



Growing Faith

14 - Winter | 19 December 2022

A thought for Christmas

Learn from Mary, and watch your tone of voice.

Written by Mr Pountain,

Years ago, at a previous school, I remember working with a top level professional boxer at this time of year. He had been brought in by the school as a final attempt to re-engage some disaffected year 10 boys, who were on the brink of permanent exclusion from school.

The boxer was not a Christian, but much of the sensible life-advice that he gave to those youngsters over a number of weeks, stays with me to this day. For example, I distinctly remember him saying that when his alarm would go off at 4am, (4am!) and the weather was freezing cold outside in the pitch dark, and his bed was lovely and warm, it took him every ounce of strength he had to not simply knock his alarm off, pull the duvet over his head and go back to sleep. His coach, he told the boys, was safely tucked up in his own bed across town, and would be none the wiser!

The problem was that the short cuts that he took in the darkness would find him out in the light! His laziness in the darkness, when nobody was looking, would be exposed in the light of the ring, in front of a huge crowd and the world's watching media. "Be careful what you do in the darkness" he told the year 10s. "It will find you out in the light!"

My mind went straight to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She found favour with God because of what she did in the darkness, when nobody else was looking. God saw her heart and chose her to carry His son.

We get a glimpse into Mary's character in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. It's really interesting to contrast Mary with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, in that same chapter. Zechariah is visited by the angel who announces the birth of his son. He enquires: "how can this be? My wife and I are old and advanced in years?" Just a few verses later, Mary says something very similar in response to a similar angelic visitation: "How can this be, for I am a virgin?" The angel's reply? He told Mary she had found favour with God, and Zechariah was struck dumb!

Why was the angel's (God's representative's) response to these two humans so different, when they had essentially said something very similar? We can only assume it was to do with the intention behind the words. Zechariah, no doubt, was mocking and sneering in tone as he drew the angel's attention to the problematic age of himself and his wife. In asking the same question, Mary, from the character she has cultivated in the darkness, was saying "please help me to understand."

This Christmas, may we recommit ourselves to the ongoing internal development of our characters, knowing that though others may not see what goes on inside the darkness of our hearts, God sees, and places great importance on this area of our lives. May we be inspired by the example of Mary, and take care of not only the words we speak, but the way in which we say them. This way, may we this Christmas, approach the light of Christ with confidence, knowing that the same child born in the manger, grew up to die on the cross for us, and make us right with God.

Song for the Reflection



Sing along or sit and reflect as we worship together with 'Glory' by Matt Maher



A Prayer

By Lucy Tattersall

Dear lord,

Thank you for the growth in our school this year, and we hope it continues into the new year. We pray that you help many to remember the true meaning behind Christmas, not just the physical gifts, but the gift of eternal life. Help us to be grateful, and to remember his coming on Christmas Day.

In Jesus name,

Amen

School Song

Sing along to '10,000 Reasons'
as we worship together.



Teenage Tip

By Daniel Ley (Year 11)

The Bible has a lot to say about how we treat people, and this verse gives a pretty clear idea of how we need to act. But why should we show these to others?

In short, what we believe should determine how we act. If we believe in God's love, we need to share this with others, and one great way of doing this is by being compassionate and loving. If we fail to love other people, we fail to share God's love.

Paul also says we should forgive others. Forgiveness and compassion go together. If we want to forgive like God does, we can't do it without showing the same compassionate love that God does. We need to share the same compassionate love that led Jesus to die for us.

Take the time now to think about someone who you can show compassion to. Is there someone you can help? Forgive?

Encourage? Take the time today to show the same love, compassion and forgiveness that you have received from God.

"But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God."

Luke 1:30

Church Support

Church Services

Please visit these church websites to see when their services are taking place:

Great Harwood Christian Fellowship: [Website](#)

St John's and St Augustine's Church, Huncoat: [YouTube channel](#)

St Peter and St Paul's Church, Rishton: [Facebook Page](#)

St. John's Church, Baxenden: [Website](#)

Peel Street Baptist Church: [Website](#)

All Saints Church, Clayton-le-Moors: [Facebook Page](#)

St James' Church, Clitheroe: [Website](#)


Burnley Life Church: [Website](#)

St Mary Magdalen's Church, Accrington: [Website](#) / [Facebook Page](#)

St Andrew's Church, Accrington: [Website](#)

St Peter's Church, Accrington: [Website](#)



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