

Unwrapping the gift of Christmas

John Witcombe *reflects on* Matthew 2:1-12 and Matthew 3:13-end

This week, as we move into the new year, we are entering the season of Epiphany, and our reflections over the next few weeks will be exploring this theme. The word “Epiphany” means “manifestation”, or “revealing” – and this is the time in the church year when we think of God being known to the whole world.

How do you know what you had for Christmas, only a couple of weeks ago? By tearing off the wrapping paper and holding your gift up to the light for you – and perhaps others – to see! That’s what’s going on in Epiphany – the gift is Jesus is revealed for the world to see. We are helped to understand this at the start of Epiphany by our readings, which speak of the wise men, representing the wisdom of the world, coming from afar to see Jesus.

And at this time we also celebrate the Baptism of Christ, when in obedience the adult Jesus offers himself to God through baptism and is rewarded with the voice of heavenly affirmation: “this is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased”. ☺

Lord Jesus, as we follow your example of obedience, reveal God’s ways to us, and through us, at the start of this new year and beyond. Amen.



New year, new life *Part 2 – the joy of failing*

by Jane Williams

How are your New Year resolutions doing? Most evidence suggests that very few resolutions actually make it as far as February. The trouble is that every time we embark on a course of self-improvement and can’t stick to it, it makes us feel like failures, and failure is self-perpetuating. The more we fail, the more certain we

are that we shall fail again next time we try. Ask any dieter!

The good news for Christians is that failure is a necessary precondition for the Christian life. After all, if we thought we could be good by ourselves, and save the world without any help from God, what would be the point of being a Christian? We know that we need God to act for us, to reach out to us, and that we would never get round to it on our own, or be capable of doing it even if we tried. ☺

“The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year, but rather that we should have a new soul.”

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), writer, philosopher, theologian and critic

Revelations of Divine Love *Part 2 – all shall be well*

by William Hepper

Julian’s account of her experiences of God’s “showings” or revelations are given in two forms, a Short Text, probably written earlier, and a Long Text, in which she expands on her visions. In both she is exercised by the problem of human sin. She states, “I saw that nothing kept me from him (God) but sin... and I thought that if sin had never existed, we should all have been pure and like himself,

as God made us; and I have often wondered before now in my folly why, in his great foreseeing wisdom, God had not prevented sin; for then, I thought, all would have been well.”

The answer to this conundrum was made clear to Julian in a vision of Jesus with the words, “Sin is befitting, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

In spite of the reality of sin in human life, in God’s economy all will, nonetheless ultimately be well. ☺