Sermon: Christmas Day

I know that this year has been a tough year, and the extent to which we have been affected has depended on so many factors - class, financial security, health- both physical and mental, age, ethnicity, beliefs and none. It has also affected people geographically unequally – my sister in the NW of the UK who works as a guard on trains in and out of some the most affected areas has seen her anxiety levels go through the roof; and although she has type 2 diabetes, her employer did not deem that as a high risk, but gave her loads of masks and sanitiser for free, so that is something; while another sister living in deepest, darkest Wales has barely noticed any difference to her life as she made a decision to live frugally many years ago and cut herself off from all social media and still communicates by writing long, often rather bewildering postcards in tiny writing; another of my sisters lives in Somerset in a small village, and during the first lockdown, found a new love of her life, new teaching job [remote] and is enjoying long walks and wood fires being all romantic. I have 2 more sisters and a brother whose lives are also as disparately affected but I will not go on…

One thing they all have in common, and indeed in common with the world – is that the Christmas they expected to have – the one where people got together, got tiddly and hugged and kissed, even strangers in the street [or is that just me?] and went to pantos and nativities and parties and pubs and shopping for more sparkly stuff – is not the Christmas they got. And so – is Christmas cancelled?

Well, that is the story seen on FB, and other social media platforms – and blame is attached to some of those posts too – the government, other people, the old, the young, the schools, the NHS.., this list goes on and on and while I am not a fan of many decisions that have been made, I am blooming glad I haven’t had to be in charge of making most of them!

So, is Christmas cancelled? I guess you might know my answer to that question! Of course, it is not cancelled! It all depends on what you have decided Christmas is for you and your family. And I am sad that for many people Christmas is all about the partying and shopping. I am sad for them because, yes Christmas has been cancelled. But for us? For those who believe that God was made incarnate 2,000 years ago, and was born out of love for humankind, in a stable to a virgin and a carpenter from Nazareth then Christmas cannot ever be cancelled. As long as there continues to be that love shared in the world to all, then no how can something so fundamental to us be cancelled!

Last Sunday I was sorting paperwork and thinking about watching a film that wouldn’t need me to concentrate but would have a bit of Christmas feel to it and so I watched The Grinch, written originally by Dr Seuss. I had seen it before but not for a long time. And as I vaguely watched out of the corner of my eye, I was caught up in the core sentiment expressed by the author. The grumpy grinch who hates Christmas and hates the fact that the townsfolk of Whoville love it **so** much, and are **so** happy to celebrate it every year with bigger and better decorations, that he decides to nick everything they hold so dear. And he waits eagerly for Christmas morning when they wake up and find it is all ruined.

And so I want to close my sermon with the words of the Grinch, and Dr Seuss

They're finding out now that no Christmas is coming!"

"They're just waking up! I know just what they'll do!"

"Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,

Then the Whos down in Whoville will all cry BooHoo!"

"That's a noise," grinned the Grinch, "That I simply MUST hear!"

So he paused. And the Grinch put his hand to his ear.

And he did hear a sound rising over the snow.

It started in low. Then it started to grow.

But the sound wasn't sad! Why, this sound sounded merry!

It couldn't be so! But it WAS merry! VERY!

He stared down at Whoville! The Grinch popped his eyes!

Then he shook! What he saw was a shocking surprise!

Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,

Was singing! Without any presents at all!

He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME!

Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,

Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?"

"It came without ribbons! It came without tags!"

"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"

And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store."

"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"