

May you all have a happy, a holy and a blessed Christmas. Amen.