

Christmas Day 2020

Something like.. if ever we needed a superhero - its now

If ever we needed someone, or something, to bring peace to our fears and worries, to bring hope when we're feeling like despair, or to shine a light into what seems like a dark world -  
If ever we needed those things, its now.

So if we're looking for a saviour - here's one God prepared earlier.. Jesus

- The reason for the season, the light in the darkness, the light of the world.

The one who said - come to me all who are hungry and thirsty, and I will feed you,  
come to me all who are tired, and I will give you rest,  
come to me for I will give you life in all its fulness, life in abundance.

Or as I used to sound it out phonetically - A bun dance - adn wondered what sort of dance that was - was it like the floral dance - and how buns would dance? Abundance - more than enough.

Jesus came to give us a life that wasn't just surviving, or getting through, but an abundant life - more than enough - full of joy, peace and hope.

Yeah - he's the one that we want, he's the one that we need. All I want for Christmas - is Jesus. (Sorry Mariah, you can't have me!)

But.. we have to face it, that this year, and this Christmas, is not going to be easy.

We can't just avoid, ignore, or fast forward through the sad bits to get to the happy ending.

We mustn't be like those people, who shall not be named, who like to skip their main meal and go straight to desert. You know my mother in law puts mints or chocolates on the dinner table - right from the start! And every year, while waiting for the main course, or starter, I go - can I eat that now...

But lets not do that...

In the Bible there's a type of writing called lament. Its when the people of Israel acknowledge how bad things are - they tell it like it is. Their feelings of hurt and anger. They rail at God - where were you? They let it out and get it off their chest.

And in bereavement and grief therapy, you listen to someone telling you the hurt, again and again.

So this Christmas is messed up. All those things we like to do to make it special, to show those around us how much they mean to us - like that special stuffing that takes 2 days to make - yes, vegetarians eat stuffing - or the trip to the pantomime or theatre, or staying over at grandparents... **we've lost that.**

And so we might be sad about those things. And its ok to be feeling a bit blue, down in the dumps. In fact its actually healthier than being in denial. If we all shed a tear this Christmas it would be ok, it would be good.

Because what I've learnt from walking with people on their grief journey, is that as they tell you their real feelings again again, eventually the hurt begins to lose its grip, and heart moves to a place of acceptance and looking forward to new life.

And the Biblical laments, after they have let it all out at God - I have soaked my bed with my tears (psalm 6) - they say - but you have heard my crying God, you know how this feels, you're still there God. They (nearly always) turn to God and hope!

So after we've had our sad moment, let's remember that first Christmas - Joseph and Mary and Jesus. And think about how messed up things were in their lives.

They lived in an occupied state, with rules enforced by soldiers and military presence. I bet there were many Jews who longed for their freedoms of movement and worship - for things to return to "normal".

Mary and Joseph, like everyone else, were forced to take part in a census. Joseph had to close his business, loss of income, no furlough scheme. And talk about transport trouble - it was a long walk to Bethlehem. And then there was Mary. His consolation bride in old age - a gift he'd thought, from God. But then all this getting pregnant, hushed up marriage - oy veh - the trouble and mess he had. Poor Mary - 14 years old maybe, scared, walking, and donkey riding day after day.

And the doors were closed to them when they arrived. Only one tiny glimpse of compassion - that gave them a stable. And here she is giving birth, without midwives or support from older female relatives - on her own. That's a messed up Christmas, before we even get to fleeing to Egypt from a murderous tyrannical governor.

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And yet it was precisely into this mess that God thought was the right time and place to enter His world. That it was in this imperfect, risky, unhappy circumstance, that Jesus came to show us what God is like, his love for us.

Jesus did not wait until we were ready, until we were spiritually, mentally and physically prepared and perfect, wearing our Sunday best.

I think God knows what he is doing.

God knew and Jesus did not come to a sanitised, perfectly prepared Christmas, where the turkey is just so, and the vegetables not overcooked, and the cook is perfectly calm.

Jesus came into our real lives, because it's only in our real lives that he can bring real hope.

And God's hope is about small things that change the world. Remember the mustard seed, remember the yeast in the flour, remember the king of Israel David, being chosen from the youngest, the smallest tribe, remember God coming to earth, not as an all powerful, awe inducing, terrifying Warrior God.... but as a baby...

The little things are always important, especially to God.

So let's pay attention this year to the little things - take the time to do that 2 day stuffing - because it'll remind you of those you love and bring them close to you in their heart. If you can find a tangerine - peel it slowly, and if you've got a sense of smell - why not sniff it and see if reminds you of childhood excitement and joy. The little we can do - which might not be the hugs or visits or family get togetherness, but we can meet online, or phone, or text, or drop a card round, or something as small as an angel - thank you Cathryn. Maybe you've got a sleeping baby you can look at, or a sleeping cat, to remind you of that peace that comes from above. Or a fire to look into to remember the warmth of love, the journey of humanity, or the light of love. God's given us so many signs, like treasures to be found - ooh, chocolates on the Christmas tree, hidden among the baubles!

We often do Christmas by excess - too much to eat, or drink, too many presents, too much TV - or maybe that's just me - but God does it by abundance (different because too much joy doesn't leave you feeling bloated!) found in the smallest things - the little we can do - the tiny baby, whose love for us would be enough to save the whole world, no matter what befall.

Happy Christmas.