

# John 1.1–14

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## *In the beginning*

Amington

Monday 24 December 2018

Midnight Communion

### **In the silence**

In the silence of Christmas morn  
The Word was spoken; a baby was born.  
In the darkness of Christmas night  
A baby was born: the world's true light.  
Into the silence, the Word was spoken.  
Into the darkness, the light has come.

I don't know about you, but 'silence' is not usually a word I associate with Christmas. 'Noisy', 'busy' perhaps, or 'exhausting', not empty, but 'full' of Christmas dinner! 'Darkness' is also rare at Christmas these days, we have so many lights!

But no matter how full, busy, noisy and bright our Christmases might be, without Jesus there is something missing. Without Jesus, Christmas may as well be empty, dark and silent.

# Receive

The simple message of Christmas is this: a baby is born.

It doesn't get much more normal than that. At some point, in each of our lives, someone has said almost exactly those words about us.

I had the privilege of visiting my best man and his wife, the day after the birth of their first son, Isaac. He was so tiny, he felt so fragile as I held him, this new life, come into the world 36 hours earlier. Jesus was exactly like every other baby when he was born: fragile, tiny, utterly dependent upon his loving parents.

When we receive a baby, our life changes *forever*.

The first thing that changes is the amount of sleep you get... then things like what you buy, what you talk about, where you go on holiday, what car you need, how often you can see your friends.

Receiving a baby changes everything for their family – but pretty much everything else in the world stays the same. And it was like that when Jesus was born, too. Mary and Joseph's lives changed forever, and I doubt the shepherds ever forgot the heavenly choir singing on the hillside – but rest of the world? It carried on as before, oblivious to the wondrous miracle in Bethlehem.

And it's easy for the same thing to happen today. Christmas is so full of wonderful things – decorations, presents, food, family, fun and games – that it's easy for us to let the baby Jesus change the lives of Mary and Joseph, while *our* world carries on as before.

## **Believe**

Jesus was exactly like every other baby that has ever been born. But he was also completely unique, unlike *any* other baby.

This is the beauty of the opening words of John's gospel. Matthew and Luke tell us about that first Christmas night: *how* it happened and *where*, *who* visited, and what happened *next*.

But John, John tells us what it *meant*.

This baby, born like every other baby before or since, was the Word of God made flesh. Somehow, in Jesus God became a man and dwelt for a while among us.

In Jesus, God shines in the darkness of this world.

In Jesus, God speaks into the silence, the hurt, the pain and the suffering of the world, and says, 'I am with you.'

In Jesus, God gives us the light and life we all need.

To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name,  
[Jesus] gave the right to become children of God.

*John 1.12 (NIV)*

Receive... and believe.

Like any other baby, we need to receive Jesus with open arms. We need to welcome him, make him part of our lives. He will change things forever – but in a wonderful and blessed way, like a baby.

But unlike any other baby, John invites us to *believe* in Jesus' name. He invites us to put our trust in Jesus, to lean our whole weight upon him, to rely on him, stand firm on his solid ground.

Because this baby was God's Son, come down to earth to lift us up, to bring forgiveness and life to all who receive and believe in him.

## **Born Again**

To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name,  
[Jesus] gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

*John 1.12 (NIV)*

The phrase 'born again Christian' has negative connotations for some people, who associate it with over-eager, 'happy-clappy', in your face Christians. While that stereotype may contain a grain of truth, in reality *all* Christians are born *again*, born of God, rather than their human parents.

John uses the picture of being born because it is dramatic, it marks a change, a new beginning, a fresh start. In the same way that being born is the *first* step of life, not the last, so being born *again* is the *first* step on the journey of faith, which lasts a lifetime.

And like being born, it's not something we do to ourselves – it happens *to* us: only God can do it, only God can bring someone out of darkness into light, out of the world and into his family.

Being made children of God is a wonderful gift, which God gives to all who receive, welcome, put their trust in and rely on Jesus.

So although tonight we remember Jesus being born to Mary and Joseph 2000 years ago, it's my prayer that some other births happen this Christmas time – not in a hospital, but in our hearts. It's my prayer that we will come to Jesus, receive him with open arms, put our trust in him – however tentatively at first – and so be born into God's family this Christmas.

Because, however many wonderful presents you will receive in the next few days, the best present you could ever receive is to become a child of God.

When a baby is born, for the parents it isn't just a bit of upheaval for a day – *every day after that is different.*

And in the same way, being a Christian, being a follower of Jesus, a child of God, isn't just a bit of upheaval once in a lifetime, or a couple of times a year – *every day after that is different.* The journey of faith lasts a lifetime.

God never promises it will be easy – in fact he guarantees it will be hard. But – and this is a much better promise than for things to be easy – he promises to be with us, no matter what.

May Jesus be a part of our lives, not only on Christmas night, but every day, in every way.