

## Christmas Day - 2013 8am St Aidan's & 9.30am Wesley

Reading: John 1:1-14

Text: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."  
(vs 14)

### Introduction

Well here we are on Christmas morning, enjoying the freedom of worship in our wonderful land. We come with a variety of Christmas traditions. For some we look forward to sharing the day with family and/or friends. Some of us look forward to our traditional turkey with the trimmings and a Christmas pudding.

In our house we have the tradition of seafood, mostly cold with salads and a wonderful cassata, an Italian layered ice-cream dessert that Annette makes. Once we tried to change the menu, however we were told by our children that it just wasn't the same – it wasn't Christmas without the cassata and the crab and salmon dish. It is amazing how quickly traditions begin and how hard it becomes to change them!!

Some of you will have opened Christmas presents already, others are waiting until after church, or until families/friends come so there can be a present sharing time. In my childhood family home, as children we were allowed to open what was in our Christmas stocking when we were all awake, which was pretty early, but then we had to wait until the Davidson lunch to share presents with the gathered hoard, and it was a mob of between 35-45, because my mum was one of 7 children and when her sisters and brother and families and extras got together it was huge!

Some of you may well say today, well we haven't had the Christmas story in our readings today. I want to hear again the story of Mary and Joseph and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem so long ago. Let me assure you, we had that last night at the Christmas Eve service leading into Christmas Day.

However this year is one of the times where the set reading of the Gospel is from John and John adds a different perspective. At the outset there are faith statements made about Jesus, his relationship with God and with us. Let us take a few minutes to reflect on John 1.

### John 1:1-14

1. Firstly, we read odd language for us today.

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (vs 1).

The Word ('logos' for the Greeks) is a term not only of the spoken word but also of the unspoken word, the word still in the mind – often thought of as reason. When the Greeks applied this to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. Jews on the other hand, used it as a way of referring to God. Thus the writer of the Gospel of John used a term that was meaningful to both Jews and Gentiles. So here at the beginning of this Gospel, we have the fact that these writings were meant to reach beyond the Jews to those who had found or were seeking faith.

2. Secondly, we read;

"In him was life, and that life was the light of men or mankind." (vs 4)

This theme of 'life' is mentioned some 36 times in John's Gospel. This is a major theme. Life is seen as a gift of Jesus. Often 'light' is also mentioned in conjunction with life as the positives of knowing not only who Jesus is but also

accepting the gift of his 'light' which is often seen as lived out knowledge. In Christ is the spiritual illumination and so we have the saying, "Christ, the light of the world." This is part of the expected hope of the Christ child, the one who would lead people out of their 'darkness'. This is part of our Christmas celebration

3. Thirdly, even in spite of John heralding the way for Jesus not everyone believed. This is still the case and we need to continue the message of John the Baptist to herald Jesus as the Christ, the promised one of God, Immanuel which literally means 'God with us'.
4. Fourthly, we are reminded that to 'all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God'. This is God's grace, a free gift. Note that it is not simply receiving Jesus it is also believing in Him. One is a mental assent that doesn't necessarily follow through with any action. There is both the receiving and believing. You can receive a gift, but unless you take it, unwrap it and use it, it is useless. So it is with God's gift to us in the form of Jesus our Lord and our Saviour.

### Conclusion

Sometimes it is good to look at traditions and see what is useful and what is not. Sometimes we become so familiar with the Christmas story that we fail to see the true meaning behind it.

Having John's Gospel for us this Christmas morning reminds us to take seriously the life, witness and ministry of Jesus, his relationship within the Godhead and the challenge to live out our faith as people of 'life' and 'light'.

Come to us afresh this Christmas, O Lord, and challenge us in our faith life. Amen.

### Let us pray

God of unconfined glory, you constantly surprise us with your gifts of grace. We praise you for your astounding Bethlehem Word: Jesus, born of Mary, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Because of this sacred day, all other days have become sacred also. Blessed are you, God of Christmas, our hope and our joy, Immanuel! Glory belongs to you this day and every day. Amen.