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A Crown

- No doubt this year we will all wear our paper Christmas Cracker crowns as we sit around the table to enjoy our Christmas meal.
- But those crowns sum up the problem with our world. It sums up the problem of our lives – We all want to be Kings and Queens of our lives.
- The trouble is that when we are in control, things go wrong
- That is why God gave us Jesus as our special Christmas gift



A Gift

- Most Christmas Crackers contain a gift. God's gift to:
 - a) **Mary** was Joseph her husband and the privilege of bringing up God's only son.
 - b) **Elizabeth**, who had been barren all her life, was to give birth to John the Baptist.
 - c) **Zechariah** was a son, John the Baptist.
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 - f) **Wise Men** was to look upon the face of God
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 - to reveal more about his Father, God.
 - to call sinners to repentance.
 - to give his life as a ransom for many
 - to reveal life after death
 - to demonstrate the power of God and
 - to establish a Kingdom



Conclusion

- So as we reflect on the Christmas story once again, who will we be like? Will we be like:
 - a) **King Herod** who had no intention of taking the crown off his head.
 - b) **Zechariah** and treat the Christmas story as a bit of a joke.
 - c) **Mary, Joseph and Elizabeth** who all trusted God.
 - d) **Shepherds** who witnessed the event and then went out and spread the good news: 'So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.' (Luke 2:16-8)
 - e) **Wise Men** who sought an audience with God's son and were prepared to bow their knees and worship him.

Matthew Street 25th December 2023



The Parish of Wellow

A Christmas Cracker - Matthew 1:18-25

Talk Notes

Introduction

- Have you ever considered that the humble Christmas Cracker acts as a wonderful summary of the Christmas story. A Christmas Cracker is made up of four things:
 1. A **Bang** or **Surprise** as we pull it,
 2. A **Joke** for us to share,
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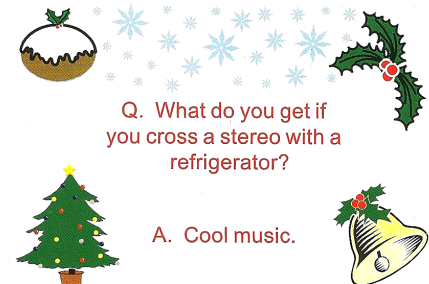


A Bang or Surprise

- Every character in the Christmas story gets an unexpected bang or surprise:
 - a) **Mary** – "Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be." (Luke 1:29)
 - b) **Elizabeth** – '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)
 - c) **Zechariah** – 'When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.' (Luke 1:12)
 - d) **Joseph** - "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) An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." (Matthew 2:13)
 - e) **Shepherds** 'And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.' (Luke 2:8-9)
 - f) **King Herod** – '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)
 - g) **Wise Men** 'And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.' (Matthew 2:12)
- Why have you come to church today? Have you come to worship God and hear him speak directly to you or are you here out of a sense of habit, a bit like Zechariah?

A Joke

- Do we treat the Christmas story a bit like the joke in a Christmas Cracker? Is it just something we engage with each year for the sake of our children. Or is it something that we take seriously, believing that the events happened and that they are of great significance for us and for all mankind.
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Q. What do you get if you cross a stereo with a refrigerator?

A. Cool music.

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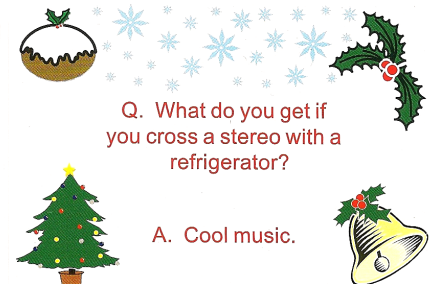


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