

- *Don't look inside the Puzzling Parcel yet!*

Introduction

- Christmas is great, and getting presents can be fantastic:
 - but there are times when we are disappointed!
 - perhaps when we open a duplicate present...
 - or when there's something we've wanted, perhaps even asked for, and no one gives us it...
 - or maybe, for some, there are disappointments with the people we have to spend it with - family who we "need" to see, but whose company can be difficult...
- **It may be hard to admit it, but sometimes Christmas can be disappointing**
- We are going to enter the first Christmas story through the eyes of three people who had reason to be disappointed:

Joseph

- Hoping to get back home from Bethlehem quickly, and back to my carpentry business...
 - and having to go there in the first place just so the Romans could make us pay more taxes - that's what the census was for
 - and then when we got to Bethlehem there was nowhere to stay - ended up in a stable!
 - Mary was about to have the baby, and I was fed up - we couldn't find somewhere to sleep, never mind somewhere safe and warm for the baby to come...
- *Don't look inside the Puzzling Parcel yet!*

Shepherd

- Poor career choice/shepherd
 - these days as if you didn't do well at school, and ended up stuck in what felt like a dead-end job...
 - night shift
 - smelly sheep, Temple rulers excluded us...
- One cold night got fright of our lives:
 - lights, and singing... petrified...
 - voice said, "**Don't be afraid - a Saviour has been born to you**"
 - (could do with a Saviour; Romans are really oppressing us...)
 - "**He is Christ the Lord. You will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying in a bed of hay...**"
 - (hmm, doesn't sound much of a Saviour. And when we got down to Bethlehem there was a baby - a very ordinary little baby. His parents were nice enough, but... it was disappointing! Not at all like Isaiah's prophecy that they read out at synagogue had made me expect!)
 - it was special, but how can a baby save?
- *Don't look inside the Puzzling Parcel yet!*

Simeon

- Waited and waited and waited
 - old, my bones creak... has God forgotten?
 - with the Romans and their oppression, so hard to believe Isaiah's prophecy will ever come to pass
 - yet God said I will see it with my own eyes!
 - then a dad and a mum clutching a new baby came into the Temple while I was there...
 - and I felt the nudge of God's Spirit that this was the one...

- the dad? No, the baby...
- I thanked God - and prayed God's blessing on the babe and his parents
- but this was not what I'd been expecting...

Disappointed?

- Three disappointed people
 - and yet, God came to them, used them as part of his coming...
 - there were still questions, but their disappointment was... *going?*
 - though they'd have had to wait another 30 years before they began to see fully what all this meant
- *Now you can look inside the Puzzling Parcel!*
- Open parcel - small candle
 - disappointed?
 - but light of the world in darkness (lights off?)