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8 January 2014: Jon Piper, Hope Church



Brilliantly Grey

Christmas, I'm sure you'll agree, is brilliant.

I spent this past Christmas with my wider family, hidden away in a hunting lodge in the Scottish Highlands. We exchanged presents and laughed at each other to our hearts' content.

And, of course, the 'reason for the season' - the miracle of God becoming a human baby - is far more amazing than I could comprehend. My small brain is not capable of understanding the brilliance of that divine act.

Then January arrives and we leave cosy fireside conversation, event television and fairy lights behind. Real life hits us, like the cold, steel thud of a shovel in the face in an old "Tom and Jerry" cartoon. Work, rain and lack of sunlight greet us as the new year begins. Money continues to be problematic, taxes continue to be demanded, lives continue to begin and end. Life's pace continues to be punctuated by pensions, good books, driving, sweet songs, bad books, news of political wrangles, difficult commutes, dirty shoes and shopping for milk.

It is also plain that the miracle of God becoming a baby carries the implication that He experienced much of this January-based dullness.

Granted, the weather was less grey in ancient Judea. But the Jesus we are told about will have experienced the drudgery of small town life, funny smells, probably bullying due to his parentage, learning his craft, eking out a living.
The gospels offer a few details about the start of Jesus' life, then jump 30 years to the start of his ministry (apart from a short, prepubescent episode). The narrative gap implies that God's first 30 or so years as a human were full of everyday, simple drudgery.

It seems to me that God's life in Jesus takes the mundane and calls it sacred, worthwhile and just occasionally brilliant.

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