

## Sermon for Midnight Mass at Holy Trinity Geneva – Christmas Eve 2025

*Texts: Isaiah 9.2-4, 6-7; Hebrews 1.1-4; John 1. 1-14*

### **Lost and Found**

Being lost and left on one's own, can be a scary experience. I still remember as a very young child, letting go of my mother's hand on a crowded London street and for a moment losing her. It was only for minutes but I vividly recall the sense of absolute panic I experienced and my terror that I would never see her again.

As we get older, we learn to handle experiences of feeling lost and feeling alone more robustly, at least on the surface. Yet every one of us at various points in our lives, has to struggle with this internally. We live in a world, which can feel, very dark, uncaring, and at times quite brutal. And even if life feels very good and full at this time, we each face deep questions about the purpose and meaning of our lives.

I wonder what has drawn you here tonight. Probably each one of us is here for different reasons and in very diverse situations in our lives. For some, this may be joyful time celebrating with family and friends when all feels good and positive. Others amongst us may be feeling less good, perhaps facing a future which feels uncertain and worrying. And for others still, this may be a very difficult time indeed – perhaps a year in which you have experienced, bereavement, loss or rupture in your life and relationships

And yet, whatever our reason, we are all here. Something or someone has drawn us here, in from the darkness to this church where light is shining from the candles on the altar and all round us. The greatest light of all is coming from the child lying in the crib. For this child offers each one of us hope, purpose and joy this night. For this child is God's Son who has come into our world – his name 'Emmanuel' literally means 'God with us'.

The birth of any child brings hope and is a sign of hope. As I was preparing this sermon, a friend of mine sent me a WhatsApp telling me that their daughter had just given birth to a little boy. The family were filled with joy both for the presence of the new child in their family and also for all the potential which this baby has as they imagine what role he may have in the world as he grows up.

One of the first questions which we often ask when someone has a baby is, "Who does he or she look like?" We're fascinated to know whether he has his father's eye colour, or his mother's nose or if there is a throwback to a grandfather or grandmother in the shape of their mouth or expression.

Tonight, we are celebrating the birth of a child who shows us a family resemblance. But this child is showing us the human face of God. For tonight we celebrate the mystery that the one who is the Creator of all that exists, comes into our world as a tiny child to help us to find and relate to God as human beings with all our limitations but also all our potential.

This night, God reveals himself to us as love and enables us to glimpse the depths of that love as he comes into our world. He comes in utter humility and weakness. The one who has brought all things into being and holds us in life, is held in the arms of his young mother. The one who is the Word, the source of all life, utters the cry of a new-born child. And yet even in the depths of that dark stable, light shines forth. Strange visitors come in the darkness to kneel down before him in adoration – first shepherds and then the mysterious wise men or kings from the East.

As this child grows up, we will see in Jesus, God's human face revealed to us in ever greater fullness. For as Jesus enters into his ministry of proclaiming God's love, manifesting that love in his acts of healing, his miracles and his teaching, we see that love in action. It is a love which will lead Jesus to the Cross for our sakes. On the Cross, as St John shows us, God's love for us blazes out, pointing to a reality of a love which is deeper and stronger than the darkness and sin of our world.

So tonight, as we too draw near the stable, let's rejoice that, wherever we may be in our lives at present, we are not alone. This child whom we adore and worship, is God's sign and faithful promise to us that we are not alone in the world and we are not lost. Rather, we are held in an immense love which is revealed to us in the birth of Jesus. Emmanuel – God with us.

And as we rejoice tonight that we are held in that love, let's also remember that Jesus has shown to us, through his own life on earth, what a human life, lived inspired and guided by that love can look like. He reveals to us that if we live our lives, guided by God, and characterised, as his was, by love, compassion, generosity and willingness to forgive and to be forgiven can be transformational, bringing light out of darkness.

At the baptism of a child or an adult, in the final part of the service, the priest takes a baptismal candle, lit from our Paschal (Easter) candle which represents the light and love of Christ. The priest gives it to the child or one of its godparents with these words: "Receive this light", to which everyone present responds, "Shine as a light in the darkness to the glory of God the Father". We are praying that that child or adult will realise its true potential to live our lives in the fully human way of life which Jesus has shown us, being ourselves, lights in the world, each of which points to the source of that light which is God.

And tonight, the Christ child shows us that every act of kindness, thoughtfulness, forgiveness and love we can make, helps bring that light into our world and helps make the human face of God visible. As we do this, we help make the incarnation of Christ as a reality, whatever our context and helps others to realise too that they are held in the immense love of God.

*'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it' (John 1.5).*

I wish you all a very blessed and joyful Christmas.

**Amen**

**Canon Daphne Green**

