

Christmas day 2020

First of all Happy Christmas! Thank you for taking time out of your festivities to join us in thinking about the Christmas story today. You all know the Christmas story right? Every year we hear about it in school, in church, on the radio or on TV. We read about it and sing about it. You might even have heard it told lots of different ways, from the point of view of the shepherd, or the wise men or even the donkey! But have you ever stopped to think how strange it is?

God chose to be born as a baby. On the face of it, this seems like a crazy idea, a baby can't do anything for itself, it needs help with everything. God chose to be born as a helpless baby, because he wanted to be able to identify fully with what it meant to be human. He was a baby who cried and relied totally on his parents for food, shelter and care – just like we did. It's probably not how you'd have chosen to plan it, if you were God ... is it? It's a bit of a risky strategy!

You might have thought God would have chosen someone famous or special to be his parents. But instead, he chooses an ordinary teenager. Mary would probably only have been 12 or 13 when she found out she was going to have a baby. She wasn't married, which would have meant people treated her unkindly when they found out she was pregnant. She was an ordinary girl, not rich and powerful. And she wouldn't have had a clue how to look after a baby. But God chooses ordinary people, even when we might think there's someone better for the job.

Jesus was born in a stable: God could have chosen anywhere on the planet to be born. A stable probably wouldn't have been our first choice. It was probably noisy, smelly, and not very private. It's unlikely to have been particularly comfy for Mary and Joseph: and being put in a manger instead of a cot probably wasn't all that comfy for the baby either ... When wise men came to look for the baby (they appear later in the story), they knew they were looking for a king, so they headed straight for the palace, only to find no sign of a newborn and an irritated King Herod who didn't like the idea of another king appearing from nowhere to threaten him. Once again, God chose to act in a way that no one could have or would have expected!

The wise men gave Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. Not very useful presents! You must know the joke about what would have happened if there had been 3 wise women, They would have asked directions Arrived on time Helped deliver the baby cleaned the stable brought practical gifts and made a casserole. The wise men gave the baby these presents because they each said something about who Jesus was: the gold symbolised that he was a king; the frankincense was a perfume used by God's people when they worshipped him, and symbolised that Jesus would help people to get to know God better; and the myrrh (probably the strangest gift of all!) was used when people died to stop the body from smelling, symbolising Jesus' eventual death on the cross.

The things God had planned at Christmas weren't what anybody was expecting – they were even better. By being born as a baby, God showed us how much he loved us. That's why we're celebrating. Happy Christmas and have a lovely rest of your day!