

**On-line Reflection Mid Strathearn Church 24th December 2020**  
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What a strange year!! How many of us have been confused, worried, concerned about the virus, outside our comfort zones when dealing with things and with people? How many of us have really struggled? How many of us just don't know what to do for the best?

Christmas is usually such a happy time full of joy: church services, meeting family and friends, going to the theatre, eating plenty of food and worshipping God. This year is different - this year is very different and is very unusual for us. Sometimes some things are different for some people - but not for the whole world.

Let us go back to the account of the birth of Jesus. Almost everybody involved was outside their comfort zones. They were surprised by events and were in difficulties. Firstly, it seemed that most of the world was travelling for this Roman census. We had the shepherds in the fields, watching over their flocks, minding their own business when suddenly a crowd of angels appeared in front of them and the angels told a story that was unimaginable. Then there were the Kings who had set off and travelled a long distance, looking for something different. And, of course, we've got Joseph, betrothed (or engaged if you like) to be married to Mary but not married yet and she was expecting a child. And then Mary herself, a young woman probably not much older than a child, suddenly had a visitation from an Angel and was told that she was going to become pregnant and that she would carry the son of God.

For us, Christmas means church services, carols, cards, decorations, parties, going out to see plays or films ... and this year will be very different ... this year restricted church services ... this year no parties ... this year no carols, only singing at home!!.

Have we been celebrating Christmas for years without fully realising the significance of the events? Has Christmas become turkey and tinsel, presents and carols? Have we separated Christmas from Christ?

Listen again to those words from John's gospel chapter 1 verses 12 and 13 "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

To those who receive him, not just acknowledge him, but receive him; they have the right, the legal right, to become children of God. Jesus is inviting us to become part of God's family. Not his wider family but his close family - sons and daughters of God. A loved child, without any doubts an offspring of the highest authority.

Do we appreciate what it is like to have a powerful father.. a father who protected us.. who guided us.. who supported us? Not everybody has a human father like this but we can all have a heavenly father who is even more powerful. A father who will support us forever – not just until we become adults, but forever.

Our heavenly father will support us, will encourage us, will protect us. It does seem to be "too good to be true" that we can become part of God's immediate family. But it is true, to those who receive him.. he gave the right to become children of God. Just as in a human family, we are all together to face the outside, so with God's family we are all together and we all do . all we can to keep the relationship going. Just as human family relationships can break down if somebody is selfish, our relationship with God can break down. But only if we chose the break!! God will not abandon us or ignore us.

So this Christmas time, while all is quiet, when all the extras are removed from the lives; let us concentrate on what is important – growing our relationship with our heavenly father. Talking to him, listening to him, reading about him, bonding with him. Then we will get closer, we will feel that love that he has for us, we will gain a direction and purpose for our lives.

Let us put Christ back into Christmas. Let us ignore the commercial, ignore the flippant and get back to celebrate that birth in a stable. A birth that led to our relationship with God being opened up or being restored. We will spend a Happy Christmas renewing and improving our relationship with our eternal family headed up by God, with his son Jesus and the Spirit of God. Amen.