

24/25 December 2010

Midnight Communion 2010 Ray Slade

Earlier this year I read this little book 'Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture'. It about a mathematician who spent his entire life passionately and energetically trying to solve one of the greatest ever puzzles of mathematics, Goldbach's Conjecture.

It is simple enough to say 'all even numbers can be expressed as the sum of 2 prime numbers'. But while no exception to it has ever been found it has never been proven mathematically to be true in all cases.

The book's ok, quite fun but by no means great!

Our reflection this evening is 'the mathematics of Christmas!'

We start with a brain gym. Getting warmed up, fit, ready to receive the message of Christmas.

A few simple equations to solve. They start easy and get harder.

$X=3+2$ Answer 5

$X-3=8$ Answer 11

$5+2X=13$ Answer 4

Algebra is all about discovering the value of an unknown, x in this case.

Christmas can also be about making a discovery. Identifying an unknown. Indeed often Christmas is shortened to **Xmas** almost as though there really is something unknown at the heart of it.

Well of course the X is short for Christ. It's from the Greek Chi, the first letter of Christ which looks like our X.

But for many people there is something unknown, something awaiting discovery, something like an equation to be solved. That X, that Christ is maybe not known, undiscovered, a personal equation waiting to be solved.

What was your maths like at school? A* or U?

How is you Christmas maths going? There is work to be done!

Let me give a little pointer towards revealing that X, that unknown.

Tomorrow in the FS we will be opening these crackers. Here's what they say.
Don't tell anyone who's here in the morning!

1. God loved us so much
2. That he gave his Son
3. If we believe in Him
4. We will live with God for ever.

That's a paraphrase of John 3 v 16. The Gospel in a nutshell.

It starts with **God and his love for us** his wonderful, amazing, creation. But a creation gone selfish, gone sinful, gone wrong or at least the human bit of it. The link between God and his creation broken.

Then comes the **gift. His Son.** Christ. The X of Christmas. God became man and lived among us.

But the gift requires a response. A special way of saying thankyou! **Believe.** That's a strong word more like **trust.** I believe there is a Barclays bank in Broxbourne. But that belief is neither here nor there until I actually trust them with my cash. The story is told of a famous tightrope walker who could wheel a barrow full of bricks across a vast chasm. He would invite on lookers to join him in the barrow instead of the bricks. 'Do you believe I can do it?' 'yes'. 'Then get in'. 'Ah maybe not!' What is lacking is the total confidence and **trust.** **Trust** goes beyond the passive and into **active** commitment. That's what is at the heart of believe here.

Finally '**we will live with God for ever.**' Through trust the broken link is fixed, abundant, eternal life is promised, assured.

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Discoveries are being made all the time. The years ahead may see remarkable solutions and discoveries. The Higgs Boson may be unveiled in the LHC. Maybe Goldbach's conjecture will be finally proven (doubtful) like Fermat's last theorem was a few years back.

But more important is that personal discovery of the real identity of the X of Christmas. The Christ. And then going on with Him into a life full of meaning, a life worth living, a future assured.

Christmas Morning 2010

I am going to share with you something of this Advent calendar I was given. Unfortunately it's not a proper AC with shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph etc. It's a joke AC, with 24 Cracker type jokes in it.

It was given to me by one of our congregation!!

Let's hear some of them. They are **not** hilariously funny.

You may get similar, hopefully better, jokes in your crackers later.

I've got 4 crackers here with not jokes but important 'one liners' in them which we can join up.

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As we go back to our Christmas, our presents, our good things let's go remembering the most important gift of them all, and why that gift was given.

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