

Sermon – Christmas Day – 2020

Content: To read the First Christmas Poem. To talk briefly about the first Christmas and today. For Tony to open his presents. Sanitiser, mask, and a tape measure. To say the three words – HANDS – FACE – SPACE. To relate the three words to parts of the Christmas story. To ponder about the Shepherds in the story. And then to ask ourselves some questions. To remember the words – HANDS – FACE – SPACE.

Intention: To make room in our busy lives to receive Jesus!

Outcomes: From hearing the words, HANDS – FACE – SPACE – to be drawn towards God. To have them as a daily reminder.

The First Christmas by Marian Swinger

It never snows at Christmas in that dry and dusty land.
Instead of freezing blizzards, there are palms and
drifting sands,
and years ago a stable and a most unusual star
and three wise men who followed it, by camel, not by
car,
while, sleepy on the quiet hills, a shepherd gave a cry.
He'd seen a crowd of angels in the silent starlit sky.
In the stable, ox and ass stood very still and calm
and gazed upon the baby, safe and snug in Mary's arms.
And Joseph, lost in shadows, face lit by an oil lamp's
glow,
stood wondering, that first Christmas Day, two
thousand years ago

It's Christmas Day today.

A Christmas day with a slightly different feel after the year we have all had. It's a Christmas Day we have all longed for. Waited for and hoped for.

Of course, our Christmas will be different to the first Christmas.

But is it?

In the first Christmas we find, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, in the stable, with a feeling of awe and wonder.

As we sit here today, I wonder if we are experiencing those same feelings. Let's see how we can.

One activity people really enjoy at Christmas is opening presents.

Me and Tony were rushed this morning.

We didn't have time to open ours.

So instead, I have prepared Tony's Christmas stocking for him to unwrap now.

It's very exciting! He had written an extra long list!! I wonder what he has.

(Invite Tony up - Tony to collect the stocking and open in any order!!)

Tony: Oh (trying not to be disappointed) – it's hand sanitiser (holds it up)

Alison (excited) – I know Tony – hand sanitiser – you can't get enough of it... I thought it would be handy for you.

Go on – do the next one...

Tony: Oh (*trying not to be disappointed*) it's a mask...
(holds it up)

Alison (excited) – I know – a mask – and look it's got a Christmassy design... and it is your colour too! Lovely isn't it?

Go on – do the next one...

Tony: Oh (*trying not to be disappointed*) – a tape measure (holds it up)

Alison (excited) – I know Tony – a tape measure. For all those DIY jobs around the house! It will also help you to keep a social distance – I thought it would be a great addition in your tool box!

I hope you like them.

These gifts, sanitiser, mask, and tape measure, remind me of a phrase that we are hearing and asked to apply quite a lot at the moment...

Hands, Face, Space!

Hands, space, face remind us how we can all keep safe this winter –

BUT, Hands, Face, Space! can also remind us of the true meaning of Christmas.

The **Sanitiser** is for **hands**.

This morning day we placed the figure of Jesus into the manger.

At Christmas we remember that God placed Godself into human hands as a baby – as Jesus.

A gift given to everyone.

We **give**... but we also **receive** presents;

we were given the Christ child,

and all we are asked to do is to receive him.

Hands open.

Are our hands ready to receive this most precious gift?

Next, we have a mask

The **mask** is for the **face**.

At Christmas we remember that Jesus shows us who God is.

And how God wants us to live.

Jesus reveals God to us – you could say that when Jesus was born it was almost as though God took off a mask.

Are we ready to be truly ourselves and look for Jesus?

And finally, we have a tape measure.

The **tape measure** helps us to keep **space**.

At Christmas we remember that God didn't keep his distance...

not even a social distance.

Jesus was born among us – close to us, a part of human lives.

And by His Holy Spirit Jesus remains close to us today.

Are we ready to invite him to share life with us?

Hands – face - space

I often wonder about the shepherds in the field that night. Tending to their sheep as usual. Amazed, stunned, and surprised.

As an angel appears to them.

As they are instructed to go to Bethlehem to '*see this thing that has taken place*'.

The shepherds stopped.

They listened.

They made **space**.

And through these actions, the Shepherds encountered God in their place of work!

Not in a synagogue or temple.

Not in a place where spiritual things are 'meant' to happen.

And then God takes them to the most ordinary of places, a stable.

I wonder whether one of those shepherds have reached into the manger ...

and held their **hand** out to baby Jesus.

I wonder whether Jesus reached back and held onto their finger...

God's **hand** in a Shepherd's **hand**...

I wonder if their gazes met as their faces faced each other.

The Shepherds recognised that in the ordinariness of our everyday lives, God is at work.

The question for us is: -

In the busyness of our lives today, how can we stay focused on the manger?

One answer is to remember those three words on the tip of our tongues – **hands** – **face** – **space**. Three words said in the ordinariness of our everyday lives.

After the year we have all had,

I wonder if this this Christmas can be for us, just like at the first Christmas, a time of wonder, of amazement and awe as we too, gaze upon the baby?

BECAUSE...

We can always come **close** to God;

We can always be our real selves with God, we need **NO MASK**

And we can place our lives into God's hands and be used by God to bring his saving love to the world

Let us receive the Christ child into our hands, our hearts, and our lives this Christmas.

And may the joy of that gift shine into your lives, this day and always.

Remember – **hands – face – space**

Let us pray...

Lord God, as we welcome you this Christmas and celebrate your birth,

help us to pray that your kingdom may truly come, and all creation celebrate your presence among us through pain and happiness.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Child of the crib and Prince of peace. Amen

Our Christmas picture was drawn by Jaiho Patta, aged 11 (Roots)

Jaiho says, 'This piece of art represents how Jesus is born in 2020. There are three important roles. First, the nurses and doctors. These are representing the angels at the time of the birth. On the left you see the Magi. They represent the people who find the vaccine cure. On the right, there are the vulnerable people. They represent the shepherds guarding their flocks at night. Finally, in the middle, Mary is giving birth to Jesus and Joseph accompanying her.'

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