**A year to remember** dkm Dec 2020

It was in March 2020 that a pandemic was declared. a corona virus had escaped out of China. But even before this, the year had begun with what were labelled ‘unprecedented’ bushfires on the east coast of Australia. People fled for their lives as bushfires raged out of control. In early February the Lord sent rain that quenched these fires, filled our dams and gave farmers a bumper crop.

Our sense of things being out of control because of drought and bushfires was exacerbated by the feeling, and reality, of being out of control because of corona virus. Our nation was shaken like never before, or at least since the Spanish flu of 1918. ‘Unprecedented’ has become the catch word of the media, although not exactly the truth. A better word or phrase would be ‘out of our control’ because this is how we all felt. In our prosperity we had grown accustomed to being in control of every aspect of our life, in control of our health, of our finances and in control of our comings and goings. The sudden realization that things were out of our control was devastating. We heard of increased drinking, gambling, and domestic violence and a call for more mental health services.

As we come to the end of the year we look forward to Christmas. We are hoping for a happy end to a disastrous year. But for those who understand the truth about Christmas, this year has not been unprecedented or unbearable. The truth is that God became man and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The truth is that Jesus, the creator and sustainer of all things, came into this world to save us from sin and death. The truth is that the Lord is on his throne in heaven, ruling over all- he has been there for ever and will continue for ever (Ps 103:19).

Jesus came into a world torn by injustice and tyrannical rulers, a world where sickness and diseases such as leprosy were ever present, a world in which storms regularly drowned people out on the seas. No one felt in control of their lives, apart for the rich and powerful. The richer we become the more we feel in control and the less we believe God is in control! In Jesus they saw one who truly is in control because he healed every disease and even raised the dead, not to mention stopping the wind and the waves (Matthew 8:27). Are you worried about global warming and unprecedented storms? Then remember the words of these men who were with Jesus on the sea. The bushfires are out but fears of catastrophic climate change continue to be fanned into flame by those who believe that they, not God, are in control.

Jesus came into the world that we might have life, life to the full (John 10:10). Life to the full does mean a life filled with fear; we can cast all our cares on Jesus who cares for us (1Peter 5:7). Jesus came to give us peace: ‘My peace I give to you, not as the world gives (John 14:27). If you hear the word ‘peace’ this Christmas it will be the first time this year! The message of the incarnation is peace, peace with God and peace with your fellow human beings. Peace with God means peace with God’s creation, just in case you feel nature is against you and that you have to appease it in some way. God is in control of his creation. So look to the Lord and know that he died for you and rose again to set you free from sin and the fear of death. Jesus said, ‘Come to me you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28). Will you come to Jesus and remember him as we approach the end of 2020? Will you make 2020 a year to remember Jesus Christ our Lord?

