

**Weekly Devotions**  
**South Holburn Church**  
**14th December 2021**

## **READINGS**

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 Counselor, 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 7:6-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.). And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

*Luke 2:1-20*

## REFLECTION

A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold, December morning. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

A few minutes after the man began to play, a middle-aged man noticed there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule. Moments later, the violinist received his first tip: a woman threw the money in the tin in front of the violinist, but she did so without stopping, hurrying on about her business. Then, a few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to violinist, but then the onlooker glanced at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly, he was late for work.

The one who paid the most attention was a 3-year-old boy. His mother was dragging him along, harried and frustrated, but the boy stopped to look at the violinist. Finally, the mother pushed hard enough, and the child began to walk away with his mother, turning his head all the time to glance back at the violinist. This action was repeated by several other children. All the parents, without exception, forced them to move on.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 passersby gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this, but the violinist was none other than Joshua Bell, one of the best musicians in the world. In his stint in the subway, Maestro Bell had played some of the most intricate pieces of music ever written. And he had done all of this on a Stradivarius violin worth 5 million pounds.

Two days before playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theatre in Boston with tickets costing an average £175 each.

The crowds missed one of the greatest musicians in the world playing some of the greatest music in the world on one of the rarest and finest instruments in the world. They had the chance of experiencing for free what people had been willing to pay a small fortune to see. But they were all too busy, too hurried to notice. If only they could have paused!

As we approach Christmas, our days fill up with things we need to do. Even in these times as we live under restrictions because of COVID, its very easy to get caught up in the rush to make Christmas as best as it can be.

There is nothing wrong in that. But perhaps we should stop and ask ourselves what is it that is most important about Christmas? If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is about our priorities. What can we afford to lose from our lives, and what is it that is most important to us that we can never, ever allow ourselves to lose?

For us, as Christians, we must consider also that, no matter what, the most important part of the message and the purpose of Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus and

hope that he brings to the world. The story of the manger, angels, shepherds and magi might seem 'twee' to many in our society, but it presents to all the world a message of hope that is so desperately needed. A promise that God reaches out in love to all people, from the humblest and the poorest, like the shepherds, to the wisest and the richest, like the ones who travel from the East with their expensive gifts. The light shines in the darkness for all people.

So, pause and listen for the Good News. Pause and look for the light that shines in the darkness. Pause and make space in your life this Christmas, for the Son of God.

Have a wonderful Christmas season.

## **PRAYER**

God who loves us,  
God who reaches out,  
God who gives everything for us,  
God of Good News.  
Don't let us get so caught up in all the festive hassles,  
That we pass by without noticing the manger  
Speak your words of hope into our lives this Christmas season.  
Speak into our lives your words of love to heal our hurts  
Speak into our lives your words of love to quell our fears  
Speak into our lives your words of love to deepen our faith

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,  
Amen.

