

# Wrington and Lynch Chapels

## Minister's Website Article for December 2021

It's nearly Christmas! I hope your tree is suitably decorated. It's time to celebrate. But, before you do, think of the Christmas story for a moment. I don't mean the story about Santa and Rudolph, but the one about Jesus. Lots of things happen - stable, kings, donkeys, star, manger, and so on. What is your favourite incident?

I'll tell you mine: it's the shepherds. What a great story, because shepherds were amongst the lowest of the low at the time. If you think you're at the bottom of the pile, you're nowhere near as far down as these shepherds. Shepherds were disowned by the authorities, considered unclean, unable to join in the social events of their community, shunned, and so much more. There are several reasons for that, which you can look up.

If you read the bible, you'll see how the shepherds are described. The story says the shepherds are over the hill, in the dark. Do you feel like you are over the hill and in the dark? I know I sometimes do. I can get as depressed and overwhelmed as anyone. But then I think of the shepherds.

Remember, the shepherds are at the margins of society. They are also at the margins of the Christmas story - almost left out. They're probably around a fire, sharing beer, swapping sheep stories. Life is normal for them. They don't have a lot to look forward to except dawn and getting a meagre amount of pay. Then, suddenly, God says, 'Watch this!' and angels explode on the scene. What a surprise! There is great joy, a message of hope; a possibility of a future that could be changed, even for them. Even for them. And that's the point. Even for them. They're no longer in the dark. They're literally in the light, and invited into the centre of the story.

That's the whole focus of the Christmas story. Yes, it's cute, with a baby in the manger, but it doesn't end there. Jesus was born - God himself becomes flesh just like us - to forge a way forward for everyone. No discrimination. None left out. No one looked down on. Even shepherds are invited. Everyone has a chance to respond to God and say, 'Yes, I will follow Jesus into this new life.'

Isn't that great! That's why I like the story of the shepherds. It reaches everyone who feels they have been left out, or trodden on, or pushed aside. God doesn't ignore anyone. The offer of new life is for you, for me, for everyone who wishes to respond. Isn't it great that you and I are invited as well - into this incredible story of hope for the world.

I wish you the peace and joy of God this Christmas. May you hear his call for yourself.

Duncan