

Christmas Eve All Age

A Boy called Christmas

Luke 2:1-20

Matt Haig is a writer. As a writer for children and young adults he has won lots of prizes for his writing.

Tonight, on Christmas Eve, I want to tell you part of the story of one of my favourite books that Matt Haig wrote. The book is called, 'A Boy Called Christmas.' Do you know how Matt Haig came to write the book? One day Matt was with his son, and they were talking about Christmas, and Matt's son asked a simple but very wonderful question, "What was Father Christmas like as a boy?"

Well, that is a wonderful question, and it sparked a whole set of ideas in Matt Haig's imagination. His story follows an ordinary young boy called Nikolas, who was born on Christmas Day. He sets out on an extraordinary adventure into the snowy north in search of his woodcutter father, who was on a quest to discover the fabled village of the elves, Elfhelm. Nikolas takes a headstrong reindeer called Blitzen, and a loyal pet mouse for company.

There is a wicked aunt, there is the Truth Pixie, who can only ever tell the truth, and there are lots of other wonderful, wonderful characters. The book starts like this:

"You are about to read the true story of Father Christmas. Yes. Father Christmas. You may wonder how I know the true story of Father Christmas and I will tell you that you shouldn't really question such things. Not right at the start of a book. It's rude, for one thing. All you need to understand is that I do know the story of Father Christmas, or else why would I be writing it?"

Maybe you don't call him Father Christmas. Maybe you call him something else. Santa or Saint Nick or Sinterklaas, or Kris Kringle or Pelznickel or Papa Noël or Strange Man With A Big Belly Who Talks To Reindeer And Gives Me Presents. Or maybe you have a name you've come up with yourself, just for fun. If you were an elf, you would always call him Father Christmas...

But whatever you happen to call him, you know about him, and that's the main thing. Can you believe there was a time when he was just an ordinary boy called Nikolas, living in the middle of nowhere, or the middle of Finland, doing nothing with magic except believing in it? A boy who knew very little about the world except the taste of mushroom soup, the feel of a cold north wind, and the stories he was told. And who only had a doll made out of a turnip to play with.

But life was going to change for Nikolas, in ways he could never have imagined. Things were going to happen to him. Good things. Bad things. Impossible things. But if you are one of those people who believe that some things are impossible, you should book this book down right away. It is most certainly not for you...

Because this book is full of *impossible things*."

What a great start to a book. And the story goes on to tell of how this human boy called Nikolas brought joy and happiness to a sad and frightened world. I wish I had time to read it all to you.

Two lovely things I remember from it. The Truth Pixie, who can only ever tell the truth, said this to Father Christmas: 'Sometimes,' she said, as her eyes shone wide and bright, 'people look up to people not for who they have been, but for what they could become. For what they know they could be. They see in you something special.'

And then, towards the end of the book, these words: "An impossibility is just a possibility you don't understand."

Each Christmas Eve, we hear again the story of the birth of Jesus. There are many characters in the story: a star; a stable; shepherds; angels; wise men; an innkeeper; King Herod; the donkey (though it's not mentioned in the Bible story!); Mary; Joseph; and Jesus. His birthday was also Christmas Day!

So many parts of the story, and some people have always found the story hard to believe. Could it have happened? What was it like? Why do we still tell it?

We tell it because it speaks of kindness and love coming into the world, and helping us cope with the hard times and difficult places of life. We tell it because it tells us that we are never alone and

that there is always someone there for us. We tell it because it speaks of gifts given, and perhaps the biggest gift of all: the gift of hope.

Maybe, like in *A Boy Called Christmas*, it is like this for the Christmas story about Jesus: an impossibility is just a possibility you don't understand.

This night of nights, with the lights around us, wherever we have come from, whatever age we are, let the wonder, the excitement, the peace, and the joy of Christmas and the coming of Jesus fill you right up to the top of your lives. Hear the Christmas story of love, joy and peace; and believe Jesus came into our world, just for you!

Amen