

A Double Birthday ...

... Born into the Family of God

A talk given on the Christmas Morning, 25th December 2021 – by the Vicar the Revd Canon Jonathan Baker, and the Youth Minister Ben Merrell, in Beverley Minster

John 1:1-14

Jonathan

So, Ben, Christmas morning. What did Santa bring you? Or are you being good and waiting until after Church before opening your presents?

Ben

Well, I will open most of them later. But two things came through this morning. One of them a beautiful Yayoi style handkerchief because Aisla has been learning about this particular artist (that's quite nice) and also Aisla and James definitely promised me that I could have a lie-in tomorrow morning. Is that right, guys? Maybe? They're not listening! But how about this, guys? Who else has got some good presents that they want to share? Jacob, you shout what you've got - hold it up if you can. You've got a skateboard!, Libby, how's our risk assessment feel about skateboards in the Minster? Bit iffy. Okay. Who else has got some good presents? Isabelle, what have you got there? Can you hold them up? We've got two beautiful unicorn ballerinas? Excellent! Who else got some good presents they want to share? James Manson- what have you got? You got some Lego?. James has got Tower Bridge in Lego, that sounds amazing. and James is 17, so that's an appropriate one for him, I think. Harriet, is that a doll you've got there? A baby. You've got a baby? Well done. Anyone else want to share their's? Where is my son? Oh, he's over there. Father Christmas bought him a trumpet in his stocking. I will be having words. And Aisla, what did you bring with you? Some plasticine, I think. And Liza, what did you get? Do you want to show us? And how about you? Have you got lovely presents? Anyone further back want to shout out what they got in their stockings this morning that they've already opened. Tim, what do you get? Some socks? Classic. *[No more roving mic. The batteries died. Sorry. Now I'm back here with a microphone.]* I love hearing about all these presents. It feels like everybody celebrating their birthdays all on the same day.

Jonathan

Well, I mean, in a way, I suppose it is. Christmas is a kind of birthday for everybody

Ben

Well, what do you mean, Jonathan? I thought Christmas was when we celebrated Jesus' birthday in the stable in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. And anyway, my birthday isn't on the 25 December. It's on the 4 April. (everybody remember that).

Jonathan

Well, of course, I didn't mean that everybody was literally born on Christmas Day. But there might be a sense in which Jesus Christ wasn't just born in Bethlehem all those years ago.

Ben

How do you mean?

Jonathan

Well, I'm thinking of some of the carols we sing. There's that verse in O Little Town of Bethlehem that goes,

*O Holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray,
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.*

It's like Jesus has just been born, only he's been born into our lives today, here in Beverly in 2021, in the middle of a pandemic and climate change and cancelled holiday flights and all the different problems that people face in their lives today. It's as if Jesus keeps on being born into our lives and when we welcome him, it's like our hearts become the manger where we kneel to worship him.

Ben

That's amazing. It reminds me of that song (which I'm not going to sing) 'I wish it could be Christmas every day.' Maybe Jesus being born into our lives is something that can happen any day and every day. But that still makes it Jesus's birthday and not ours. You said earlier that Christmas might be a birthday for everyone. So how does that work?

Jonathan

Well, it's that promise in the reading we've just heard

'To all who received him, who believed in his name, He gave power to become children of God.'

Ben

You mean it's like we have two birthdays, our normal birthday and our spiritual birthday when we become children of God.

Jonathan

Exactly. The Son of God is born as the son of Mary so that the sons and daughters of Earth (that's you and me) can become the children of God. It's like we change places with Jesus so that we can know God as our heavenly Father.

Ben

So no wonder Christmas is just like a great big birthday party. We're not just remembering how Jesus was born as one of us. We're celebrating the good news that Jesus is still being born spiritually into our lives when we welcome him and follow him - and that when we do that, it's like we're being born into the family of God. That's a very special birthday, isn't it? And that's really worth celebrating.

Jonathan

Happy birthday, Ben.

Ben

Happy birthday, ***everybody***.

Reading Texts

John 1:1-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.