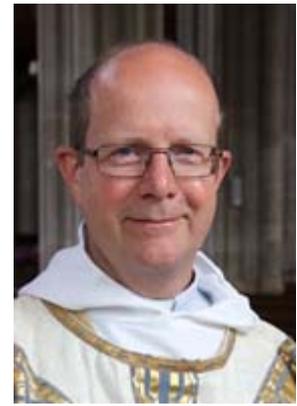


Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - December 2022 - January 2023



Dear Friends,

On the wall of a house near the Market Square in Saffron Walden is a small plaque. It reads: "On this spot in 1834 nothing happened." It's not true. I know.

Round about 2022 years ago in a quiet backwater of the Roman Empire nothing happened either. And that's also not true. Well, kind of.

Certainly nothing happened that made the front pages of all the papers (if they'd had newspapers in those days). And if a few people were interested in the events that began to unfold at that time, for the most part they kept fairly quiet about it. No-one slipped a brief note to Rome, warning them of what was to come. Even when a strange group of foreigners turned up at Herod's Court, we're told the initial response was, "Oh yea, there's something written about that somewhere in Micah."

The significance of that first Christmas was only understood much later on. At the time it was, for most, just another day. Even for those who were involved, the birth of a baby was nice, but not exactly rare. If the child survived infancy they might just begin to become interesting, but that was still a way off. An ordinary couple had a child, and they probably were not the only ones. Some shepherds caused a bit of a kerfuffle, but no-one paid that sort any attention. The wise men may not have arrived for a couple of years.

Heaven, it would seem, was found in the ordinary. That's often where it is found today. This Christmas heaven will be found in a person giving you a smile and a bit of space in a busy Christmas shop. Heaven will be found in a children's nativity play, performed with a great deal of commitment, but perhaps a little less skill. Heaven will be found in the recognition that the giver is more important than the gift. All of that is important, and all of that is wonderful.

Yes, heaven will also be found in beautifully crafted carol services, and exquisitely thought-through gifts, but at the heart of the Christmas message is this simple idea: That God breaks through into this world, not so much into the great and majestic things, but into the ordinary lives lived by ordinary people. You and I are of interest to God, and in a way that might astound us.

When, after the life of Jesus, the message of this Nazarene Carpenter began to spread, part of its power was the audacious idea that God was on the side of the ordinary. In a world where great power was held by a few, who seemed less and less accountable every passing year, this was good news indeed.

In God's new economy there are no ordinary people, and there are no ordinary days. You would be very welcome to celebrate that at your local church this Christmas, in ways ordinary and extraordinary.

Happy Christmas

Jeremy

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