

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Great Expectations



Dear Friends,

As I write this, the Christmas lights are being erected in the town centre of Hertford, the shop fronts are full of decorations and great presents to buy and food to stock up on, and there is an air of excitement and expectation. The Schools are rehearsing carols and readings and the costumes for the nativity plays have once again been taken out of their storage boxes. Shops, organisations and people will all have their different expectations during this season.

We may find ourselves saying: "This year Christmas is going to be

choose your appropriate word or phrase:

better / more organised / different / more ecological / quieter / more reflective / celebratory /,

well, whichever phrase we use, we will have our expectations of the Christmas season and then the New Year!

Will these expectations be met and what happens if they are not?

We learn that in life things don't always work out as we had thought. The expectations that the people had for a Messiah were very different from the reality:

No grand affair of a royal palace birth, no political freedom fighter against the Romans; but a baby born to an ordinary, poor family, who was later to teach about the need for love and forgiveness rather than the merits of power and possessions.

Will our expectations be met this Christmas?

It may well be that like the people of Jesus' time the things that we had planned and prepared for might not work out in the way we thought! Perhaps we need to be aware that Jesus comes to us in amazing and unexpected ways:

"Prince of Peace", what welcome news when we hear of conflict around the world or experience conflict in our own lives. The Holy One comes to be with us in our ordinary lives.

God is with us, "Emmanuel", in our suffering and brokenness, as Jesus suffered, died and rose again to bring us eternal life, life in all its fullness.

We can experience God in our midst as we gather together to break bread and celebrate.

We can expect great things from God. His gifts are lasting, deep, at times surprising, and always good. God sent Jesus into the world as a precious gift, a Saviour for all of us, bringing true and lasting joy.

All our yearnings and expectations are fulfilled in him as it says in the carol "*The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight*".

It is up to us to respond, to receive the gift that God gives us, to become more aware of God at work and to live out this love in our lives so that the real great expectations come to their deepest fulfilment.

May the God of Love Bless you all this Christmas.

With love,
Jo