

**SERMON: 24 December 2018 7PM – Rev Alistair Cowper**

**“The Christ of Christmas is With Us”  
(Luke 2:1-20 and Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-7)**

The greatest gift that God could possibly give us is the gift of God himself.

The greatest present we could ever receive is the presence of God.

Christmas is all about that gift - the presence of Christ, God with us.

And if we were to look more closely at what that means, we might see that there are three parts to this gift - past, present and future:

- forgiveness from the past,
- new life in the present
- and a hope for the future, beyond death.

One of my favourite verses in any Christmas carol is the last verse of ‘O little town of Bethlehem’.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem  
Descend to us we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in  
Be born in us today  
O come to us, abide with us  
Our Lord Immanuel

The Queen quoted this in her 2016 Christmas address, saying how important it was.

If you think about it, it’s incredible.

That the holy child could come down and cast out our sin and be born in us and stay with us.

But that is what the Bible supports.

Jesus is the Saviour who has come down out of heaven to show us what love looks like, and to become ‘God with us’, and by his Spirit, to become ‘God within us’.

God has become present with us.

To be present with someone is the greatest gift we can give to one other.

*French philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, said, "The most satisfying thing in life is to have been able to give a large part of one's self to others".*

When it boils down to it, what we enjoy most at Christmas, isn't the quality of the presents, its the presence of those we love.

God became human in Jesus, so that real people could enjoy being with him, being loved by him, being able to love him back in a real way.

And now through his Spirit born in us,  
we can enjoy his company,  
We can know his nearness,  
His guidance,  
His forgiveness,  
His peace and joy and love.

So let's receive the gift with thanks  
and let's share the gift of being present with one another  
Knowing he is always with us,  
Because his moving into the neighbourhood  
Means he is living in all of us.