

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

Watch the story of the birth of Jesus. This telling of the story comes to us from New Zealand ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWq60oyrHVQ> and read: [Luke 2:1-20](#)

The childhood story

Here we all are on Christmas Eve, singing some of our favourite carols and remembering the traditional story about the birth of Jesus. It's the same story that is depicted on some Christmas cards – where everything is bathed in a soft golden light, where Mary Joseph and Jesus all wear haloes and the lines of the shadows have all been blurred.

In some carols, baby Jesus doesn't even cry.

It's all very serene and tranquil and romantic – but so unreal it's more like a fairy tale.

The more realistic story ...

The more realistic story is much grittier, messier and more dangerous. I invite you to close your eyes for a couple of minutes – try not to fall asleep! – and imagine with me what the scene was probably more like ...

What does the stable – or probably small cave – **look** like?

How large is it?

How warm or cold is it?

Is it very dark or is there some light from a small fire?

What does the place **smell** like?

Is there straw on the ground or just smelly animal dung?

Who's the **older woman** off to the side?

Is she the innkeeper's wife who encouraged Mary through the birth and who told her to push when the contractions were at their worst ...?

Did she bring some old rags to wrap baby Jesus in?

Where's Joseph? What's he doing? ...

Is he cleaning up the mess after the birth and trying to make a place to lie down and rest?

And **Mary**? How old does she look?
Does she look tired and worn out?
... or does she have that new Mum glow?

How about the **baby**?

Does he have any hair and what colour is it? Black, like Mary's?
And is his skin pale or more a mid brown?
Are his eyes closed and sleepy or is he hungry for a feed?
Look at that little face more closely ...
... and then come back to us here now in this place ...

Consequences – Jesus the troubling Messiah – who is he for us?

When this child Jesus grows up, he will challenge the status quo of the existing world order.

- He will do this as a prophet and teacher, prompting people to see God and God's justice in a new way. This will prove to be uncomfortable and challenging to many.
- Jesus will also disturb and delight as a compassionate healer, bringing God's love and wholeness to many who were outcast or considered beyond the reach of God's mercy. He will often do this on the Sabbath day, highlighting that compassion for human need outweighs rules.
- Jesus will disappoint and infuriate people by his claims to be God's chosen king, whose throne will be a Roman cross and who brings redemption through his death.

Despite claiming to bring peace with God and peace with others, Jesus will be shouted down, ridiculed and eventually killed ... in the way of many prophets before him.
... yet he remains probably the most influential person who ever lived!

I want to bring the message closer to home ...

What might you say to this child? ... how has his teaching, healing and loving example inspired and guided your life?

On this night, I invite you to ponder afresh, who this child Jesus is for you, and what difference his coming will make in **your** life, not just tonight but every day?

Amen.