

Year B Christmas Day 2023

Isaiah 52: 7-10

Hebrews 1: 1-12

John 1:1-14

## **Superhero?**

Who do we think should come and save the world? Who has the skills and attributes to ensure people can live in peace with each other? Who can ensure there are no 'baddies' left to ruin the lives of people?

Well, if we look at what our culture has to offer you might think it should be Superman, the Dark Knight, Spiderman, the Wolverine in X-Men, or one of the characters in the Marvel series perhaps? Or maybe I have missed out one of your favourites? In my day it was Batman and Robin or Action Man, just to show how ancient I am!

What these characters have in common is some wonderful superpowers that give them skills and strengths beyond what normal human beings have. They use these powers to deal with either their enemies or the enemies of particular countries or even the world order. They use their special skills and physical force to achieve change.

But, and it is a big but, I don't think they make any attempt to change each and every human being through creating lasting human relationships. I don't think their example really inspires others to do the same as the superheroes. That is because with such superpowers beyond what humans have, it would be impossible for any of us to imitate them, to do the same as they can do. Could anyone of us follow Spiderman's exploits, for example. I don't think I would survive trying to crawl over a ceiling, defying gravity, let alone climb up the side of a tall building.

Today, we celebrate the birth of a different sort of superhero. This superhero, Jesus Christ, is nothing like Superman, Spiderman, the Dark Knight, or the Marvel characters.

Jesus came to us as a vulnerable baby, and even as an adult, he never wore a fancy costume that made him stand out from the rest of the crowd. Despite having awesome powers, Jesus only ever used them to heal people and to

enable people to understand what the whole world could be like if only people would respect each other and show compassion and love for one another. Jesus even asked people if they wanted healed – he never assumed they would want to be healed. And we know that Jesus wept at the death of a friend, we know he asked others to do things to support his mission on earth, and he depended on others to help him as he travelled around the countryside. When he entered Jerusalem for the last time, he needed to get a loan of a donkey.

Jesus sought to change the world not by command nor by physical threats nor by using physical force. Jesus walked alongside people, built relationships, showed love, patience and endless compassion. Through Him, God sought to change the world on its own terms.

Jesus was born to give us all a second birth, as one of the carols makes clear. And that re-birth is so we can each be changed, so our capacity to love, to relate effectively, to think about the world differently and view all other human beings through God's eyes, can happen.

God sent his Son Jesus, as a vulnerable baby into a precarious world. God, through Jesus, changes us by the most unconventional yet effective means – we are changed by defenceless love. The tiny vulnerable child that grew into a very different sort of superhero, captures our hearts, and enables us to see the world through his loving, compassionate, and caring eyes.

Our superhero does not use force. God uses love; the love that came down at Christmas and which we are invited to join in with.

Today we welcome the Christ-child into our lives once more. May we respond with love, not just to Jesus, but to all humankind. May we follow his example and help change the world one relationship at a time, from the inside out.

And luckily for us, when we find God's mission so difficult, we can once more turn to the baby Jesus, and get a re-charge of our 'kingdom' batteries as we respond with love, with hope, with joy, to this birth of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Jesus, wrapped in swaddling bands. It may not seem to be superhero clothing, but appearances are deceptive. May Jesus be the instrument of our second birth, and lead us into new adventures, in love, peace and justice for all. Jesus, wrapped in swaddling bands – I am proud to call Him my superhero. I hope you are too.