

Let me confess from the outset that I am a complete sucker for Christmas—I love the soppy films, the millionth rerun of 'A Christmas Carol', the colours red, green and gold put together, the bright lights—all of it. It probably has a lot to do with the lights shining in the darkness of the long winter evenings and nights.

I love singing Christmas carols, the way that the story is told through verse and music. I love the way that the children's Nativity plays reduce grandparents to tears. All the glitz and all the tinsel.

But none of this—none of the countless garden centre displays, the blaring Christmas pop music, arranging parties and family visits, the worry over the size of the turkey—none of this is what Christmas is really about. Christmas is about God coming to Earth. Coming as a defenceless baby so dependent upon those around him. Leaving his heavenly home and his complete divinity to depend upon others for food, warmth and love. Christmas is about God loving us so much that he became human and lived among us, wanting us to turn to him, to love him and to build a relationship with him. We should never forget that the baby in the manger, so cutely pictured on Christmas cards, is in fact God. St John famously said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life." (If you are wondering how God became his own Son please don't worry—we can delve into that at another time.)

And this is the real story of Christmas, the fact that we have a God who loves us so much, who hates to see us act in demeaning, violent and angry ways, and who in his great love came to Earth to help us find our way to Him more easily. He came to shine as a light into the world which was dark—and despite everything the dark could do it has never overcome that wonderful light. God loves his creation and He wants us to spend eternity with him.

So please have a very joyful Christmas—lots of light, colour, music, family, friends and turkey — but don't get so carried away with all the preparation, the gift buying and the card writing that you forget why we celebrate this wonderful birth every year. Emmanuel—God with us.

We look forward to welcoming you and your family to one (or more) of our Christmas services to learn more about the true meaning of Christmas and to enjoy the carols.

Rev Glynis Beckett