



First Sunday of Christmas

As I write this reflection, the exhausting task of the main Christmas food shop is still a recent memory - people frantically buying as if the shops are going to be closed for several weeks rather than a few hours. But by the time you come to read this, people will have been equally frantically dealing with Christmas left-overs, as they launch into New Year - however they are celebrating it.

Turkey stew, turkey curry, turkey soup. Potentially tasty meals - if the left overs can be assembled creatively before they end up in the bin. If only we could remember which is bin day, and what can be recycled, and what can't!! I don't know what is more stressful - the frantic buying or the frantic dealing with left-overs. Is this all there is to Christmas?

Of course not. People in their busy activity are often just trying to spread a little happiness in a dark and dangerous world, and to enjoy family life and friendships - even if they sometimes go wrong. But more importantly, those who realise that Christmas is all about Jesus, are celebrating (and trying to understand) the miracle of God coming among us, entering human life and bringing blessing and peace to all who are open to receive it.

The baby in the manger is a reminder of all this. But Christmas, the incarnation, is so much more than a one off event - to be forgotten when the decorations are packed away and the left-overs dispatched. Christians believe that Jesus was a human baby for just a little while, but lives on in our hearts and lives always and for ever. The same God who taught and healed, still brings healing and comfort - and the God who walked the path to the cross, died for the love of his people, and rose from the dead to give them new life and hope - still does this very same thing for us today.

I'm sure that I'll groan with the best of them when the Easter eggs appear in the shops in the coming weeks - if they're not there already. But then I'll have to remember what I'm saying to you now. Which is don't throw the baby out with the wrapping paper. The human baby Jesus was only here for a while - but the God he actually was, has come into human lives for ever, bringing light to the darkness and the hope of new life for our world. This is what people need - and this is the message we must carry to those who haven't heard it - or perhaps have heard it once and then forgotten it through suffering or despair. If we don't carry the good news of Christmas and pass it on - who else is going to? The decorations and the glitz will rightly be packed away for another year - but the deep down peace and hope and love which is God making his home in us - should be celebrated every day.