

Hope is delivered into uncertainty

People were anxious; living under the rules of a foreign government with corruption rife. A nervous nation with a rebellious population unsure of what the future may hold. Uncertain people. Uncertain times. Looking for a way out – looking for hope.

This could be many points in history. There are elements that ring true today. But it was the world that greeted Jesus on the day he came into the world. The prettified Christmas card version of the Christmas story hides the harsh reality. Jesus was born into poverty in bleak surroundings in dangerous times.

This is the aspect which makes the story massively compelling. The events surrounding Jesus' birth would not seem massively out of place in the Game of Thrones. A despotic king ordering the slaughter of hundreds of innocent children. Magi travelling miles to be caught up in the political intrigue of the royal court. Mary and Joseph smuggling the new born away on a dangerous flight to Egypt. You almost couldn't make it up.

It needed to be this way! For the story of Jesus to make any sense to us today and indeed at any time, his birth and life had to be a realistic tale of human experience and struggle - not a fairy tale. A story we can relate to and find our place within it; a story to speak to our generation as it spoke to the generations before us and will continue to speak to the world long after we are gone.

Because at Christmas hope is delivered into uncertainty. And that's what people are looking for. Hope! Hope for meaning, for a better, kinder and more compassionate world, a world where there is no more war, and hope for the what next – is death the light going out, or is there more?

From the very beginning, God promised Jesus would come and herald in a whole new world. This is why the angels accompanied his birth – Jesus IS the 'glory of God'. When Mary kisses the cheek of her baby son, she's kissing the face of God. The child will grow and teach us how to be fully human, fully who we are. He will teach us how our slate can be wiped clean, how to start again and how we can lay down the things that weigh us down. He will show us what it is to have freedom, peace and joy in our hearts. This is his gift to each of us at Christmas, when we simply say, 'Jesus, I need you! Jesus I want you! Please make your home in my heart'.

In the silent place of our heart, Jesus will give us assurances and the hope that we long for.

This Christmas, as you receive his gift of immeasurable love, be thankful!

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