

So we have had the baptism of Harrison and Harley. I wonder why Mum and Dad picked those names? I remember back to when my daughter had her first child we had a sweepstake on the name trying to work out what it would be.

We are aware that names have meaning. Martin comes from Mars the God of war, Sarah – princess, Ian is the Scottish form of John – gift of God.

Do you know what your name means? What hopes did your parents have for you when they named you?

Many of us when choosing names for our children will use some books. We may rule out some names because we associate them with people we don't like. We may talk to other family members.

In the past parents would give their children names that had meaning such as Grace, Charity, Hope but today we get Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lily, the daughter of Michael Hutchence and Paula Yates! Yesterday Mick Jagger named his latest child Deveraux Octavian Basil!

But by and large we parents will make the decision ourselves.

What we see in the passage we had read earlier from Matt 1 is very different but then the child being born was very different in fact he was unique.

So important was our understanding of the birth of this child that four times in the Bible we read of angelic messengers coming to explain what is going on. One of them, as we see here, came to Joseph.

The situation is described for us in rather delicate terms in v18-19. Mary, who was pledged to be married to Joseph was "found to be with child". Now we must be wary of reading between the lines but you can imagine there might have been a bit of an exchange of words and Joseph stumped off to his shed or workshop and took it out on a bit of wood. As he worked on the wood he probably thought about what he was going to do and being a decent guy, while wanting to do what was right by the Jewish law, he decided to annul the arrangement to marry but without any fuss which would disgrace Mary,

Then the angel came and his message to Joseph was for two reasons to explain the nature of this child who was to be born and the reason why he was coming. The message of course wasn't just for Joseph but through him to the whole of humanity throughout history, a history which is defined by the birth of this child as we have BC and AD.

## **1. The nature of the child to be born v20**

So there was Joseph, he'd made his decision but before he could act on it, "But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."" In short the message of the angel to Joseph was that all was OK because the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit who is God and therefore the son of God. Now probably that was what Mary had already said but I think most of us would take some convincing of this, hence the angel.

The angel explained how the pregnancy had come about and in that the nature of the child. It was so important that not just Joseph but we centuries later understood this. God wanted us to know what was going on. God was coming down to be with us to be a human. This child would be **THE** son of God. That makes him unique. I know every child is special but this one was unique. That is why we celebrate his birth each year.

A week ago yesterday I went to watch the mighty Kettering Town play at Cirencester and I and both the other fans rejoiced in a 6-1 victory. You probably weren't aware of the result even. However many will have been aware that this summer saw the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of England winning the Football world cup. But that is how it is isn't it. It needs to be a big anniversary before we celebrate. So the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Queen we might celebrate with party but not every year. However, with Jesus it is every year.

The message of the angel to Joseph was that Mary had not done anything wrong but that the child she was carrying was the son of God.

## **2. the reason for his coming v21**

Here is the question why would God come down to be a human? If we are honest there are points when being human isn't all that great. But for God to come down, down, down, down to be born a man? Why did God humiliate himself in this way? Again we need the help of the angel if we are to understand what God was doing.

I was back in the dentist's chair again this week. I look round and see all the equipment and wonder what it is for. But then of course most of what she does I can't see so she talks to explain what she is doing. I'm not sure she really understood why I laughed when at one point she stepped back away from the chair and said "OK give your jaw a rest". People here have been wanting to say that for years!

Again God wants us to understand what is going on and so he spoke to Joseph through the angel, ““She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.””

Can you see there the reason God the Father have through the angel as to why God the son had come? He came to “save his people from their sins.”

That is what his name means – the Lord saves. It is all in the name Jesus.

Some years back when she was in her teenage years our daughter Anna was opening her Christmas presents. She got one from her godparents and it was a cuddly robin. She hurled it across the room and shouted “what do I want with a cuddly robin?” It became a family joke, we think the godparents got some presents mixed up.

But as I say the Jesus, meaning the Lord saves, came as a man to save us from our sins we might say “what do I want with a saviour?”

And that if not in thought certainly in action is what most of us say. We ignore this gift of God and in so doing are saying “what do I want with a saviour?”

In so doing we are in effect saying to God you got it wrong.

But friends that isn't God. God doesn't get things wrong.

Far from it, God knows exactly what we need.

As someone once wrote, "If our greatest need had been information . . . God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology . . . God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money . . . God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure . . . God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness . . . So God sent us a Saviour."

God knew what we needed. He knew that there is no way we humans who are sinful, we know we are, can be acceptable to a holy God. So he sent his son the only one who because he was sinless is qualified for the task. On the cross he took the penalty we deserve for our sin so that through him God the Father might look on you and I as sinless and we might be saved, restored to God as his children. This is the only way and this was why Jesus came.

Jesus – the Lord saves.

### **3. The offer of Christmas**

On Christmas day after the service we will drive down to Plymouth to see our daughter, Chris her husband and the grandchildren. She has also asked us to go down in August to help while Chris is away. Can you imagine me getting there in August and Anna saying, “Dad

I'm so glad you've come. Will you please go and open the present you left under the Christmas tree. The pine needles are everywhere and the kids keep trying to climb the tree." It wouldn't happen would it?

Christmas is about God's gift of salvation and honestly I am baffled as to why people would not want to be forgiven and not want God as a friend and Jesus as a ruler. It is beyond me. Friends here is God's Christmas present to us and my plea is that we don't let another Christmas go past without taking this gift which God has given to you.

Please don't think it doesn't matter. God the Father seems to suggest it does matter by sending his son into the world. Jesus seems to suggest it does matter because he died a death he didn't deserve so that you and I can be forgiven.

Just think how many Christmases you've celebrated and sung about this one who was born and died for you without actually accepting that gift.

What's in a name well in this instance everything, Jesus – the Lord saves.