

“Who me Lord? You cannot be serious!”

Geoff Gleed offers a brief reflection on the Bible Reading: Luke 2: 15-20 and a Poem ‘Christmas Bells.’

I have a real soft spot for some characters in the Gospels. One of them is Peter because although Jesus chose him to be the one on “Whom he would build his church”.... the man representing firm and solid foundations, he was also someone who was very vulnerable. He regularly put his foot in it and often said or did completely the wrong thing.

And in the Christmas story, it has to be the shepherds who stand out to me. Like Peter, they were also very ordinary, very lowly folk who were despised by most of the society of their day. They were on the bottom rung of the Palestinian ladder sharing the same status with tax collectors and dung sweepers.

And yet like Peter they were seen as extremely valuable to God at this given moment in history. They were the ones who were chosen to go and visit the Christ Child and having done so they just couldn’t keep the story of what they ’de seen and heard to themselves. Yes, they returned to their duties but their lives had been changed not for an hour or two or a week or two but forever. They praised their God for revealing to them the Good News of this child’s birth. The Disciples and followers, again ordinary men and women would do the same later on when the man Jesus commissioned them to “Go and tell everyone what they had seen and heard.”

So we shouldn’t be surprised if we are required to do the same thing in our generation.

The poem, ‘Christmas Bells’ by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reflects on the message of peace. We need to remind ourselves that the word ‘Peace’ derives from a bigger word ‘SHALOM’.

Peace (Shalom) does not only mean an absence of wars or conflict but the desire to bring about wholeness and completeness, reconciliation and harmony. And when that begins to happen, God’s Kingdom begins to be sewn into the very fabric of our life, our communities and our world.

The Shepherds and later the Disciples mission, was to spread the good news of God’s LOVE for us, revealed through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, ‘The Prince of Peace.’

Never in my opinion has this world needed to hear that message of hope, of a new order being created , embracing the desire to care for creation and all humanity, of working towards a state of completeness and a reconciling of those differences which has created far too many barriers to a better life for so many.

In short, if you and I do our bit, then I believe that true, lasting harmony will come about so that all may once again live in the Garden of Eden. Am I believing in an impossible dream? I don’t think so.

The visiting angels told the Shepherds that Jesus would also be called ‘IMMANUEL’ – which means ‘God is with us.’ Jesus promised the disciples that he would be with them until the end of time.

What more do we need to convince ourselves that we are not alone and that we are here to tell the good news and to do those good deeds that help bring about God’s Kingdom. A certain carol ends with the words, ‘What can I give him poor as I am?...give my heart’. And we’ve all got one of those.