

John 1: 1 – 14

**'Hopes, Fears & Light and 2022'**

From our last carol: **"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight"**

What, I wonder, are your **hopes and fears** tonight?

Are they personal – family, friends, job, health, income?

Are they global – climate change or Covid-19 throughout the world?

Or maybe in between?

In November 2021 the climate emergency was the focus of the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. For everyone – especially young people – this was about making sure that there is a hope for the world's future – linked to the fear that we are leaving it too late.

And we know that this hope will not be achieved without action.

Similarly, we know that we will not be able to 'live well' with Covid unless we take action.

Again from that last carol – **"Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in."** This is the key to empowering our action.

Receiving the presence of Christ in our lives can help us to live less selfishly, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to us motivates us to action – action for the Common Good – which encompasses every part of our lives.

And hopes we have about reversing Climate Change or living well with Covid will need caring for one another and the planet by changing our behaviour. Hope will only come into being if there is work and action.

The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 reduced pollution and cleaned the air for a time. (*Use of the face mask*) Before 2020, if you saw someone with a mask on, it was probably because they were worried about air quality. One of the things which happened in the lockdowns was that car and air travel was massively reduced, and the air got better to breathe. Some people have permanently changed their behaviour as a result. There is more walking. Scooting and biking to school are more common now.

In the lockdowns we saw some of the ways that human beings could change the environment for good. How do we carry this forward? It's a lesson we must not forget, especially as we look forward to many of the activities starting again – though probably not in the first few months of 2022! In these times, which remain difficult now and mean that the future as a whole seems uncertain, the verses we heard just now from St John's Gospel are so relevant and important.

Jesus – the Light of the World – a light that no darkness can overcome. Not the darkness of Covid, not the darkness of climate change ... not the darkness of whatever fear you may have this Christmas-tide – in all the Light of Jesus will not be put out and can lead us forward.

That's why the birth of Jesus is good news – again back to the words of **"O little town of Bethlehem"...**

His birth is a **"wondrous gift"**

Why? Because when we welcome Jesus to walk with us through both joys and sorrows, we find that his presence brings a new perspective – we start to glimpse how God longs for the world to be – and we find God’s strength and comfort and perseverance. Despite our own concerns, we find an ability beyond our natural selves to look outwards still and both receive and give love. We know, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, that love will always win through and gradually melt selfishness, bitterness and hatred.

We do, however, have to be willing to follow that light and make some changes as a consequence. The comedian, Milton Jones, makes this comment:

**The arrival of Jesus signifies the end of keeping traditions for the sake of tradition –  
perhaps he shouldn’t have come at Christmas!**

And so – I invite you to make the last verse of that Carol your prayer – the Carol I’ve been quoting – a prayer for yourself – but also that through your life and action – fears will fade and your hopes and the hopes of others will come about plus, where necessary, leaving traditional ways behind, for these hopes can come about through our lives being changed – being transformed and empowered – by Jesus and the truth that his is a light that no darkness can overcome:

To conclude as a prayer:

**O holy child of Bethlehem**

**Descend to us we pray**

**Cast out our sin and enter in**

**Be born in us today.**

**We hear the Christmas angels**

**The great glad tidings tell**

**O come to us, abide with us**

**Our Lord Emmanuel.**

**Amen.**