

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
22nd December 2020**

READINGS

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.

Corrie Ten Boom



REFLECTION

Christmas is a time of year that is loaded with meaning. It is a time of memory, of remembering celebrations past and the people we shared those celebrations with. It is a time for relationships, as people gather together to share a special time with special loved ones. It is a time of expectation, when we hope that there will be joy and laughter and that people will come close to one another. It is a time of thinking of others, of choosing presents and sending cards. It can also be a time of pressure, of feeling we have to get things just right.

Perhaps that is part of the reason why the news of the restrictions introduced this year have been such a blow for so many people. After a difficult year of isolation and lockdown, so many people placed expectations upon Christmas time. That time when they would at last get the chance to see loved one, when they could make up for all the isolation. And to lose that has indeed been a bitter pill to swallow, especially when the hope for a way out of this virus has seemed so positive with news of vaccines being administered and more on the way.

For Christians, all of these things are also true, we have the same memories, the same hopes, the same pressure and the same sadness at how events have turned out this year. But Christmas is also so much more.

It is light in the darkness, it is hope in the midst of hopelessness, it is the guarantee that God's promises are not broken, but sure and true. The Christ child comes, Immanuel, God is with us. We can never ever have that taken away from us. The promise of light in the darkness cannot be broken by restrictions because of COVID-19, or by anything else - God is with us.

What does the perfect Christmas look like? I suspect if you asked 100 people that question you would get 100 different answers! But I like Corrie Ten Boom answer best. The perfect Christmas has already happened. Christ is born in Bethlehem; the light is in the world and all that causes darkness is already defeated.

So this year, as has been said many times, Christmas will look and feel different than traditionally. But that which lies at the heart of Christmas will not change. We still celebrate the Christ-child. The light still shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. God is still with us. Our faith and our hope cannot be extinguished just because our usual way of doing things has to be changed.

May you have a blessed and wonderful Christmas time.

PRAYER

God who loves us,
God who never turns away from us,
God who calls us family,
Make us ready to receive your light this Christmas,

Amid all that happens,
Amid all that causes doubt,

Amid all that casts a shadow,
May we ever see your light shining,
May we trust always in your company with us,
May we recognise your hand at work.

In this Christmas season
Where many are sad
And many are hurting
And many are worried,
We pray for peace,
We pray for healing
We pray for comfort.
We pray for the light of your Good News
To shine in in the middle of every need

In Jesus name
Amen

