

Sunday 16 December 2007 - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

**Carol Service Reflection
Ordinary People meeting an Extraordinary God in Ordinary places**

Nick Allan

The Christmas account is probably familiar to many of us. I'm not going to ask you to think about it again in a brand-new way necessarily this year... I haven't discovered a dramatic new twist to the Christmas message which you will receive exclusively and free from my lips over the next 10 minutes.

In fact, I'm going to reflect about ordinary things tonight. Ordinary people, ordinary lives, ordinary days. Just like you and me. Because what strikes me about the message of Christmas, is just how ordinary those folk were who got swept up into the path of the most extra-ordinary God-event ever to hit planet earth.

Of course, Christmas Day itself isn't ordinary – it celebrates the divine creator of the universe touching earth in the form of a human, and changing human history from that point on. But the key figures in the bible account of that event are, to my mind, actually very ordinary – and I want us to take heart from that, and reflect briefly of what that means for ordinary Joe-soap you and me, today, this year, this life.

Really the Christmas account is one of 'Ordinary People meeting an Extraordinary God in ordinary places'.

The Main Players in the Christmas account

Mary & Joseph at the birth – just normal teenagers (the photo suggests what they might look like today!)

Scared at the prospect, Joseph has taken the plunge and stuck with his fiancé even now she is pregnant. They both lived to a great extent, ordinary lives throughout – never famous, rich, refugees in Egypt for a season (Matthew 2:12-14)



Just Ordinary people, getting on with life – Joseph making a living as a carpenter

- Yet in their midst was the most extraordinary young man, who the bible records as showing great wisdom even in his teens
- And at the end of Jesus' life, as he was executed without a fair prosecution on the cross, a terribly poignant image of his mum... still watching, still involved, but just an ordinary mother unable to stop what must have been terrifying circumstances to witness for her.

What about the Shepherds? – normal working class men, rugged, skilled, brave, bored perhaps, loners perhaps. Ordinary men, fairly low down the social-pecking order of the day.

- Surprised no doubt to encounter an angel – speaking to them only, in the bare isolation of a hillside at night
- Over awed I'm sure - Especially when a whole company of angels appeared, singing praises. Heavenly beings, radiating



- light, have just lowered themselves to speak to me! Most extra-ordinary!
- Intrigued by what the angels said. Curious.
- Obedient too - they run down the hillside to find out if the extra-ordinary experience they just had was real, if the angels were telling the truth... They found the 'King of the Jews' – in a manger.

What about the early Disciples? (Peter, John etc.. the ones who wrote the books)

They were found by God in the workplace (may surprise some of us)

- Peter, James & John were all fishermen
- Very ordinary. Whose lives were radically turned around by encountering this extra-ordinary man Jesus
- And following him around then encountered extra-ordinary miracles – healings, actions which defy the laws of physics. In the midst of their normal lives around them



Ordinary People meeting an Extraordinary God in ordinary places.

What about us?

So what about you and me? I like to think I'm unique and special in some ways – we all are. God made us that way. At the same time, my wife Marjorie likes to keep my feet on the ground and reminds me just how far I still have to go to be perfect!

At root – we're regular folk, just wanting to make a good job of this one life we get, living in the 5th largest city in England for the time being. Aspiring to do the best for ourselves or our family

If the message of Christmas tells me anything it's this – that God who is utterly extraordinary, wants to meet and love ordinary people like you and me. We don't have to be special, we don't have to be good.

And the bible, plus my own experience following Jesus for a few years, tells me that God can meet and change us even in the seemingly most ordinary of circumstances. At work, at college, at the kitchen sink, in the pub, in our neighbourhood. Sometimes in extra-ordinary ways – we see physical healings in KC which you can't explain through science alone – they are the touch of God.

The question perhaps is – are you open to that idea? Are you open to the possibility that there is a extra-ordinary loving God who is reaching out, even now, to meet you in your ordinary circumstances?

We may put limits on where we think God can work, or wants to work..... but just think of those shepherds! They probably did too, and the extra-ordinary God chose to move regardless – and showed them a sight that perhaps the holiest of holy-men on earth today may never see – a company of angels singing praises to God and telling of the most dramatic God-event happening in a small town in northern Israel that night.

Isaiah 9:2 (we heard read earlier) and John chapter 1 – talk about Jesus as a ‘light shining in the darkness’.

I don’t know where you are at tonight...

- You may feel that God is irrelevant to your situation or life history
- You may feel like there are dark places in your lives or hearts where God wouldn’t want to reach or you wouldn’t want him to see into (often people say to me, ‘I’m too insignificant for God to worry about, or ‘I’m not good enough...’)
- Actually – the Christmas account is simply one of ordinary people, even insignificant people in the world’s eyes, finding God. Even better.... God finding them.

That’s why we’ve chosen to close our service with a celebration song – ‘Joy to the World’.

Because at the heart of Christmas is great news – that even the most ordinary people like you and me can meet the extra-ordinary Jesus in ordinary places if we choose to.