

The Perfect Christmass!

Isaiah 527-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 11-4; John 11-14

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth.
(John 11⁴)*

Not only did Oliver Cromwell ban the celebration of Christmass (except in a muted, miserable liturgy in Church without colour or candles), he specifically made it illegal to eat a mince pie on Christmas Day! According to Lord Denning (a previous Master of the Rolls) this law has never been repealed. Although you may imagine that, having endured such restraint (in public at least) since 1649, the Christmass of 1660 would have been as extravagant as people could afford - and would have included eating mince pies of Christmass Day!

What would you have to have included to make a Christmass perfect? The absence of a General Election and all the empty promises may be a good start! The problem is that so often people end up disappointed in their attempts to create the perfect time for family or friends.

That look that betrays the fact that a gift wasn't exactly what had been expected or wanted; finding that the shops have run out of pigs in blankets or the means of making them; people changing plans and not turning up; the shadow of illness or bereavement that makes the day less than perfect.

But the simple truth is that Christmass is a celebration of imperfection - all of it prophesied by Isaiah:

✠ The infant Jesus is **the messenger who announces peace.**

The Afghan Conflict began in 1978 and in this year there have been 41,735 deaths; in the Mexican Drug War there have been 17,608 deaths this year; in the Syrian Civil War there have been 10,257 deaths in this year; in the Yemeni Crisis there have been 20,882 deaths in this year.

We have lived with the continual threat of inflammatory remarks from the President of the United States leading to full-on warfare and the Israeli Palestine conflict continues to claim lives and displace people.

Conflict begins when one side thinks that its own interests are more

important than the lives of those on the other side. The Christ-child turns that on his head as the one born to live and die as the one who held his own life as secondary compared to the needs of the world.

✠ The infant Jesus is the one **who brings good news.**

China and freedom of information; Hong Kong and the freedom to pursue democracy; the progress towards the impeachment of the President of the United States; North Korea; Prince Andrew being sacked by his mother; and of course Brexit. These have been the stories that have dominated in 2019. None of these are 'good news' stories.

The Christ-child **is** Good News - of God intervening to change the world, which he does by changing one life at a time and bringing both justice and peace.

✠ The infant Jesus is the one who **announces salvation.**

One of our granddaughters, who loves to dress as what we used to be able to call a Tom-Boy was being subjected to be measured against festive dresses and mouthed to her father over her mothers' shoulder 'Save Me!'

The Christ-child opens up the possibility of us being saved from ourselves and rested from the mess that is our life by dealing with the sin that harms us and alienates us from God.

The perfect Christmass really isn't about the possibility of being arrested for eating mince pies! It is about dealing with imperfections honestly - and so we are transformed and the world is transformed through us.