**Midnight Mass 2024**

**Is 52:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-14:**

**God sent his Son so that in his coming to us we might see our salvation**

***14And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.***

For me, a regular highlight of Toddle Along on Monday mornings, is the chance to hold some of the youngest babies. I’m reminded again what babies are like: soft and sweet, and gentle and trusting. Of course, it is easy for me to hand them back when they start to noisily make their needs known!

At Christmas we remember how Christ the Son of God took on our humanity at the point when every human being is most vulnerable – when we are most dependent and helpless - as a newborn baby.

The Christmas story, with its strange cast of characters, is as comfortably familiar to us as a fairy-tale. But Jesus did not come to us just for us to keep him in our hearts as a baby, so that once a year, like the Christmas decorations, we could take him out to help us to feel warm and safe.

***The Word became flesh and lived among us.***

Why did Christ come to our world?

Christ, so much the self-expression of God, that John calls him the “Word”, why would Christ come to us and become flesh? Why would Christ, Christ the King, chose to come, not to a palace, but to a stable, and be placed in a manger?

Christ, who with the Father made our world and everything in it, did not come to our world to discover it for himself.

He ***already knew*** what people are like.

He ***already knows*** the best of each of us: our hopes and aspirations. Just as he ***already knows*** the worst of each of us: our flaws and our failings.

Christ was born into a human family, of aunts and uncles and cousins, and given the name Jesus. Jesus grew up and yes, because ***he became flesh and lived among us***, he knew what it is like to be human.

Jesus knew all too well the highs, and the lows, of family and community life.

Jesus knew the joy of friendship. He knew too, the grief of losing a friend, and he wept.

Jesus knew both the excitement of building and a team and leading it towards something new. And Jesus knew the pain of betrayal.

So this Christmas, if the stresses and strains of family life are taking their toll, Jesus knows how you feel.

If you are mourning the loss of a loved one, Jesus understands what that feels like.

This Christmas, if you have been disappointed by the response of somebody you love, you can know that Jesus understands.

This Christmas, if the future looks daunting; if you are apprehensive about what might be coming next, or if you feel that you’ve run out of road, and all you can do now is hope and pray … rest assured that Jesus also experienced times when the best thing he could do was to pray; to stop and to reach out for help, and just to hand over everything to God.

God’s Son ***became flesh, and lived among us,*** not for his own sake but for ours. So that all of us might see, in Jesus’ life, and most of all, in Jesus’ death on the cross, that Jesus could take on his own shoulders everything that we were meant to carry.

Jesus ***became flesh, and lived among us***, so that God’s plan for saving humanity, might be seen, in the words of Isaiah, ***in plain sight***, ***before the eyes of all the nations***.

He came, that we might, in him, ***see our salvation***.

He came as a baby, completely dependent upon others for everything, so that we might admit our own need.

Our longing to be loved, as human beings who are *still* vulnerable and in need of love.

Our longing to be able to put to one side all our pride, all our pretending that things are “fine”.

Our longing to be accepted as we are, with all our faults and our failures.

***And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.***

In Jesus, in the Word ***become flesh and lived among us***, we see both the grace and the truth of God.

We see ***the grace of God***, reaching out in love to us, to draw us close to him.

God telling us, through the birth, and life, and death and resurrection of Jesus, that he loves us as his children.

And we see ***the truth of God***, penetrating our hearts as only God’s truth can do.

The truth that, however hard we might work at being our very best selves, we can only find salvation through the one who knows us exactly as we are, and yet still loves us.

**God sent his Son to become flesh and to live among us.**

**That we might know his love for us.**

**That we might see, in him, our salvation.**

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