

WEEKLY SERMON

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A very messy Christmas

“The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”
Luke 1.10-11

For many of us it can be a huge amount of hard work and stress getting ready for Christmas but by the time you read this I hope your preparations for Christmas are nearly all complete. Decorations up, good food ready to eat and gifts to exchange. However, if like me you feel a bit under-prepared then you are in good company because the preparations for the first Christmas were not ideal either.

Heavily pregnant Mary and her fiancée Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted so that the government could increase taxes. When they arrived the city was packed and so they ended up out back in a stable. It was there in the muck and mess of life that Jesus was born.

This birth that changes all human history was then announced by a great angelic choir. Oddly, this heavenly host declare the birth of the Saviour not to the great and the good, not to community or religious leaders but to smelly shepherds on a hillside. Once they got over their terror (I'd be terrified too if an angelic choir filled the skies while I was out on Lancashire's hills), they rushed off to Bethlehem to see the new-born baby. It's a messy scene that Luke paints for us of that first Christmas. A baby born in a stable, to a vulnerable couple a long way from home, only to be visited by shepherds they've never met shortly after the birth.

The world around us pressurises us into thinking that Christmas needs to be perfect but the only perfect thing that first Christmas was the Christ child. The circumstances of his birth look messy to us but it is into the mess of this world that Jesus comes to do the ultimate clean up – cleansing us from our sin so that we can be in a healthy relationship with God and with one another. So don't worry if your Christmas is a bit messy – the first one was messy too. But however messy your circumstances, stop like the shepherds and gaze in awe that the creator of the universe came as one of us to save us that first messy Christmas.

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