

Christmas 10am 2011 – Flesh

How many people here this morning were also at the midnight service last night? There's usually a few. You know in some places they don't even have church services on Christmas morning? In the US, for instance, lots of churches close their doors on Christmas Day because everyone, and I mean pretty much everyone, goes to church on Christmas Eve, and that really is a very different service.

This is till a Christmas service of course, and we're still singing Christmas carols, but what's missing is the magic. There's something about the midnight service, with the choir and the darkness and the Christmas lights and the candles – there's something about all that which makes midnight special. Not that this isn't special as well of course. I like to think that every service is special, but where midnight is magic, this, here and now, is real life, and that reality is caught up in the gospel reading we've heard, which is John's very different Christmas story.

“The Word became flesh and lived among us”.

Part of what makes midnight magical of course is the traditional Christmas story. Luke's gospel gives us the shepherds and the angels and the whole Bethlehem pageant, but behind that story, at the heart of what all those familiar things are about, is something truly amazing, something incredible and ultimately world-changing – God became one of us.

We call it the incarnation, but regardless of what words we use or story we tell, that's the real meaning of all this stuff we say and do, both last night and this morning; God became one of us. God was born not just like, but as a human being, God grew up as we grow up, God experienced all the highs and lows that everyone experiences, and all the frustrations and the excitements and the hurts and the happiness. God became a person just like us and lived like us and that is what Christmas is really all about, and that is the story John tells – no angels, no shepherds, no baby in a manger, just the Christ of the Incarnation, the Word was with God and was God, becoming flesh, becoming human, vulnerable, dare I say even fallible, just like you and me, alive and living not just in the magic of Christmas Eve, but in the cold, hard light of day that is real life.

There's nothing more important than that, or magical than that, or as worthy of celebration as that. On that day, whenever it was, in a stable or maybe not, in a manger or maybe not, with shepherds and angels, or maybe not, God was born. Here and now at 10 ... on Christmas morning, God is with us. That's the Christmas story, that's the Christian story, that's our story too. Thanks be to God.