

**St James' and St Peter's Churches, Birkdale**

# **Advent Reflections**



**Week 4 - Wonder**

The hours slide past, the days go on, and suddenly, it's Christmas! Every year I feel like it creeps up on me and I'm never quite feeling ready! **How ready do you feel for Christmas? How prepared are you? How has the waiting been? What are your expectations now?**

And now – I think it's right to pause. **To wonder.** To drink it all in. The bright lights, the beautiful trees, the family, the food, the carols and the celebrations. **Do we still wonder at Christmas?**

There were some shepherds out in the fields one night. Washing their socks, keeping watch. And, then an angel suddenly appeared in the sky and told them about this baby that had been born. They went to see for themselves and found the baby as the angel had described, lying in a manger. And when they had seen this, they went back to their fields, telling everyone what they had seen and heard. And then – the King James version says “all they who heard it **wondered.**” They marvelled. They felt the presence of God, they felt Christmas in its beginning – the closeness of God with us. They were in awe.

I think this is one of the things we lose in our celebrations of Christmas, and I think we should try to re-capture it. Christmas is the one time a year when more people than ever are thinking about Jesus. Even if it is just for yet another school nativity. - this year featuring a sentient tree and a herd of dancing elephants...

All of a sudden Jesus is on everyone's mind – whether they follow him or not. God-with-us Emmanuel. It's truly amazing this time each year that heaven comes to earth. From the beginning of the Christmas story to the end, it's wrapped up with awe, and **wonder.**

Wonderful things happen, wonderful events occur, angels, shepherds and visitors from the east. Dreams and visions. Star of wonder, star of night!

I **wonder**, if **wonder** is slipping away – each year Christmas starts earlier. Adverts and Christmas decorations flood the shops from well, August! We drift into familiarity and the trappings of the season.

**But pause for a moment again – and wonder.**

Phillip Yancey writes – “God exchanges omniscience for a brain that learned Aramaic stroke by stroke, omnipresence for two legs and the occasional donkey, omnipotence for arms strong enough

to saw wood, but too weak for self defence, instead of overseeing 100 billion galaxies at once, he now looks out at a narrow alley in Nazareth, a pile of rocks in a Judean Desert and a crowded street in Jerusalem.”

Who would come up with that? Who but God himself would do something like that?

The creator of the universe, the one who holds eternity in his hands emptied himself and took our form. The word became flesh. And became flesh to ultimately go to a cross and die for us. The Son of Man, God himself, came to seek and save the lost through the cross. Was born in a muck and messy stable to save us from the muck and mess of the world and our lives that we call sin. The world changed. Over 2000 years later we still speak of that birth, of that life. History was cut in half that day. Before Christ After Christ. BC and AD.

**This changes our lives too.**

I don't know if this is your first Christmas as a Christian, or your 50<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>, or 100<sup>th</sup> but there are far too many times when even as Christians we let the busyness of the season squeeze out the wonder of the God made flesh. During these next few days, look for the moments where you feel this sense of **wonder**, and try and hold them. When you see a Christmas light, a tree, or a turkey burnt to perfection, try and grasp hold of that feeling, **embrace the wonder**. Thank God for the light and hope given to us at Christmas.

**Take a moment to pause, and wonder.**

God-with-us, Emmanuel.

Praying that you have a wonder-filled, wonderful, Christmas.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How prepared for Christmas do you feel? How has the waiting been for you? How have your expectations changed this advent?
2. Read Psalm 33, what part speaks to you of wonder?
3. This psalm asks us to consider the earth and the heavens, leading us to wonder at creation. How much do we pause to do this in our day to day lives?
4. Have you made space this Christmas for wondering at this creator, the one spoken about in this psalm and the immensity of the “Word became flesh”?
5. The Shepherds were the outcasts of society at the time, and yet this Good News was revealed to them first, why might God have chosen to act in this way?
6. The way that God chose to announce the good news was as much of a surprise to the shepherds that night, as the fact that he chose to involve the shepherds in His story may be. Think about the different ways that we can share the news and wonder of Jesus coming into the world with people you know and love this Christmas
7. As these series of Advent reflections draw to a close, what is something you will remember and hold onto into the new year?

Resources mentioned in the video:

“Grace Notes: Daily readings with a fellow pilgrim” Phillip Yancey (Zondervan, 2009)