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6. **King Herod** – Herod gets the surprise of his life when a group of foreign astrologers turn up and tell him that a star in the night sky signifies the birth of a new king: *'Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.'* Matthew 2:1-2
7. **Wise Men** The wise men are surprised to find the new king, not in a palace, but in a manger: *'On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.'* Matthew 2:11

### The biggest surprise

- John, who is Jesus' cousin, opens his Gospel with the biggest surprise in history. He firstly tells that Jesus, 'the word', was there with God at the beginning of time: *'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.'* John 1:1 He then goes on to tell us that *'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.'* John 1:14
- John tells us that Jesus, who is none other than God's son, leaves heaven to come and dwell amongst us.
- This is the amazing surprise at the centre of the Christmas story. Jesus leaves heaven to:
  - Reveal what his Father, God, is like: *We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14. If we are ever in doubt about what God is like then we need look no further than Jesus.

But as John continues his Gospel he reveals five other purposes of why Jesus left heaven and came to earth:

1. to call sinners to repentance.
2. to give his life as a ransom for many
3. to reveal life after death
4. to demonstrate the power of God and
5. to establish a Kingdom

### Conclusion

- So as we reflect on the Christmas story once again this year will be surprised by the amazing truth sitting at the centre of the Christmas story: that Jesus stepped out of heaven so that the broken relationship between us and God can be restored.

Matthew Street 25<sup>th</sup> December 2018



## The Parish of Peasedown St John

Surprised! - John 1:1-14

### Talk Notes

#### Introduction

- What has surprised you this year?
  - the Brexit fiasco in Parliament?
  - the action of a son or daughter or even a grandson or granddaughter?
  - something in your workplace?
  - illness in your family?
  - an unexpected windfall?
  - some comments on social media?
- Some of you will be aware of my own personal unexpected surprise.
- But what about Christmas this year? Has anything surprised you, other than the speed with which Christmas seems to arrive each year and our unpreparedness as a result?

#### Surprises in the Christmas Story...

- What about the Christmas Story which we have heard and seen played by countless young people? Are we surprised by this in any way?
- Some of us may remember the TV show hosted by Cilla Black in the eighties and nineties called "Surprise, Surprise." The Biblical Christmas Story is a bit like an episode of "Surprise, Surprise." It is littered with people getting unexpected surprises:
  1. **Zechariah** – Zechariah was a priest but unfortunately he had given up on the idea of ever meeting with God in the temple. He went to church but did not expect anything to happen. Maybe some of us are like that. We come to church once a year, as a habit, to feel Christmassy, but we really do not expect to meet God. Zechariah got the surprise of his life when the Angel Gabriel told him that his barren wife Elizabeth was going to have a son: *'When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.'* Luke 1:12
  2. **Mary** – A twelve year old girl gets the surprise of her life when the same Angel comes and tells her that she is going to give birth to a son. *'You will be with child and give birth to a son'.* Luke 1:31 even though she is not married and has not been with Joseph, her betrothed: *How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?* Luke 1:34
  3. **Elizabeth** – The Angel Gabriel also tells Mary that her barren relative Elizabeth is in for a surprise as well: *'Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.'* Luke 1:36
  4. **Joseph** - The same angel surprises Joseph by telling him that Mary, his betrothed, is going to have a baby even though he knows that he has not had anything to do with the conception: *"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"* Matthew 1:20
  5. **Shepherds** Shepherds were tending their flocks on the hills around Bethlehem, much as they had done everyday for many years, but they get the

surprise of their life one night when not only one angel appears but a whole army of angels: *'Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests'* Luke 2:13-4

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