

*Sermon Preached by Rev Rachel McDougall*

*St Paul's Canterbury*

*Christmas Eve/Day 2020*

*God's love in the smallest of things*

The main character in the Christmas story does not do a thing.

He says not a word – although he probably cried like most babies.

A baby laid in a manger, oblivious to it all, dependent, yet radiant with new life and possibility wrapped up in the five fingers on each hand, in tiny feet and deep knowing eyes. Jesus is just there, with Mary and Joseph.

There is something so miraculous about new life in its smallness and its need, its vulnerability.

This is such an ordinary everyday miracle told in a matter of fact way.

Parents on the move, the powerful throwing their weight around.

The inevitable birth of a child that happens whether the time is convenient or not.

Through the upheaval and pain of labour new life comes and is born and that cannot fail to move us to wonder!

Here is an ordinary story that glows with the extraordinary, touched with divine love and the singing of angels.

The world continues on and yet the babe born in all its smallness is for all people in all times, news that is good and great and full of joy.

This year has been an extraordinary year, hard to pin down with words – so much is held in the words – what a year!

All its' upheavals, our lives changed almost in an instant by a virus that we can't even see.

We have been reminded of our frailty, that we are vulnerable.

We have been reminded of all that we have taken for granted – even toilet paper.

It has been a year of anxiety, pain and suffering.

There is a sense of weariness as we come to Christmas and wonder if we can still feel joy.

And yet.

This is not the end of the story of this year.

In the darkness there have been pinpricks of light, small signs of hope, tiny glimpses of what can help us to continue on.

There has been the treasure of the small gifts in seeing a flower poking through a fence, smiling eyes above a mask, the cheerful chats with a barista.

Even treasure in the quietness of the streets, the patient waiting and persistence in hope and love for each other.

We have been reminded that we are connected to each other.

There have been meals cooked, phone calls made, shopping done.

All of these speak to me of love as does the simple words of carols.

Christmas reminds us that God is found in the small signs of love rather than in the powerful throwing their weight around.

Love was not in the emperor sending people to be counted but in the birth of a wee one.

So often we can feel overwhelmed by what is more powerful than us, by what we can't control and by the complex problems and pain that are so much bigger than us.

Yet in the midst of this, God continues to be born in us.

God is with us and cares in the small gestures of love and support, the helping hand, the wearing of masks and all those small acts of kindness that speak loudly of love and that each person matters and is loved.

These small signs of love whisper in us that love and hope remain and make all the difference.

In the small things which we often overlook God is at work to be born within us.

God continues to love us and bless us and heal us one step, one moment, one day at a time.

How often is it the small things that are most genuine, that bring hope to life.

Through the darkness the light of Christ shines on.

The Christ child is born in us and love joy hope and peace remain true and deep, revealed in every tiny sign, each small action.

After all it is in a tiny helpless baby that God became one of us.

So in the small things, love continues to shine.

Glory and love in the ordinary, in the small move us to awe and speak of what is real and true:

God is with us, God within us, the God who in Jesus lived and died for us.

Here is God in the smallness of a tiny baby who still seeks us to love and be loved.

*God of joy*

*in the quiet stillness of this holy night*

*may we hear the angels sing*

*and know in the celebration of Jesus' birth*

*peace for the present*

*and hope for the future*

*Amen.*