

Welcome to another short meditation, that we as chaplains produce for the University. I'm Dafydd Job, the Welsh Evangelical Chaplain. And yes, we've arrived at that time of year which Christians call Advent. We're in those weeks leading up to Christmas. *'Tis the season to be jolly* are the words of the old carol, but everyone says that Christmas this year will be different. Although we may wish for a jolly time, it seems that we cannot escape the fact that this has been a really difficult time for many, and the new year may promise a change as the scientists promise a vaccine, but it's not going to be quite the same this year. Advent has traditionally been a time of preparation – preparing for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ. Usually when people ask if you've prepared for Christmas what they mean is, have you bought all the presents? Have you got the decorations up? Have you ordered the turkey and all the other food and drink? But this year those things will be a bit muted with fewer parties, and no longer the opportunity for get-togethers with friends and extended family. And with the insecurity regarding health, employment and the economy some might feel there's not much to celebrate.

But for those of us who follow Jesus there is much to think about. Firstly of course we remember that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and though we don't really know the time of year this happened, the important thing is the news that God has entered our world, as Scripture tells us, the Saviour of the world. Then there's a looking forward, to Jesus coming again, returning to the world, as the Bible again says he will. That time he'll be coming not only as the Saviour of those who believe in Him, but also the judge of the whole world – and in a time when many have been protesting about the injustices of the world, both in the past and in the present, there is comfort to know that a time will come when all wrongs will be put right.

But there is another coming that we remember – the coming of Jesus into our own hearts. When He came two thousand years ago there was no room at the inn for him, but following his life, his terrible death on the cross as an atonement for the sin of the world, and his resurrection on the third day we are invited into a living relationship with him – a heart relationship which calls for our faith, or trust – a relationship where we may find peace with God as he shows how our sins and failings may be forgiven, and a relationship where he becomes our Lord and master – a concept which seems odd in our times, yet he is the best master that any could imagine.

At a time when we realise that we can easily lose those things which we associate with Christmas – the presents, the parties, the companionship – why not take time to think of the One who promised to give us life that we cannot lose. There's an old carol that I often turn to at this time of year:

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown,
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity:
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus! There is room in my heart for Thee.

May you have a good and blessed Christmas