

MODERATOR'S 2025

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Be full of gaiety and high spirits marked by festivity, everyone. It's Christmas time!

I was walking along Manners Street in Wellington CBD about six weeks ago and noticed, as you do there, a roughly dressed man who hadn't probably brushed his matted hair in months, sitting on a piece of corrugated cardboard with his meagre possessions beside him. A rough sleeper. He had his hat laid out waiting for a donation. I looked at him from a distance, summed him up, and walked past looking straight ahead up the street as though something more interesting had caught my attention. At least I didn't cross the street to avoid him.

About two hours later, I returned down Manners Street, and the man was still there. I slowed my pace a little when the voice said, Go and sit with him. So, I did, with my flashier clothes and hair done. People were looking. I asked how he was, and we started talking. Used to be married with children. Worked for a government department a few blocks away, for a number of years. I told him who I was, and another family history was exchanged. "Where do you live?" I asked. "On the street or under a building, if the weather is bad, I like it on the street". "How does the money work out?" "Always just enough because Jesus answers my prayers every day."

We talked more, then he got up to go. I offered to pray with him and did. He prayed as well - that was special. He explained he had enough in his hat to buy a few kebabs down the street. I gave him the little cash I had, being a plastic card person. "Goodbye", and he was gone. A fifteen-minute encounter. I walked in Manners Street over the next couple of days but never saw him again.

Luke 2:14, "*Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.*"

recently received a text from a parishioner, the kind that tugs at the heart. She had been notified that the business where she worked was closing, and she would have no job after Christmas. Her husband lost his job at the beginning of the year. She is still getting over the emotional and physical trauma of a miscarriage of a much-wanted child. Her comment was, "It has been a shit year!" Not the King's English, is it? You are allowed to tell God things like that.

Two days later, a smile on her face with the words, "I'll be OK, Jesus will answer my prayers". Luke 2:10-11, "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

I made the connection when I started writing this piece. Both people referred to their faith in Jesus. They spoke as though they knew him not as a character in a story but a person of reality in the midst of their difficulties in life. Luke 2:30-33, "I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

Sit with the rough sleeper and listen. Pray with the fearful. Meet with the lonely. Food for the hungry. Money for the poor. A festival for those who live in dark circumstances. A story about God with us. Those are some of the gifts the Church can give at Christmas time as it too knows Jesus and the path he asks us to walk.

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