



Meet the Parents

Matthew 1:19-21, Luke 1:26-40

One of the features of Felixstowe is that it has all the sort of things that you normally associate with a seaside town, fish and chips, amusement arcades, children's rides and of course novelty stores. I often look for the funny ones that people take back to their offices from their holidays.

One of the more repeatable of these goes like this:

In this office there are three sorts of people:
those who know what's going on
those who think they know what's going on
those that haven't a clue what's going on.

There's lots of truth in that – it's true of many kinds of workplaces. I've worked in a few offices in my life and it's true that most of the junior staff in offices know what's going on, but the managers usually are the ones that think they know what's going on or probably don't have a clue!

The Christmas story is a little bit like the average office.

In the Christmas story, there were three sorts of people:
those who knew what was going on Simeon
those who thought they knew what was going on The Wise Men
those who didn't have a clue Shepherds

And in that last category we have no problem putting Mary and Joseph – Meet the Parents – the two people to whom the birth of Jesus wasn't just a bit of a surprise – more of a shock!

Take Mary. There she is, in Nazareth, sitting around one day, minding her own business and this angel appears. "You're going to have a baby". In modern words Mary's reply would have been Yer wot! I'm a virgin. And of course it happened and she became pregnant even though she was a virgin.

Now that one was a bit of a surprise for Joseph. I think most of us would have liked to be a fly on the wall when Mary told him. "I'm going to have a baby even though I'm a virgin". I guess in the modern day Joseph's reply would have been "Yer wot! Consider yourself dumped!" Actually we read that he was a decent bloke he could have made a public spectacle of her but he decided to just dump her quietly. If he lived today and decided to make something of this unlikely story, I'm sure he would have confronted her on the Jeremy Kyle Show " and asked for a lie detector test which would of course proved that Mary was telling the truth!

But he was just going to dump her quietly until the angel met him as he slept and confirmed her story so he married her.

And through Luke's account in particular, we see how these two seem to have had their jaws dropped at every term. Take this morning's story about Simeon, who was one of the few people in the Christmas story that did know the plot. He spoke and told Mary and Joseph what the score was:

"This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

And their reaction: ***The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him.***

“Duh – what’s going on”. Nice one!

But let’s face it, the whole concept of the eternal God becoming human is a bit of a difficult one for most people to get their head around. But there it is written in verse after verse of the New Testament – and for that matter the Old one too. Here’s a verse that sums it all up – John 3:16.

How are we getting our heads around it this evening? It’s like to office – in this service, there are three sorts of people:

◆ **Those that don’t have a clue what’s going on.**

Maybe you find all this stuff about God a bit difficult to get your head around. Christmas peace and all the fun that goes with this season are easy to understand, but the idea of God becoming a man seems a bit far-fetched. But is it? A hundred years ago it would be inconceivable to people worshipping in this church that we had mobile phones, televisions, computers; that we could send men to the moon. But it happened because we needed to have our minds and understanding stretched.

That’s what God wants to do in your life this evening. He wants an encounter with you and he showed how serious he was when He sent His Son to die for you and for me. Many be you’d like to believe but... Then speak this prayer seriously to God – Lord help me to see what you’re doing, to hear your voice and have the wisdom to follow you.

◆ **Those that think they know what’s going on**

Maybe you think that you’ve got Christianity sussed this evening. I hope you have but my experience of people coming to Christmas services but who never go to church or worship much at other times is that they have a dimension missing to their lives. If we’re honest, we’ll recognise it. Maybe we’ve been put off Christianity by the behaviour of Christians, maybe you think God has let you down, maybe you think that you’re just not good enough to go to church, or maybe you can’t see it’s important enough to worship regularly.

All I can say to you is that, we have a God who is enthusiastic to welcome us into His presence and deal with our doubts and fears and make an impact in our lives. He is a God of encounters and Mary and Joseph met God in a way they hadn’t bargained for!

Maybe you see a need to get to know God more – or even get to know Him again now you realise that never mind what you have done in the past or what you’re doing now, God still loves you and wants to be part of your life. Then I offer you the same prayer: Lord help me to see what your doing, ears to hear your voice and the wisdom to follow you in a fresh and dynamic way.

◆ **Those that know what’s going on**

I’d like to think that most of us know what’s going on tonight because we have accepted Jesus into our lives as Saviour and Lord. But God wants that to be true for each of us this Christmas.

The real meaning of Christmas is that the Eternal Son became human – was born as a baby, lived a life, died on a cross and rose again. He’s dealt with all the things that keep us apart from God and opened a way by which we can find forgiveness, a relationship with Him and eternal life.

Lord, help me to see what you’re doing, ears to hear your voice and the wisdom to follow you.