

Hurst Green
15th Dec 19
Christmas Awe and Wonder
Luke 2:1-20

Are we getting excited about Christmas – the real Christmas? That is what this series aims to do – help us get excited. I can't get excited for you; you need to get excited for yourself and let me be excited for myself.

Together, if we are all excited, then our excitement will encourage one another to get even more excited.

At Windmill Manor last Wednesday I spoke on getting excited and I finished with “Can we get excited about Christ's birth?” and an old gentleman said “I jolly well hope so!”

This is an exciting season as we think about God becoming man. As I mentioned last week he really became man; he wasn't just God walking around in human form able to do God things to show how different he was.

He was in human form to show us what we can do with our lives. All that teaching and miracles are all available to us if we will only let ourselves be available to him. Of course that is the scary bit – letting ourselves be available because we lose an element of control and anything can happen.

I know that is good because I have seen it both in Christian groups but also in my own life.

I really believe that verse in John

John 14:12 (ANIV)

¹² *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

I want to see those greater things; I want to see the Church doing even the things that Jesus did; at the moment I have to dig around to find credible reports where I want to be there and give the reports myself.

I still pray for a release of the Spirit in this place firstly for a loosening of your tongues that you will praise God and that you will pray.

Then we shall be fulfilling the command in 1 Cor.

1 Corinthians 14:26 (ANIV)

²⁶ ~~What then shall we say, brothers?~~ *When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.*

Then everyone will be involved in the strengthening of the Church that is the strengthening of each other.

But part of that excitement is this Christmas season and because of Christmas day we can be excited all year round as we consider all that God has done, all that God is doing and all that he has promised he will do.

So the awe and wonder of Christmas!!

When was the last time you felt a sense of Awe and Wonder?

Usually it is when you see something new or unexpected. The night sky on a clear night.

One thing for me is the birth of a child. Given I was in the Army I was blessed to be at the birth of all three of my children and the sense of Awe and Wonder as I held that new little being in my arms and praised God for them will live with me forever.

That was a few years ago now and we now have the awe and wonder of holding our grandchildren (together with the joy of handing them over when they have a dirty nappy!).

But have you noticed as you get older it takes more to produce the sense of awe.

You live in a place without light pollution and soon the night sky is mundane!

And so it can be with Christmas – we have all done so many of them. We know the story. The only new thing is the presents – we don't know what we will get each year. We know it will not be a piece of coal in our wealthy society but what will it be?

Our society seems to work against any awe and wonder. You rarely hear good news in the media for good news doesn't sell newspapers. People live a life anxious by what others think about them; your image and self-image is all that is important to them, they are panicked by what is going on in the world and discontent with what they have.

Life seems dark and depressing to too many people and this is shown in places such as self-harm and mental health figures.

Sometimes all people need is a little light; a distant star.

And that is what happened 2000 years ago in a little backwater called Israel and it brought awe, wonder and joy to all the people who heard of these things and that was the whole of the hill country of Judah – God was not going to slip onto the earth unnoticed and, most importantly, unrecorded.

And I want to share with you a little something about Joy because we often talk about the joy of the lord.

People often confuse this with happiness but Joy is not about walking around with a smile on your face while the world throws at you everything it has. That is just an irrelevant mask and sooner or later it will crack.

Happiness comes from what is going on around you – the world is all as it should be.

Joy comes from within. It has nothing to do with what is going on around you because you know that everything is going to be alright. God is not only in his heaven but he is in you and so on his Earth – regardless of what the world is throwing at you. You have that sure and certain hope and that is why it is the joy of the Lord and only we can have it.

Awe, wonder and joy are the emotions of this season.

Luke 2:11 (ANIV)

¹¹ *Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*

In these weeks we need to ensure that our Christmas is focussed on what really matters – that saviour born as man.

Forget the “to do” list – it will get done or if not I doubt anyone will notice. Forget the cards that have got to be posted, forget the perfect party because it will be perfect because it’s your friends and family.

It is time to sit back and be overwhelmed by awe and wonder.

Think what it would have been like to have been there with the whole of the hill country atwitter about what is going on.

That is atwitter – a state of agitation or nervous excitement not the twitter you all know and some love. This is where that twitter got its name!

Where would you see yourself – in Herod’s palace? One of the foreign roman soldiers? A resident of Bethlehem making money as everyone crowds in? One of those who have come to be counted? A Shepherd on the fringes of society? It wouldn’t matter you would be atwitter.

You will be able to say with Simeon

Luke 2:30-31 (ANIV)

³⁰ *For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people,*

And

Luke 2:32 (ANIV)

³² *a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

Do you want that awe and wonder this season? You can have it although we do not deserve it.

We need to stop striving for the latest this or that; stop spending a fortune in the entertainment industry, avoid the snares of the online gambling industry. They only bring you fleeting happiness and sometimes not even that.

We need to stop our striving, stop our self-justification and allow the awe and wonder of what God has done to creep back into our hearts.

Whatever your role this Joy of the Lord reaches into all of the lowliest places. Jesus was born in a stable – a dirty, humble and lowly place.

Will you let that Jesus place a small light of joy in your heart? Will you nurture it and give it room to grow?

Remember

Isaiah 9:6 (ANIV)

⁶ *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.*

For unto **you** a child is born.!

For unto **you** a son is given!

And he is the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace and he will never end.

And he did it all for you!

Remember that this Christmas time.