

Christmas Day
Tutshill 2022

Lections: Set 1

Lord Jesus, light of the world,
Born in David's city of Bethlehem,
Born like him to be a King,
Be born in our hearts this Christmastime,
Be king of our lives today. Amen.

It's true, isn't it, that some of the most seemingly grown up people, people like teachers, for example, can actually be the most childlike at times. A teacher I know absolutely adores Christmas, and especially the games and activities which come along with it. This teacher can't sit still doing nothing for more than about ten seconds, and so games are absolutely spot on for her.

One of the games we frequently play is that game, "Articulate" (other guessing games are available!). As with most games which are played round Christmas, it often ends up with the competitors almost coming to blows, but it is a great game. Do you know it? It's the one where each player in turn has to describe a word, person, or something similar, without mentioning the word itself. So, for example, if your card said, "Blue Whale", you'd have to say something like, "It swims in the sea, it's not a fish, it's a mammal, its humungous, biggest living thing on earth, blows water up in the air..." You get the idea?

[Let's do a couple, shall we?

[Doctor Who] Try this one: This is a person, almost a thousand years old. Travels a lot. Has two hearts. Can be male or female.

Has had 14 lives so far. Lives in a little blue box...Is a Time Lord.

[Severn Bridge]It's a thing. It's two miles long. It's got 18,000 miles of wire in it. Bits of it dangle. You can walk, run and cycle across it. It joins two nations...

[A Cat] small, fluffy, domesticated animal, says Meow, hunts mice, bites your feet...

[Fiona] Person. Has two sons. Scottish. One son is a vicar. Excellent poet and writer.

It's really interesting when things are talked about without their name being mentioned.

I don't know if you've noticed that in both of the birth stories of Christ that we've read over the past week or so, at the various church services we might have been at, Jesus' name isn't said at all.

Now doesn't it strike you as a bit weird to be celebrating someone's birthday, or writing about the birth of someone you think is really important, without saying their name. Look back over the first twenty verses of Luke chapter 2, or the first fourteen verses of St John chapter one, and you will see that the word Jesus doesn't actually appear. Isn't that interesting?

What do appear of course are a whole bunch of other names, or descriptions of Jesus. St John, of course, calls him "The Word" In the beginning was the Word.

St Luke has the angels saying to the shepherds, "To you in David's town this day is born of David's line a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Saviour, Messiah, Lord. Three ways of describing Jesus. The Name Jesus is a Greek version of an

Aramaic name, which in Hebrew is Yeshua, which means, “He saves us”.

What’s going on of course is that actually Jesus’ name is given to him as a *description of what it is he does*. It’s a divine round of Articulate. When we say “Jesus”, we are saying, “He saves us”. When we talk about this baby by name, we are describing our salvation. It is why this name is the most precious name that there is. And in fact you might notice some quite old-fashioned priests like me actually bow our head slightly when we say or sing the name Jesus. And that’s an act of reverence, sort of picking up on the stuff in Philippians. So when we gaze at the baby in the manger, when we worship him, not just on Christmas Day but every Sunday, and every day, we call on this name, we are calling on our Messiah, our Lord, the Word of God, someone who comes to rescue us, to lift us up, to bring us back to God.

And because what happens at Christmas is so amazing, so far outside any other thing that has ever happened, – we’re trying to describe something that is indescribable, impossible to fully put into words, which is why the Gospel writers don’t really try to do that.

This morning, here in this place, with Christians all over the world, and joining our prayers with all those which have risen to God from this place over the past centuries, we are thanking God for doing something we can’t really describe, can’t really Articulate.

But we know enough about what happened that first Christmas to know that a baby was born, and that when that baby was born whole world changed, because his name, Jesus, articulates what he does. And what he does is that “he saves us”. That he is the Word of God, the person who speaks to us of what the

Father is like, and that he is the Lord, the one who we might follow, into life and light and eternity.

So I encourage you to play Articulate this Christmas, but try not to come to blows.

Emma joins me in wishing you a very happy and peaceful Christmas. Amen.