

Feet

Isaiah 52:7-10; John 1:1-14

There was a time when, if you were a boy or a man, most of your Christmas presents seemed to consist of slippers and socks. It's what you gave to people you didn't know what to get. Not bad gifts; helpful gifts in fact, but maybe lacking that extra-special pizzazz that you might have been hoping for. Apologies to anyone who is planning to give or receive slippers and socks at Christmas!

Maybe they're not such bad things after all. I was struck by our reading from Isaiah – which tells us, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good."* Whose feet were these?

The feet of the donkey carrying Mary to Bethlehem? Or the feet of Joseph, walking patiently beside her the long 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

The feet of the innkeeper – rushing around at that busy census time with no room for strangers.

The feet of angels dancing from heaven to earth.

The feet of the animals in the place where the baby was born.

The feet of the shepherds, running from the cold, stony fields to the manger, then back again to tell the story of the birth.

The feet of Herod, pacing up and down in Jerusalem, darkly worrying about the news of a new King foretold in the sky by a new star.

The feet of Herod's soldiers, getting ready to march to Bethlehem to slaughter the innocents?

The feet of the Wise Men, on their long road from the East to Jerusalem and then on the few short miles from that city to the little town of Bethlehem.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tiding, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good." I reflect again on the different feet there are in the Christmas readings until now. Not all of them came to bring good news. But some of them did. All of those feet.

But what about the most important feet of all? I like the thought of the feet of the infant Jesus. I can imagine Mary and Joseph taking turns to hold the infant, wrapped in His swaddling clothes. Those little, tiny, baby feet, being warmed from time to time in His parents' hands. A couple of weeks ago I was at South Morningside Primary School's Primary 1 Nativity play. There was a young mother sitting beside me with her four month old infant, who had somehow managed to wriggle out of most of his clothes. "Would you hold him whilst I pick up his clothes?" she asked. So I took him, and my fortunate baby-whisperer skills came into play. It must be something about the reverberations of my deep voice. And the fact that as we sat there, the baby and I, I held his little cold feet in my hand, to warm them. It wasn't hard to imagine Joseph and Mary doing the same for their little infant Jesus. Holding his feet to warm them.

The feet of adult Jesus – there's an image. Dusty in sandals on the many roads He travelled. Walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee. Being anointed by Mary in Bethany. Being nailed to a cross at Calvary. Walking in the cool, grey dawn of the garden on that first Easter morning.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tiding, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good." The feet of Jesus take us from the crib to the cross. From nativity to crucifixion to resurrection. The feet of Jesus bring good news on this Christmas Day. How will you use your feet to go from here and share that good news beyond these walls?

Time to start walking!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Amen