**Christmas is for the family**

Christmas is for the family, especially children, grandparents, mothers-in-law, uncles & aunts, pets….There’s family presents, family meals, family games etc. with a sound track to go with it.*Amazon* sell a digitally re-mastered CD of songs featuring the voice of Dennis Day (who?) that reinforce this truth that Christmas is for the family.

The opening verses of John’s Gospel talk about how Jesus was born into a human family, how he became flesh and blood like us,and came to live with us - it was like he ‘moved into the neighbourhood’(John 1:14). Before I came to Wellspring there was an expectation that the minister would *live* in Wirksworth - not just occupy a house but *live:*be involved in the community, identify with it and be part of what goes on here. This is the sense in which Jesus came to *live* among us, to become part of the human family.

The gospel that offers these deep thoughts doesn’t speak directly about the birth of Jesus, but other writers tell of the strange visitors this new family received - the lowest of farm workers and some weird stargazers from far away. Their place in the story shows how *all* are welcome to this family celebration.

But perhaps stranger still were the gifts that were offered. One of them, myrrh, was associated with death as an embalming ointment. It seemed this pointed towards what the future held for *this* baby. Not a glorious future as a king in the worldly sense, but the harsh and cruel death we know he endured on a cross.

So Christmas and Easter are connected. I once put an Easter Egg in our freezer so I could get it out to illustrate my Christmas Day sermonand make this very point! We celebrate the birth of Jesus because of what happened at the end of his earthly life, and because of the new and everlasting life he offers as a gift to all.Pope Francis has *said ‘God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it’*

So how *do* we understand the gift of Christmas? Well how about this:

In Jesus, God came into our human family so that we might become fully part of his family - as children, daughters and sons of God, for ever.

What a gift!

Have a blessed Christmas

Kevin