

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : December 25th, 2020
“Christmas Morning”

CHRISTMAS MORNING 2020

The Reverend Lucy Winkett, the Rector of St James Piccadilly and a writer and broadcaster tells this story: “I was standing in the olive wood souvenir shop in Bethlehem in the West Bank. With US dollars in my hand, I was haggling with the Palestinian shopkeeper about the carved wooden nativity set I thought I might buy. I liked it because it wasn’t too fussy; slightly abstract. For Christian groups visiting the Holy Land, there is always a desire to support the local economy of the “little town” where Christ was born. But I thought the price was too high, especially because, while the sheep, shepherds, Joseph, Mary, and Wise Men were all present and correct, there didn’t seem to be any Jesus. No crib. Perhaps as an indication of the residual power of the dog collar, the man started to justify the fact that there wasn’t a Jesus as part of the carved set. “He hasn’t been born yet”, “it’s bad luck to have an actual baby in there” and so on.

What both of us had missed was that the anonymous carver had placed the baby as a bundle in Mary’s arms. He was there all right, but I’d been too keen on getting a bargain to notice”.

It is all too easy in the world of today to overlook the baby in the celebrations of Christmas. Yet what we are doing this morning is quiet and simple and at the heart of today, We have gathered together to share in our Christmas Day Communion – to worship in silence at the child born for us and for all the world. Nothing else matters for this moment. What we are doing is at the centre of who we are and what we are. Whether full of faith or full of doubt, we have come together this morning to kneel in wonder at God made human. And that is enough.

I leave the final words to one of my favourite poets, John Betjeman. His final verse in the poem Christmas sums up everything we are here for this morning:

*“No love that in a family dwells, no carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
can with this single Truth compare –
that God was Man in Palestine
and lives today in Bread and Wine”.*

And for that single Truth – Amen.