

One of the phrases that is sometimes bandied about at this time of the year is “Christmas comes but once a year – thank God for that!”

A phrase that can have two completely different meanings, depending upon how and why it is said. So let us unpack (or perhaps I should say unwrap) that.

It has been suggested that early Christians in this country hi-jacked the Pagan Winter festival and began to use it as a celebration of Christ’s birth. As I look out on our world now I would suggest that more and more these days in the West it is being reclaimed! Many people now celebrate Christmas without really knowing why, other than it’s a good excuse to eat and drink, often to excess. A time to party in the depths of winter. We even have a large supermarket chain claiming “Christmas – we make it”. People know it is a time to give and exchange presents, often making large holes in their finances or even borrowing to cover the cost of Christmas.

So they may well say “Christmas comes but once a year – thank God for that.

As Christians however we do Thank God for that, regularly and often.

We are remembering an event that took place over 2000 years ago in an obscure backwater of the then mighty Roman Empire – and yet it changed our world forever!

An event that kick-started God’s plan to recue human-kind through the birth, death and, most importantly resurrection of His Son Jesus. It was an event that lasted @ 33 years with the last 3 years being the most significant. It was regarded by many at the time to be nothing more than an irritating itch on the great roman nose that just needed scratching. Well scratch it they did and the consequences changed the future of our world from that moment on. Through Jesus, God offered all human-kind the gift of Hope and Eternal Life.

It was and is and will be a gift freely given at no cost to us, a gift that we could accept or reject.

Christmas is and should be a celebration to be enjoyed particularly if we are fortunate enough to have plenty to eat, drink, and give. I am well aware that there are many who are not so fortunate who are unable or don't want to celebrate, and we will be praying for them later.

As you open your presents this Christmas remember the gift that God has given to us. If you have already unwrapped that gift whether recently or many years ago, why not consider re-opening it this Christmas. Remind yourselves why you are celebrating and just what it means to possess this gift.

If you haven't already opened it why not consider doing so. It doesn't have to be rushed but why not make a start? This special gift, should you decide to open it, is the most precious of all gifts – one of Hope, the promise of eternal life, and the love of God for you – regardless of who or what you are - He wants you to know him and know and feel the love He has for you.

Should you decide to take that step, and I pray that you will, I can assure you, as can anyone who knows Jesus, that you will not regret it.

Amen

