

## Christmas is Coming

- Expectation and anticipation
  - holidays, chocolate, traditions, carols, decorations, smells, presents, no exams...
  - mostly look forward to it - though there are stresses!

## What did Christmas mean for Jesus?

- Do we forget to ask what his experience was like?
  - beyond the cuteness factor of images like this!
- What did he leave behind?
  - heaven, glory, joy, comfort, relationship with his Father....
- What did he take on?
  - even for his day, giving birth in a stable **wasn't** as good as it got..
  - human frailty, hunger, cold, pain, frustration, grief...
- On that cold night in the stable, Jesus was humbling himself, surrendering everything, becoming nothing so that we could gain everything. He was beginning that journey of sacrifice that would cost him dearly.
  - that would take him through the travails of his ministry... disciples who didn't understand, who let him down, fickle crowds, opposition from religious authorities, oppression along with his people by the Romans...
  - ultimately to the Cross, to the betrayals, the physical and psychological pain of an unjust trial and cruel torture before the ultimate agony, the spiritual pain of bearing the full weight of our sin and its resultant separation from his Father in heaven!
- *All of this is what Christmas meant for Jesus!*

## Your attitude should be...

- Look again at the phrase that introduces the hymn that Paul seems to be quoting here:
  - *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...* (v.5)
  - doesn't that makes you uncomfortable? Does me! Should you...
  - try reading the passage again and putting yourself in Jesus' place...
  - *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.* (2 Cor 2:14)
  - no escaping the cost of this call - a call to surrender, to give up my rights, to lay all my desires, dreams and plans down to follow Jesus
  - harks back to Jesus' familiar statement in the gospels: *'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'* (Mark 8:34)
- **Makes Christmas sound like the most depressing time in the world!**
  - why on earth would we celebrate a call to die?!
  - the writer of Hebrews: *'Because of the joy set before him, (Jesus) endured the cross, disregarding its shame'* (12:3)
  - what was that joy that enabled Jesus to suffer so much? It was the joy of freeing us from sin and death and reuniting us with our loving Dad in heaven! That was what Jesus was doing on that cross - it is a place of victory!
- **That victory is for us too - that's why we celebrate at Christmas**
  - this why we can have joy in the place of surrender
  - the Christian walk is a call to lay everything on the line for Jesus - dare not deny it
  - but reality is that when we lose all that we hold on to, we gain all of Jesus
  - we get to share in his victory, his joy, his love, and his incredible father-son relationship with God
- *The best Christmas present ever!*

