

The Second Sunday of Christmas John 1: 10-18 / The Epiphany Matthew 2: 1-12

People will sometimes comment that Christmas is all about the children or that Christmas isn't the same without children .

I would certainly agree that the level of excitement that will have happened in a household with children in it this Christmas probably outstripped the excitement levels of adult only households. But I would always gently want to push back and say that Christmas is not just about the children. It's not just about the excitement of Father Christmas or presents under a tree. The celebration of Christmas, which as a church goes on beyond the last present being unwrapped, is about so much more.

It is about the wonder of God Incarnate. It is about the gift that Jesus Christ, the Word, was and is, to the world.

And yet, it is about children - or rather, who children will become.

The shepherds and the wise men were all prompted in various ways to look for a child.

The shepherds were told by the Angels to look for a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a Manger.

The wise men were prompted to follow a star to find a child.

Neither of these groups of men went looking for a baby that they could coo over, or a child that would make them laugh or entertain them. Rather they went looking for a child because of who he would become.

The shepherds went looking for the child because they were told that he would be the Saviour, the Messiah.

The wise men went searching for the child because they had seen a sign, in the form of a star, that signalled that the King of the Jews had been born.

Even Herod sent others to look, not because the young child was to be a problem for him, but because of who that child would grow up to be - the Messiah.

The celebration, or in the case of Herod, the fear, of the child Jesus, was not because of what he did in his younger years, what he did in the manger in Bethlehem, or what he did when the wise men found him, but it was about what this child Jesus was going to do. It was about the promised future. It was a new beginning which would fundamentally change everything. The birth of a child which would change the world and God's relationship with the world forever.

Saint John captured this change in the very first chapter of his gospel.

'To all who receive him (Jesus), who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God'.

The child would give others the power to become children – children of God.

This wasn't to be the gift of everlasting youthful looks, or immaturity, or even boundless energy. This was a chance to start again - to be born again - not a physical rebirth - but a spiritual rebirth - not of blood, or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man - but a chance to be born again through God - a chance to become children of God .

The Christ child gave all of us the chance to become children again - the chance to become beloved children of God.

And this is something to truly celebrate.

We celebrate the gift of one child - we remember the celebration and gifts brought by the shepherds and the wise men - but we celebrate too, the chance we all have to be children - children of God.

And as with the child Jesus, it is about what we will grow to become.

The child Jesus grew and fulfilled his destiny. He was the Messiah, the one who had been promised for so many years. The potential and the destiny which the shepherds and the wise men celebrated and worshipped as they greeted the child Jesus was fulfilled as he grew.

As we are given the gift of becoming children of God by the Christ child who would grow and ultimately give his life for us, how do we respond? Who are we destined to be? As children of God how do we make our heavenly father proud of us? How do we grow to reach our full potential? How does a child grow to be the adult?

Well, this is why Christmas doesn't stop this week. This is why Christmas doesn't end because we pack the tinsel and the trees away again for another year.

As children of God it is our task to continue to grow - continue to mature - continue to discover more and more about what it means to be a child of God. This is not a quick task, but it is a lifelong task of seeking, learning, and growing everyday of the year - not just for the 12 days of Christmas.

The Christ child grew to become a man and to fulfil all that God asked him to do. As children of God we are called to do the same - to grow and to fulfil all that God asks us to do.

Christmas is very much about children it's about a child born in a stable who people came to worship - and it's about each one of us who are given the chance to become children of God.

As the trimmings and trappings of Christmas get put away for another year let us not put away the Christ child, let us not forget the gift of being children of God and instead, commit to strive and grow each day of this year as we journey with the Christ child into 2021 and beyond. Amen