

SERMON SUMMARY
Christmas
25th December 2011

- The Christmas story is familiar to us, but we often look at a composite.
- The two accounts in Luke and Matthew are very different.
- Luke's is the happier of the two.
- Matthew's is darker with the story of the massacre of the innocents and the flight into Egypt. It is not often preached about in our context, and only really surfaces where the feast of the Holy Innocents is kept (Dec 28th).
- In Africa, the stories from Matthew have a higher profile.
- Benezet Bujo, a Congolese Christian, in a book titled *God Becomes Man in Black Africa* writes of the significance of the Flight into Egypt for African Christians...
- To paraphrase: God becomes man, man in danger. Defenceless and vulnerable. He is taken as a refugee from Israel to Egypt. And there, He is welcomed, protected and lives in safety. African Christians rejoice to remember the welcome and refuge they gave to the Lord.
- As recent newscasts are filled with the continuing "hot button" issue of boat-people and asylum-seekers. Here is a chance to reflect on what our attitudes might be through reflecting on Scripture.
- I am not saying that the Bible accounts give a simple answer that we can simply drop into our very different social and political context.
- But we believe that the Bible speaks to us, and has the power to be transformative: to change our thinking and our attitudes.
- It gives us a fresh approach to an issue which we often look at in purely social and economic terms, long- or short-term.
- It gives a bit of distance or objectivity, too. That account is not as immediate as our current debate. It lets us stand back and look afresh.
- We often read the Bible as a guide by following what Jesus does.
- This account asks something different: we are asked to see how what happens to Jesus the victim, not the agent, might prompt us to reflect on how we might live, and deal with analogous situations in our own life.
- What new views do we get into the refugee issue, if we factor in Jesus the victim, and what is asked of us?

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