

SERMON: 2017/12/25 (Christmas Day, Year B) - Isa. 9:2-7 & Lk. 2:1-20_BTR

[Invite the children to sit at the front. Lay a blanket on the floor, and conceal a torch beneath it. Nearby, out-of-sight, hide a box wrapped in Christmas paper, with a swaddled baby-doll inside.]

[Climbing under the blanket]

I love going to bed on Christmas Eve:

It's so exciting!

Squirming *deep* down under the covers.

Feeling warm and cosy.

Struggling to sleep.

Watching the clock and wishing really, *really* hard that the hands would turn faster, and the earth would spin quicker, and that it would be morning *right now!*

But I wonder how those shepherds (outside Bethlehem) felt?

They didn't have beds.

Or warm cups of hot chocolate.

Or mummies to kiss them goodnight.

They slept on the cold ground.

Outside.

In the freezing air.

And, back then, there was no such thing as Christmas [look scandalized]: the day when we celebrate the birth of "the Christ."

They *had* heard of Him.

Growing up, all the little Jewish boys and girls heard the stories from Isaiah's book; and he sounded *amazing!*

But nobody knew when He would arrive.

And so the shepherds probably just lay there that night. Shivering. Miserable. Bored.

Suddenly, there was 'a great light' [Isa. 9:2-7]:

Ouch!

It hurt their eyes. [Shine torch into the faces of the children.]

And an angel appeared in front of them, saying "*He's arrived! He's finally arrived. Quick, go to see Him.*"

Wow!

Just like on Christmas morning, when I go *running* down the stairs and throw myself at the pile of presents beneath the tree:

This must have been how it felt to be one of those shepherds.

The *greatest* gift - *ever!*

[Take gift from hiding place and tear open wrapping paper.]

Yes!

Just what they wanted.

And do you know what happened next?

They didn't stay there (in the stable) forever:

their knees would have ached *very* badly (from all that prostrating)!

No.

The Bible tells us that they went away, to tell *everyone* about this *wonderful*, life-changing thing that had happened: about the birth of Jesus, "the Christ." [Lk. 2:20]

And do you know what?

We should too!

Because that's what you do about the *best* gifts that you're given, isn't it?

You *boast* to your friends about what you've received.

And we should do the same: in the year ahead, let's *boast* [see: 2 Cor. 10:17] to *all* those we know, about how God loves the world *sooo* much, 'that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may *not* perish but have eternal life.' [Jn. 3:16]

Amen.