

Colin

WELCOME

- Chance to stop and reflect on what Christmas is all about.
- In a sense, more traditional feel - lessons, carols, prayers...
- Chance to get a feel of the whole story, or the big sweep of it:
 - not absolutely everything, but main thrust of the narrative.
- As we move through the service, we will start with the actual accounts of what happened, the narratives from Luke and Matthew;
 - later we'll explore something of the significance of those events, as far as the rest of the Bible is concerned.
- **????** from **Fintry** is going to come and bring us our first reading:

Fintry (CM?)

READING: Luke 1:1-4, 26-38

Fintry (CM?)

SING: CH3 176 - Still the night

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PRAYER

- for a quiet, peace, joy, trust like Mary!
- Magnificat: (not quite sure how I used this originally; in the prayer? read by me doing linking? can't remember!)

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."
- Account moves on - not only was Mary told, but so was Joseph.
 - Mary - Luke; Joseph - Matthew: complementary accounts, different eye witnesses, wrapped together like cords of a rope.
- And in response to God's message, Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, obedient and trusting.
- Folk from **Strathmartine** and **Mains** are going to come and read the next two readings:

Strathmartine

READING: Matthew 1:18-25

Mains

READING: Luke 2:1-7

Mains

SING: CH3 174 - While humble shepherds watched their flocks

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- Jesus Christ has arrived, slipped into this world with only a handful knowing of his coming.
- How did he immediately impinge on this world? What impact did he make, even as a babe in arms?
- Two groups of people came to visit the infant - the shepherds and the wise men.
 - possibly as much as a year apart - long journey from the East!
- They came, drawn by God's revelation of His Son's birth.
- And what did they come to do?
 - Worship him.
- Bow, sing, run down the hill, tell other people, give precious gifts - all signs of their worship.
 - each one gave of themselves, gladly, for one greater than they lay before them in Mary's arms!
- Folk from **Downfield South** and **Mains** are going to come and read the accounts of their visits:

- DS **READING: Luke 2:8-20**
- Mains **READING: Matthew 2:1-12**
- Colin
 - May God grant that our response to his coming amongst us, not just at Christmas but throughout the year, is the glad worship that marked the shepherds and the wise men.
- Colin **SING: CH3 172 - O little town of Bethlehem**
- Kenny **PRAYER**
- for a world oblivious, for people oblivious to Christ's coming
- Colin
 - In a sense that's the end of the story - pack up the tinsel and the trees, take down the cards and finish off the turkey - it's over for another year!
 - What lasting significance did it all have?
 - a nice story to be repeated year in and year out?
 - losing freshness and credibility and impact by over use?
 - Let me ask you a question:
 - did anyone note the birth of Ghandi? of Martin Luther King? of Nelson Mandela? of any other great statesman or revolutionary down through the years?
 - No: each one born in obscurity, in a village or town no one had heard of...only after they rose to prominence did anyone take any interest in their birth, their early years.
 - Not so with God!
 - With God, the significance was explored and (partially, at least) explained beforehand - hundreds of years beforehand!
 - Running like a strand throughout the OT, like a musical theme echoing throughout its pages, picked up and repeated in fresh ways, is a promise:
 - someone's coming - from God - Messiah - his promised Saviour - bringing a rule of goodness and justice and closeness to God...
 - not just the general expectation of someone coming (wishful thinking, might say the cynics) - but a number of particular promises about where and how this Messiah would be born, how he would live, how and why he would die...
 - The accuracy of these prophecies, made several hundred years before, is staggering.
 - Equally staggering is the breadth of vision for what this promised one would accomplish. Let's listen afresh to these promises, knowing them to be fulfilled in Jesus' birth, as someone from **Chalmers Ardler** comes and reads us just a very few verses from some of the OT prophecies:
- Chalmers Ardler **READING: Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7**
- Chalmers Ardler **READING: Micah 5:2-5**
- Chalmers Ardler **SING: CH3 165 - O come, O come, Emmanuel**
- Colin
 - Prophets looked forward - and expressed their vision mostly in terms of a super-king, super-shepherd, super-protector - earthly categories amplified as much as they could.
 - Several of the NT authors look back on Jesus' coming and reflect on the significance of his coming.
 - John expressed his grappling with the immensity of it all in terms of the Word - a divine category, not normally applicable in the philosophy of the day to mere humans - taking on flesh!
 - God stooping down and becoming one of us.
 - This promised one would be great, mighty, and so on - but to be those things in a way that could be effective in saving us, God had to assume our humanity, take on our frailty, live out a limited, human life.
 - So we hear John's words from the prologue to his Gospel, as someone from **St Kilda Road Baptist** reads from John chapter one:

St Kilda **READING: John 1:1-5, 10-14**

- Colin
- Great joy and great courage and great confidence - those are the results of beginning to comprehend the significance of all that Jesus did as he came to be born in that stable 2000 years ago.
 - The OT prophets saw beyond the Messiah's coming - they saw something of the results of that coming.
 - They saw a picture of the light God has blazed forth into this dark world:
- and of the beauty of God's people reflecting and bearing that light out!
 - Final reading, a few verses from Isaiah again, where the prophet shares his hope for the reaction of God's people to the Messiah's coming - read for us by someone from **St Luke's**:

St Luke's **READING: Isaiah 60:1-5**

St Luke's **SING: CH3 369 - God and Father, we adore thee (some verses!)**

Mains **PRAYER**
- that we might arise - shine - reflect the glory of the Lord!

Mains **SING: CH3 191 - O come, all ye faithful**

Mains **Benediction**