

## Week 25 - 16th December - Deck the Halls



This time of year I go round the Garden Centres and marvel at their displays of Christmas Decorations; many have colour themes and the displays are really stunning. One of our churches is having a Christmas Tree Festival, and though I will marvel at the ingenuity and beauty of some of the creations, the ones I will like the best will be the kitchen roll decorations of the toddler group, a little bit rough and not particularly artistic but made with much glue and glitter, and dearly loved by the creators.

A little bit rough and not particularly artistic but fearfully and wonderfully made, and dearly loved by the Creator! Sound familiar? I think I have just described you and me. But we are not inanimate trees, we are living, breathing images of the living God.

The trouble is I'm not always content with the basic me (the bare tree) and I try and adorn it to make it look better, not with clothes or makeup, but sometimes I pretend to be what I am not. I pretend I can do things or I give the impression that I am more together than I really am... need I go on? This self examination time of Advent can be a bit scary as I find myself having to face up to the things that need God's healing, loving touch to restore me.

For convenience, I have a synthetic Christmas tree, and when I put it up I really miss the smell and feel of a real one, but I don't miss the pine needles on the floor or the threadbare look before Christmas Day – and of course one thing about a pretend tree is that it always looks good, but that is about it; it is all just decoration, all outward appearance. When I can, I get a real tree and I'll often go for one that no one else wants because I feel sorry for it. And I think that is a parable of Christmas for me. As I get closer to the day of celebrating Jesus coming to share in our life on earth, my tatty tree reminds me that he didn't choose the Palace or a grand hotel, he didn't choose celebrity parents, but he came for those whom no one else really cared for.

I also use the cards I receive as decorations around the manse, but my main decorations are a collection of Nativities from all around the world and also homemade ones too. And my tree has on it Christmas cards telling the story of Jesus including all the Easter symbols, for you can't have Easter without Christmas and Christmas makes no sense without Easter (guess who puts out the Nativities at Easter too?). Once the tree is up and decorated, the Nativities displayed, and the cards all hung, then I feel I am getting ready for Christmas – after all it is only nine more days to go – but inwardly I'm even more prepared because of Advent and the time we are given to think and ponder and reflect on what it means for Christ to come anew in our lives.

*Lord God, help me not to cover up the real me, but let me rejoice that I am made in your image and I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Help me to follow your Son and seek out those who feel of no worth or are ignored, and this Christmas may I remember to put you at the heart of all the celebrations. Amen.*

*Weekly Prayers for December by Denise Creed.*

*Photo: Janet Creed*