

**Hinde Street Methodist Church**  
Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019 11.00am  
Rev Peter Cornick

## **The nativity – remembering and hope.**

### **Isaiah 11: 1-10**

**An address following a nativity play performed by the Junior Church. The prayers which follow reflect the nativity characters.**

**(The phrases in italics come from the play.)**

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### **Remembering the child**

The birth of a child, gives anyone who holds the new-born, the opportunity to ponder: what will this child become? What sort of impact on the world will she or he have?

The nativity play today, was not the traditional stable scene with the baby – but twelve years' afterwards. It was about remembering. Remembering a birth; remembering childhood, growing up. And about remembering to hope for what the child – now on the verge of adulthood – might become.

All those promises to the child; close to God; God's son; a saviour who is Christ the Lord. Visitors from the hills; visitors from the east.

Reuben, announces

*Jesus is going to play a special part in history.*

*None of us knows what is going to happen ...*

Remembering with Elizabeth:

*Yes, it was all dreams and angels and visions in those days...*

Remembering a chaotic, Roman Bethlehem:

*And there, amid the noise and riot,*

*Was the one still centre of peace and quiet.*

Remembering the promise from John:

*To teach his people with one accord*

*To make in the desert a way for the Lord.*

This remembering, is about years gone by. Time past too quickly.

Recalling those moments of significance. The strange signs from God

of being chosen, the promise of new birth; the preparation for a new ministry.

### **Isaiah remembers**

Isaiah, as a prophet, remembers the past. Jesse, the father of King David. Isaiah remembers that God chose men and women to lead the people of Israel, through wilderness, conquest and famine, into fertile lands, freedom and plenty. And from that remembering, Isaiah hopes for the future. If God has led the people in the past, surely, it will be so in the future.

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse.

Isaiah looks around at the present state of his world. Not so much remembering but looking and seeing. His hope is in one who will come. Part of the family tree of Jesse. And the one to come, will bring that hope, according to Isaiah.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
<sup>4</sup> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

So, in amongst all the remembering,  
Isaiah remembers to look ahead, with hope.

### **Remembering our society today**

On the eve of a general election, we might look around and see the world around us now. What do we see?

I was listening to a volunteer who works at WLM St Luke's. He offers advice on debt, budgeting and paying the bills to clients and does so in conjunction with the local food bank. He told me about a woman in Lambeth, who can't work out whether to buy food or gas. And whilst she decides, she is in rent arrears.

The vulnerability of people and their money for rent, is the biggest cause of homelessness currently. The volunteer was expressing shock at the poverty, particularly that children live in, in this, one of the richest cities in the world. We see that in the last ten years, rough sleeping has risen by 165%. On the streets of London, there are 22 new rough sleepers every day.

(Source Roger Clark, CEO West London Mission)

The Oxford Street light show, changes from baubles to the words – ‘festive feelings’. I wonder what ‘festive feelings’, the 22 new rough sleepers or the woman in Lambeth will have?

If I were Isaiah, looking around at my society today, I would hope for a better future, whoever walks into number 10 next week.

So how does the nativity, Jesus, solve the problems Isaiah had – or we have? Jesus didn’t stand for election then or now. Is our hope just empty?

The nativity demonstrates to us hope of a different kind. Not the hope of a new political leader who will sort out the economy and put an end to the scandal of foodbanks. The nativity promises the hope of God who will enter into the lives of those who experience struggle and pain now. The nativity tells of an unceremonious birth, of

humility amidst political tension in society. And yet, it is into such a mess that God is born, and continues to live.

That is the hope of the nativity.

*But each of us felt, as we knelt to adore,  
That the love of God was asleep in the straw!*

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In the nativity, we remember Jesus' family.

We pray for those we love and care for; those who love and care for us;

for people we have lost touch with; or live with but in conflict;

for those we see no more whose lives we remember.

In the nativity, we remember those who raise children.

We pray for parents everywhere;

for those who find parenting a daily challenge and those who support them;

for teachers, youth workers; Junior Church leaders.

In the nativity, we remember an innkeeper.

For people whose home is an outbuilding, or a church porch we pray;  
for the volunteers, staff and guests of each Winter Night Shelter;  
for the Wednesday Club and each of the WLM projects.

In the nativity, we remember shepherds.

We pray for people who work long hours in difficult conditions;  
people on short term contracts; those in employment dispute;  
vulnerable men and women forced to work as modern-day slaves.

In the nativity, we remember wise men.

We pray for all candidates in the general election;  
for campaigners and journalists; counting staff and voters;  
that each may seek wisdom and the common good.