

Sermon for Christmas Day

The Text: John 1:1-14

It seems like none of us has missed out on Christmas. That's good. Unfortunately some people have to work on Christmas day and that means that while the rest of us are kicking back, relaxing and having fun they have to miss out. I don't know if you've ever had to work during Christmas or perhaps you've been away overseas during Christmas, but it can be a bit of a downer to be away from all the action at Christmas when everyone else is enjoying themselves. Perhaps you don't miss your dad's overcooked turkey, or your mum's passion pop, or the bad jokes tucked away in the bonbons but apart from those things we like to be a part of it on Christmas day, even if it's just with a couple of people or our own immediate family.

We don't want to miss out. Thankfully our country and many others around the world pretty much legislates that most people won't have to miss out on Christmas by making it a public holiday. There's no cricket today because it's Christmas – the cricket starts tomorrow. There's no trading on the Stock Exchange – that'll open again tomorrow or on Monday. Most shops are closed, you can't get your car fixed... Most things are called off well in advance because we all know that the 25th of December is Christmas and we don't want to miss out on Christmas.

Most people, however, did miss out on the first Christmas celebration. There were a handful of shepherds, some wise men, Mary, Joseph and presumably some animals but apart from that most people missed the first Christmas. But that's OK, it was a pretty exclusive event, no one even knew what Christmas was at that stage, so it's understandable that most people missed it. And at the first Christmas something extraordinary happened – the one who created the earth came to live on earth. Jesus, the Son of God, was born as a baby. This is the guy who made... everything – including many of the things we enjoy at Christmas – food, drink, fun, laughter, joy, happiness, families, culture... life itself. Jesus, referred to in our reading today as 'The Word', was there at the beginning with God: he was God and through him all things were made. So there in Bethlehem born in a manger at the first Christmas was not only the creator of life but the source of life itself.

It would have been great to have been there, especially with all the angels and everything else. But thankfully Jesus gave people plenty of opportunity to get to meet him and get to know him later on as he grew up and became an adult. It wasn't a flying visit that the creator of life made to earth – he came to stay, to dwell among us and be one of us, to eat and drink and celebrate with us. And so the author of life who was the light of the world lived among us, walked in our streets, worked like we work and mixed with the people of his society.

But so many people missed it – they had the chance to get to meet Jesus in person, the creator of the world but they didn't recognise him, or they didn't appreciate him. Our reading from John says that 'the true light that gives light to every person was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.' There may have been many people who bumped into a guy called Jesus from Nazareth but they missed the Christ.

It's a bit like being around in the 60s but not attending a street parade for the Beatles. Apparently Adelaide still holds the record for the biggest ever street parade for the Beatles – pretty much everyone was there. And so if you were alive back then and living in Adelaide but weren't there for the street parade people are inclined to ask you – 'Where were you? Why did you miss it?' Can you imagine if you got to meet someone who had lived in Palestine during the time of Christ? Or if they lived in Nazareth or Jerusalem and had ample opportunity to meet Jesus face to face. Wouldn't you ask them, 'Did you get to see Jesus?' I mean, he was *the* big event of the time. Surely you wouldn't want to miss that. But miss him they did, and Jesus passed through the streets often completely unacknowledged as the creator of the world. The author of life, the light of life – the Christ – was there but people missed him.

How lucky we can consider ourselves not to have missed out. We're here today not just because of Christmas but because of Christ. Jesus has revealed himself to us, even though we've never actually seen him in the flesh, and we have faith. That was the point of his coming – that people would realise that the source of life had come in Jesus and he had come to give us that life. Knowing the source of life is the whole purpose of life and in fact Jesus himself said this in a prayer to God the father: "Now this

is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Knowing Jesus means not missing out on life. It means not missing out on eternal life but it also means not missing out on life right here and now. Knowing the author of life and the source of life is the best way and the only way to get a grip on what it truly means to be alive, to appreciate the gifts we have been given. Knowing the author of life means that our life has meaning and purpose, we're not just accidents or statistics. By knowing Jesus we have been given the right to be called children of God.

And yet, if you ask most people, it's the people who believe in Christ and who follow him, who are the ones missing out. Being a Christian means no fun, can't do this and you can't do that. Rules, rules, rules, going to boring church, telling lame jokes, listening to cheesy music, disengaging with anything relevant in popular culture, hiding from anything that might be against your beliefs or a bit too rough or a bit too risqué, living your life feeling guilty, begging God for forgiveness and then waiting for Jesus to take you to heaven. Surely it's the Christians who are missing out, many say, so thanks very much but I'll give believing in Jesus a big miss.

What do you think – have they got some good ammunition there? Are we as Christians getting deeper into the essence and meaning of what it is to be alive and showing that in the way that we live, or are we missing out? Now every Christian is different and we're not all going to be the life of the party or the motivating, energising champion of the church leading the way by sucking the marrow out of life. But it's worth asking yourself – does my faith give me more life, or less? Do I feel like I'm getting deeper into what it means to be alive, or do I feel like I'm missing out. Or perhaps you're caught in the middle – you'd like to take your faith to a deeper place but it's risky. What might you become? What might you lose? What might you be missing out on?

Jesus, the author of life and the source of life, did not come to rob us of fun, or of pleasure, or of our personality. But he did call us to prioritise him in everything else that we treasure in life. Jesus came so that we might know the fullness of life. He came that we might be granted God's forgiveness, God's peace and the promise of life after death and all that those things mean for the here and now. He came to make us children of God. So the gift of life is there – don't miss out!