

A short address given by the Dean at the Cathedral Carol Services:

CAROL SERVICE HOMILY
21 and 22 DECEMBER 2009

‘You’re your own worst enemy, do you know that?’ Not one of my most welcome seasonal greetings, I have to say – the more so, as the person who said it was not far wrong...

None of us likes being confronted with our less-attractive features which of course is the main reason people nailed Jesus to a Cross.

That seems a far cry from the stable in Bethlehem, with all its innocent trappings: stars, animals, exotic visitors and the warmth of a mother’s love. But of course, Jesus did not remain in that stable.

The descent of God into the mess of our all-too-human world was shocking in its simplicity and ordinariness – a very far cry from tinsel-town - but it was all for a purpose. As we have sung:

‘And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.’

God, in the person of Jesus Christ, participated in all the complexities of human-life: its ups, and of course, for him, the downs of which people are capable when they are confronted with uncomfortable truths about themselves.

We are living in strange and uncertain times for our world, and for that matter for our Church. Jesus, in an occupied

country and having been driven to seek asylum in a neighbouring one, would no doubt have said the same.

The point is, the way he lived, the deeds he performed and the teaching he gave, are as totally relevant for us in 21st Century Britain, as they were for His contemporaries in 1st Century Palestine, and those who have the gift of faith should be more ready to say so.

‘Once a pale star rose in the east
for watching herds to see
and weakness came to Bethlehem
and strength to Galilee.
Perchance if thou dost try His way
a star may rise for thee.’

‘Perchance if thou dost try His way...’ Could it be that, when it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and putting into practice the tough teachings which He came to declare, we are reluctant to try that way? Could it even be that we are our own worst enemies?

Whether that is so or not, ‘*Love came down at Christmas*’: that means ‘*Joy to the world*’, *and it matters very much that we say so.*
