

COMMUNITY CAROL SERVICE

SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER 2008

Lovely to see you all and **welcome** to our service.

Our **theme** as you will have noticed from the **posters** is ‘Don’t Hide from Jesus this Christmas’! It may seem **amazing** that such a thing is possible, because Christmas signs and symbols are all around us, with Christmas decorations and messages!

But the reality is that we **can** be very **involved** in Christmas and **yet** hide from the real Jesus, whom it is **supposed** to be **all about**. For human nature, that is **not surprising** – because, right from the **start** of human history, mankind has been hiding from the **reality** of Jesus and who He is and why He was born!

The **first mention** of ‘hiding’ in the Bible is Adam/Eve just after they **disobeyed** God, they **hid** from Him! They used to **enjoy walking** in the Garden with God – but not now. They foolishly tried to hide from Jesus – but no one can! *"no creature is **hidden** from **His** sight, but **all** are **naked** and **exposed** to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* [Heb 4:13] The Psalmist said “***Where** shall I go from Your Spirit? Or **where** shall I flee from Your presence?*” [Psa 139:7]

Christmastime is a **lovely time** – I truly love it. Even in the **business** world I found **kindness** and **goodwill** in the very places where there was **rivalry** and **cheating** going on! It seems, people **do** feel they **need** to do something special at Christmastime and if not, they often feel **guilty**! So some folks.....

Give specially **large presents**! But still hide!

Making-up and **forgiving** someone! But still hide!

Employers will give employees **time-off**! But still hide

We may **promote** “*peace on earth*” and **disarm!**

Do our bit for the **environment!** But still hide!

Families will **unite/feast/entertain** each other!

Make **great sacrifices** to right some wrongs.

Some people will go to a **Church service!**

All that is wonderful and I hope we will do all these things and more - but we can do **all** that, and **feel** we **have** ‘entered’ into the real **spirit** of Christmas – and yet **hide** from the real Jesus!

Hiding from Jesus **means** we **avoid** asking the obvious questions about Christmas and answering them. **Who** is Jesus anyway and **why** all the fuss? Did He make any **difference** to us by His coming? Hiding from Jesus at Christmastime is **simply** eating, drinking, giving presents, having a holiday, relaxing – **and that’s it**, we return to work on the 5 January!

Then asking our colleagues ‘Did you have a nice Christmas?’ No mention of Jesus and why He came in the first place! That’s hiding from Jesus! I think Jesus **must** be **very hurt** up in heaven, every Christmas! Do you? Jesus = ‘It’s all because of Me – yet it isn’t about Me at all, at all! I am just not in it’!

Thinking of it **rationally**, **if** Jesus **is** real and **has** a heart and mind like ours, and He is up in heaven **watching** all that is going on, He **must** be **grieved!** Because all that is going on is nothing but **hypocrisy!** It’s not even a poor ‘pretend’!

It’s not simply ‘missing the mark’ for we are not **aiming** at worshipping Jesus, we have **substituted** Jesus with **hedonism**, pleasure seeking, **self-indulgence!** For many, Christmastime is nothing more than an opportunity for **self-gratification!**

Getting that thing you **always wanted!** And very often we get it at **all costs** and go into huge **debt!** Christmas without Jesus.

Talking of hiding from Jesus, there is a Woman in the Bible

who tried to hide from Jesus. She was **good** woman, a very good woman. She had faith, the real faith in Jesus. She believed in His **power**. She had an **internal** haemorrhage that really troubled her. She went to Jesus - **secretly** and was healed. She was so **relieved** and **delighted**! After 12 years, having spent all she had, she is now finally cured! She **steals away**! She doesn't want anyone to know about it! But Jesus does not let her get away without acknowledging God's goodness to her. He asked "*Who touched Me?*" [Mar 5:25] and she came and said it was her. Jesus wanted her to acknowledge the **source** of blessing.

You know, she was doing what a lot of us do – we receive blessings and we try hide the fact it was Jesus who gave them to us! Did you have **breakfast** this morning? Did you have **lunch**? Did you **hide** the fact it was Jesus who provided it? Did you **thank** Him for it?

All the **presents** we will receive next week come from Jesus. Bible says "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights*" [Jam 1:17] We **need** to say 'Thank You' to **God** as well as the person that **He** '**moved**' to give it to you!

Perhaps of course, you are here, really and truly, **wanting** to **worship** Jesus. Or maybe even **seeking** to **know more** about Him. There's a man in the Bible, who many might have **thought** he was **hiding** from Jesus – but he **wasn't**! He was actually seeking to know more about Him. He was a **bad** man. He was a very **wee** man! He had to climb up a tree to see Jesus!

When Jesus came along He **stopped** at the **tree**! To all **appearances** it looked like Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus – but do you know it was actually Jesus who was seeking Zacchaeus "*Salvation has come to this house.....for the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost*" [Luke 19:9]!

Christmastime is a **reminder** of **Jesus coming** to 'this house',

to this ‘seedy’ **world** – and He came to seek and to save those who are **lost!** The whole ‘idea’ of Christmas is Jesus coming to save us from our sins! That is what His name means. Jesus **has come**. He is ‘knocking at the door’. Are we going to pretend we are not in? Are we going to pretend we don’t hear Him. Are we going to **hide from Him?**

Be **assured** of this: there is nothing to fear! The **story** of Christmas and **Zacchaeus** is in the Bible to **encourage** us! So that the **very worst people** to come to him.

Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus **would** come to his house!

The **crowd** were surprised too! They could **not** understand!
Such a shame!

“Come to Me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”! God has **invited** us to come to Him and receive the forgiveness/love.

Enjoy your Christmas – every bite of turkey, every sip of wine (but not too many sips), remember every good thing is a taste of God’s love in Christ – and don’t hide from Jesus!