

1 John 1:1-4 - Sunday After Christmas. 27.12.2015

Jesus is our absolute source of Joy

¹ The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life. [² This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was shown to us.] ³ We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

⁴ We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete. [NLT]

Has it been a happy Christmas for you - a season of great joy?

If so, what is it that has brought you joy?

Have you had time to think about the miracle of which the Christmas message speaks - the miracle that God became human like us, in spite of everything. Perhaps it all sounds as if it is 'too good to be true'.

That may have been how people in the first century also thought - 'It's just not possible that God would become human - that he would come to us/ to me!' So John begins his first letter much like the opening of the Gospel he wrote - and he goes to great lengths to underline that

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For many who once again celebrated 'Christmas', the message of the Son 'born to the Virgin Mary' is a nice story - but nothing more. The story of a birth, of shepherds and wise men, is nothing more to them, than a backdrop to their merrymaking.

Perhaps they feel that it's too good to be true - we have probably all heard of people who have been caught out by believing something, simply because they wanted it to be true. So, how can we know that the story of Christmas is not the same?

John knew exactly how unbelievable this message was, which is why he emphasises, **We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus**

Christ, the Word of life. One can hear the awe John feels when he considers that God did something like this - that he, and his fellow-apostles could see him - even touch him with their own hands.

I asked on Christmas Day if you believe in miracles. Miracles don't just happen - they are caused. They are the result of God doing something. That is what John describes here when he says: **He who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen.**

Of course we can't prove that it all happened, yet Christmas is not about Father Christmas and the gifts he 'brings'. Christmas is about God the Father, and the gift he gives us: **Jesus Christ, the Word of life!** Christmas is about the fact that you and I may once again really live. We may live, because God did not maintain a safe distance from us, and shout out instructions to us about what we must do to get to 'heaven'.

Instead he sent **Jesus Christ, the Word of life**, into our midst. He did not only speak about life either - he did not only give instructions from the safety of his executive office, and then withdrew behind a closed door. From the first, Jesus had a 'hands on approach' - in him God came so close to us that John could say, **We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands!** The eternal God so in touch with his world - his people - that he could be seen and touched!

The eyes which first looked on him, the hands that reached out to touch the baby, were filled with love and joy at his coming. But there were also other eyes and hands - eyes filled with hatred and hands that manhandled and tortured him. Hands that laid him on a cross and drove nails through these very hands of God.

Yet, that was all part of God's plan to bring **the Word of life** to all people. He, to whom everything belongs, became homeless - so that he could prepare a home for us; but also so that all the homeless and all refugees should never have to feel cast out or abandoned any more.

Jesus plumbed the depths of human life, he endured pain and suffering, he knew what it is to be abandoned by all people. It is what had to happen so that **the Word of life** could reach out to us - so that he could bring his light into our

darkest places. Eventually he suffered death, even the depths of being abandoned by God - so that no matter how far from God anybody has gone, they may still be found by him there.

Jesus became human - he **who is life ... was shown to us** - so that our longing for life could be filled. So many people search for significance - they want to know that their life has a real purpose. A great part of the joy of Christmas is that in Jesus God has given your life real significance. We are so important to God - the one who **existed from the beginning** - that he sent his Son for your and my sake - so that our lives should no longer be a blind striving for success or significance.

Jesus, **this one who is life**, became man - and the wonder of it is that he did not only go to those who had made a success of life - to those who 'deserved' his coming to them. His purpose in coming is to show us how life is a success - so he goes to those who often were looked down on by others. He goes also to those, who had planned their life apart from God - and who in spite of 'great success' are often deeply dissatisfied with life.

Today also he comes to show us that a fulfilled and meaningful life is not where we achieve the goals we have set for life. Jesus shows us once more the original goal of our life: **We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

At the heart of our longing for significance lies the desire to be accepted. That is what Jesus comes to give us: He grants fellowship. His Coming into our world and to us, is God's offer of having back the life we should have - the offer to once more have fellowship with God himself! This offer is not only for the special few - it is for all! The God who became man is available to all people - no matter who they are.

All should *see* him and even *touch him with their hands* - whether it was the shepherds out from the fields, or Simeon at the temple. Not only the wise men, who travelled far - but also a prostitute or tax-collector like Zaccheus, who had fallen far!

Jesus did not come only to be found among the 'good' people. He came to call and save the lost - to restore them and once more give them fellowship with the Father. In restoring this fellowship with God, Jesus gives us fellowship with our fellow-people again.

By going to those who were cast out by society, Jesus showed us exactly what God's purpose is - why Christmas had to happen. Our striving to be important often has to do with putting others down. Jesus goes to those who are down, and to all those who don't count for much in our society. He restores families which have grown apart, and he brings people from different background and culture together. In him we become people of God.

Have you had a happy joy-filled Christmas? The great joy is not in what we do, but in what God has done for us - that he did what is too good to be true! Usually when somebody is found to have made people an offer that turns out to have been 'too good to be true', it was all for them, and they are long gone with your money when you find out.

The reason *Jesus is our absolute source of Joy* is because he does not profit by coming into our world - it is all about us, and he has promised to be with us every day.

So, let him go with you, as you pack away the Christmas lights - he will bring light to your dark moments. Let him be with you when you feel lonely or misunderstood - he comes to bring you fellowship with himself and the God of all. Make place for him when you celebrate - so that your joy will be lasting.