

Christmas 2020 10am  
Titus 3.4-7; Luke 2.8-20

When I was a little girl – a long, long time ago! - an essential part of Christmas was reading Little Grey Rabbit's Christmas by Alison Uttley. I never tired of hearing about Little Grey Rabbit and her friends, Squirrel, Hare, Moldy Warp and Fuzzy Peg. And it's still in print! But traditions change, and watching the Muppet Christmas Carol is part of a new family tradition. It's a great film adaptation of Charles Dickens novel, telling the story of Scrooge's transformation from a miserable miser to a generous caring man.

I guess most families develop their own traditions over a period of time. There's something special about doing the same things every year. This year, sadly, for so many people it will not be possible to gather together in the way we normally do.

Nevertheless, much loved decorations have been carefully unwrapped and lovingly placed on trees, signs of love, bringing back memories and offering signs of hope in what has been a difficult year for

everyone. There is no doubt this has been a year of anxiety, loneliness, and loss in many different ways. It's been tough for those working in the NHS, in hospitals, in care homes, in schools, in shops providing essential goods, and we thank them. It's been tough for businesses forced to close, then being able to reopen, only to be forced to close once again.

And if we look at our Christmas gospel reading, it can't have been a very easy time for people in those days either. Life was hard; the people of Israel were living in an occupied country. They longed for a way out and pinned their hopes on a long-promised messiah, one who would free them from roman rule other words, they wanted their sovereignty back.

We can imagine too how it might have been for the shepherds that night, as they protected their sheep, alert for any danger. No wonder they were terrified at the appearance of an angel – they probably thought it was some sort of predator! The angel had good news of great joy for them, and not just for them, but for ALL people. The birth of the saviour was not just for the inhabitants of a small nation, but for the WHOLE world. They were told where to find this saviour, at

which point heavenly singing broke out around them. Oh, that we could join in safely!

The shepherds rushed to Bethlehem to find the child. Not a very sensible thing to do, on a dark night. It shows how much trust they placed in the message they had been given. They just had to see for themselves. I wonder how we would have reacted had we been there on that night. Would we have been as trusting? Might we have done a risk assessment and waited until first light? But they couldn't wait to share that news with everyone.

God's plan took everyone by surprise. God sent a tiny vulnerable child into a world that was as messy as ours is today; the saviour of the world was born in humble surroundings, not in a grandiose palace. This birth transformed the world forever.

This story does not change. We are still celebrating the good news of God's love, but in a different way this year. The light of Christ still shines into the darkness of this year, bringing hope. The white candle in our advent wreath reminds us of this. Jesus our Emmanuel: God with us.

In our darkness today, the light of Christ still shines. It cannot be extinguished. That's the message of Christmas. Yes, many things have been cancelled. The truth of the Christmas message cannot be cancelled.

As the poet Christina Rossetti wrote:

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

The Revd Jackie Lock, Associate Priest