

Christmas message and blessing – John 1:1-14

Our service today has taken the form of the service of lessons and carols, a form of worship first begun in 1878 at Truro cathedral in Cornwall. Since then it's been adopted across the world and across denominations.

The service has been in use for more than 140 years, but the story that it tells is an ancient one. It's the story of God's plan for the world, and particularly the story of Jesus' arrival in Bethlehem a bit more than 2000 years ago.

It is a beautiful story, but it's also a story that needs a response. A response from each one of us.

The story of the birth of Christ, is one where God reached out to humanity and in the reaching out there is an invitation. An invitation to put our hope and our future in Jesus, and to follow him. To live our lives the way God wants us to; Seeking a better world, being part of offering hope for the hopeless, and being part of sharing the good news of Jesus.

When we look back on our familiar stories and beautiful traditions we shouldn't be looking back on them to admire them from a distance or just to feel all sentimental about them, instead we need to open our hearts to them.

Our service has included readings from three gospels. The readings from Luke's gospel, which tells of Mary, of the shepherds, the angels, and the baby Jesus in the manger, and the account from Matthew's gospel, which shares the story of the wise men, the star, and the responses of Herod and the religious authorities. Between Matthew and Luke, we have all the components of the popular image of the nativity scene in Bethlehem.

But our final reading, from John's gospel, doesn't include any of the traditional trappings of the Christmas scene. It steps back from the scene of a stable in Bethlehem, and moves to a cosmic scale.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

In fact, later in the reading, John sums up the Christmas story in one sentence: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word became flesh. Became one of us. And in Jesus's life and death and resurrection, he reconnected us to God. No matter who we are, or what we have done, he reaches out to us, to reconnect us to God.

All we need to do is respond to him in faith, to put our trust in him, to do our best to live our lives as God wants us to live. And as we respond to him, he gives us the power to become children of God.

Today, this Christmas, we have been reminded of the Christmas story, and so:

May the eagerness of the shepherds,
the joy of the angels,
the perseverance of the Magi,
the faithfulness of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child – the word who became flesh –
be yours this Christmas, and always.

Amen.