

John 1:12-13

Midnight Dec 2012

How are you feeling now about Christmas – pretty relaxed because there is little more that you can do? If those who will be cooking tomorrow will excuse me just have a little thought for those of us who will be working tomorrow. I mean I'm having to work three days this week whereas everyone knows Vicars only normally work one day a week!

But we are on the very cusp of Christmas Day and I may have said it before but I do enjoy this service. The others are great because I love working with the youngsters and having fun and creating surprises but this service I enjoy for the quietness and the opportunity to reflect upon Christmas and what it can mean for us.

So now if I may and if you will bear with me and follow where I'm going I want to look at just one verse from the Bible.

Here at Christ Church we take the Bible seriously. We see it as God's word which comes down the centuries to us and is relevant to us, teaching us what to believe about God and how to live God's way.

The verse I want to look at tonight were in the first reading we had, John 1:12.....

### **1. Received v12a**

I wonder how many presents will be received by people tomorrow? It is a huge part of Christmas and even if we recognise that that is not what it is about we still get caught up in it. Yet one thing strikes me and that is that as we get older we are much happier giving than receiving? People ask me what I'd like for Christmas or my birthday and I say "don't bother I don't need" anything which may well be true or the things I need well I can get for myself.

We are often not good at receiving. Just occasionally someone will say to me Ian that was a great sermon and I struggle to know what to say. I feel embarrassed I don't receive compliments any better than gifts.

But tonight we think about the great gift of God to us in Jesus and here in v12 John, who was one of Jesus disciples and lived with him, talks about those who received him and then explains what he means by saying who believed in his name.

Down the centuries many people have done that in countries around the world. They have believed in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord or as it is sometime put they have received him.

Many people and perhaps some of us would say as I do when asked about presents "but I don't need" Jesus. God has a different view which is why he sent his son.

Some years ago we had a Christmas orphan stay with us. Well she wasn't really an orphan just a girl from New Zealand whom Anna had met and would have been on her own at Christmas. We didn't

know her but Anna spoke to us about her and assured us she was nice and indeed we had a good time with her.

For many people that is how they come to believe in or receive Jesus, through a friend recommending Jesus to them and those friends do it because they know from experience that following Jesus is of supreme value.

This friends is the heart of Christmas, the child born in Bethlehem who birth we celebrate each year came to be more than a reason for a party.

Many people have pitched up here over Christmas. They have sung the carols and so on. But then, I fear, Jesus is put away for another year along with the crib scene that they may have as part of their Christmas decorations.

If you could imagine it, it is a bit like having a baby and then leaving it in the maternity hospital and perhaps popping back every couple of years patting a baby on the head and going away. A baby is for life not just for birthday. Jesus came not just so we could celebrate his life but so that his life could affect ours. Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day, "I came that they might have life and have it to the full." I understand tomorrow the Queens message will be in three-d. Jesus here is speaking about living life in every dimension and especially a spiritual one.

God doesn't ask us what we would like for Christmas but every year he offers each of us the same gift, eternal life through his Son. In the same way our daughter recommended her friend to us I would recommend my friend Jesus to you and encourage you if you have not already done so to receive him. During the early part of 2013 here at Christ Church we will be have a number of events and activities to help people discover just who this Jesus is and how we can receive him for ourselves.

## **2. Result v12b**

the result of receiving Jesus this way is we become children of God.

When our New Zealand orphan left us she said that what she had really enjoyed was just being accepted into the family and treated just as one of us. When we receive Jesus, God's Christmas gift to us we become John says children of God, part of God's family.

Some years back I went to Ipswich to hear Billy Graham at one of his meetings. I wanted to get some photos. When I got to the ground security was pretty tight and I was told that without a press pass there was no way I could get close enough to take photos. As it happened I then met a man who was Chairman of the Billy Graham organisation in this country and was a member of our church. I explained the situation to him. He wrote a note and said, "take this and it will get you into the press enclosure."

I did what he said and it worked. I accepted who he was and what he had done. I trusted that completely. I didn't try and add to the note or say anything to the security people. I just obeyed what he said and I got in. I recognise it was a privilege but one I was happy to accept.

If we receive Jesus in the way we have just been thinking then the result is we are accepted by God as his children holy and blameless in his sight. It doesn't matter what was there in the past, the death of Jesus is sufficient to pay the penalty for our sin. Through our trust in Christ his death on the cross in our place we are given the right, the privilege of being children of God.

For a couple of hours through my pass I was a press photographer. For eternity through Jesus I am a child of God.

Roy Wood and Wizard got it wrong and right when they sang "I wish it could be Christmas every day", because Jesus didn't remain a baby. He grew up and was put to death on a cross. Yet they got it right because he came to be Emmanuel –God with us and that means we can know his presence and power in our lives each day.

Noddy Holder and Slade also got it right with the lyrics from their song, Merry Christmas everybody when they sing, "So here it is merry Christmas, Everybody's having fun. Look to the future now, It's only just begun."

I hope that you will all enjoy tomorrow and certainly when it gets past midday and I have finished here and can sit and chat with my children and play with my grandchildren I'll have fun. But then there is the future with God to look to and through Jesus we can each know that our future is secure, "to all who received him to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."