

Luke 2:10

I remember how once when I was quite young I was playing with some friends on a fallen tree. All was good until I slipped and fell. I was wearing shorts and the contact with the tree caused some cuts and a graze up the inside of my thigh – ow!

So I made my way tearfully home and was met by my Mum who bathed the wounds and then put some germolene ointment on. I was told it would soothe and heal but wow did it sting!

Now what has all that to do with Christmas?

Well let me ask you how the year has been for you? Has it been good? It may have been but I'm sure many of us have had some tough things to face this year, perhaps the loss of a loved one or an illness or loss of job or problems in a relationship. Then as we look at our world there's been sufficient bad news in the last year, the terrorist action in Paris twice in the year, the earthquake in Nepal, the Shoreham air crash and many other points of bad news. Then there may have been issues in your own life. We can draw to the end of the year a bit battered and wounded and often Christmas can be a bit of a balm. There aren't many Scrooges about who don't like Christmas.

Christmas makes us feel good doesn't it?

So it should because Christmas is about good news. So, in lives that sometime experience bad things, and in a world where so often the news headlines are bad we need good news.

In that reading we had from Luke we hear the message of the angel, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news".

Now I realise that tonight it doesn't seem like news this message of the angel. After all we have heard this many times before. However to all of us and especially to those who are hurting in different ways the word of the angel is news and it is a message relevant for us. The angel told of the one who had been born, "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born, he is Christ the Lord." Here is the news the angel spoke that a child has been born.

I saw my son the other day. Now you may think that is not worthy of note but it is to me as he lives the other side of the world and so I don't see him very often. He was born nearly 30 years ago and he is still with us, still part of our lives though he lives away from us.

When the angel announced a birth the first point of news was

1. that God had come to be with us. That's how John put it in that reading we had, "the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). When I fell off the tree I went home and Mum was there to be with me. If you are hurting today then the news is that God is with you. God was born as a man and as a man went through many of the experiences we go through. He knows our pains. But more than that Jesus did not come just to be with us. My Mum was with me but she did something and Jesus was born

2. to help us. The angel described him as Christ the Lord that is he is God. As God he can help us. What are you like in a crisis? I am definitely of the Corporal Jones school of dealing with a crisis and run round shouting don't panic. In crisis I am not much help usually because I have no idea what to do (water through the ceiling). The good news of the angel is that God has come to be with us to help. In that he is much better than germolene! One of the hymns we sing which you may know is "what a friend we have in Jesus" and it has the line "oh what peace we often forfeit O what needless pain we bear" all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." My testimony and that of many others here is that through prayer we have known the power and help of God in many situations of life bringing peace, comfort and healing.

Christmas is about good news and the good news is that God has come to be with us and to help us. However when my Mum applied the Germolene it did for a while sting and make my eyes water.

The good news of the angel also has that potential there is a sting in the message. What the angel said was "a Saviour has been born to you".

Sitting here in the comfort and warmth of this place we may think, 'but I don't need a saviour. OK the year hasn't been great but I'm not that desperate.'

Recently I saw the film 'The Martian' with Matt Damon in. It was the story of a man who on a space mission was left behind on Mars having been presumed dead, though he wasn't and then the attempts to rescue him. I think it was based on a true story – only joking!

You may think that was someone who needed rescuing but not me. I may need a bit of help to get through at the moment but that's all.

However the message of the angel tells us that is not so. God has a very different viewpoint. When my Mum had bathed my leg it helped then she got out the Germolene, I don't have shares in Germolene by the way. I immediately said I don't need that because I knew that it stung. But Mum knew what I needed. My friends believe me God knows what we need and in love he sent his only son to be a saviour. Our problem is more than skin deep. Our problem is our sin, our unwillingness to let God be God in our lives. That cuts us off from God and so to save us from the result of our sin God in love sent his son who on a cross would take the punishment we deserve so that we through his death might be forgiven and restored as God's children, so that we might be healed.

Now in these few minutes tonight I can only sketch out why Jesus came. If you want to know more please ask me for a leaflet, Christmas in three words and also in the new year we will be running an Alpha course on Tues evenings to explore what Christianity is about and there are fliers explaining that do pick one up.

Christmas is all about good news of God come to be with us and help us but more he came to save us.