

## Christmas Message for Boxing Day

During my time in isolation, because of Covid, I have done a bit of reading and one of the books that I have focussed on, is called “A passion for the impossible” – the account of how China Inland Mission played an important role in the development of China as a nation.

Hudson Taylor is the missionary that we identify with this outreach, after all it was his vision in 1865, but there were many others who took his vision forward to bring the Gospel to the Chinese people.

The book traces the development of the mission from 1865 – 1965, and how eager they were to reach the inland provinces of China with the Gospel. The mission prayed hard and sent out waves of workers to China throughout the late nineteenth century and many were outstanding Scots, who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

They had many battles to fight, not least nature, the animistic religions, the war with Japan, the spread of communism and despite it all these brave people did not lie down and kept on going.

In the book there are lines of a poem which spoke to my heart,

*Are there any rivers you think that are uncrossable?*

*Are there any mountains that you cannot tunnel through?*

*God specialise in the wholly impossible.*

*Doing the things which man cannot do.*

These words are for us also today.

For in our lives, we have our own battles.

Yes, different from the first missionaries to China; we don't have communism to fight against, we don't have earthquakes and natural disaster, in the way that

these people had, we don't have the many dangerous diseases that took many of their lives.

But we do have our own challenges and they come in different ways; the challenges of materialism – the challenges of secularism – the challenge of Covid - and we are all affected in some way by these.

But recognising the battle is half of the problem, the other half is where do we find our strength to keep on going?

To Mary on that first Christmas night, lonely, afraid, homeless and vulnerable – she looked to God. God was at work in her life, and God was using this young woman called Mary to bring his salvation into His world. Mary just had to be available and to allow God to work through her. She said, I am your servant, let is be as you have said.

Who would have thought that the Eternal God would break into the world in a small baby? It's incredible, isn't it? Yet, this is what we believe and what we hold onto as the foundation of our faith. This is what we celebrate today!

That God has come to us, if it was left to us human beings, we would have designed something far grander and far more exciting than a baby born in a manger, and yet when you step back and think about it, could it get any more exciting than this, God taking human form and becoming our flesh and bone and blood to reconcile the universe to Himself. Far fetched, not a bit, this is how God has identified Himself with us.

That is where our strength comes from, the strength that we need to cross that uncrossable river, to tunnel through that mountain.

God is with us.

I don't know what you think about the 60 billion dollars that NASA has spent to send a web telescope into Space, when there are billions of people struggling with poverty on this planet. But the quest is there to discover what might be out there and how it all began.

The irony is that the One they are searching for, has come to us. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe has crossed galaxies to be with us and He has done so through a baby.

If we want to know more about God, we don't need to reach into the distant boundaries of our galaxy. If we want to know more about our Creator, He is far closer to us now, than we can imagine. He is here! He has come! He has shown us what he is like.

In the person of Christ, we see the invisible God.

Hudson Taylor was burning with desire to take this message about God into the darkest places of China and to bring light and joy to the Chinese people. This he did, and through this message lives were transformed lives and brought into God's light.

*Are there any rivers you think that are uncrossable?*

*Are there any mountains that you cannot tunnel through?*

*God specialise in the wholly impossible.*

*Doing the things which man cannot do.*

This Christmas may we look again at the babe in the manger and see a God who loves us and cares for us.