

## Address on 5<sup>th</sup> December at the Blessing of the Tree and the Nativity Scene.



Like most good stories, this one begins with Once upon a time – a very long time ago, a man was trudging through the snow on a cold winter’s night near a forest in Germany. As he passed the dark green forest, a wonderful thing happened. He was thinking about the stars that shone above Bethlehem on the night that Jesus was born. In his mind he could see the brilliant new star, announcing the birth of a king, glowing brightly in the sky. He imagined too the angels lighting up the sky with their glory as they sang out the good news to the astonished shepherds standing below.

Suddenly he stopped. The rays of the setting sun were slanting across the snow and making the forest glitter. A small fir tree, just a little taller than he was, held out its snow-covered branches to the light. The tree was transformed into a marvelous sight of sparkling, colourful light as the snow crystals reflected the sun-light.

“What a picture of the glory of Christmas!” He thought to himself. “I must share that with my family at home.” And so the man carefully cut down the little tree and took it home with him. He decorated the branches with tiny candles to represent the stars and his family added colourful ornaments. That man was Martin Luther, the great theologian of the sixteenth century, a leader of the Protestant Reformation and a man who changed the course of Western civilization. We don’t know if he was the first person to dress a Christmas tree and give it a symbolic meaning but the custom of having a Christmas tree has spread from Germany to every country in the world.

Christmas trees are wonderful to look at and this one is no exception. And we can see thousands of them throughout Hong Kong. But what can the Christmas tree tell us about the true meaning of Christmas?

Well, the evergreen tree reminds us of the eternal life which Jesus’s arrival on earth was to win for us.

The triangle represents the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The lights twinkling among the dark branches are like the stars in the sky, shining over Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born. Christmas trees are wonderful to gaze at, especially when all the other lights have been turned off and the lights of the tree are the only ones shining in the dark night.

Jesus was a light sent into a dark world and the darkness cannot quench his light. But Jesus was also life sent into a dying world and that life continues until eternity. So an evergreen tree with lights in its branches is a good way to remind us of Jesus, the light and the life of the world.

This Christmas I set you a challenge. Let’s take the opportunity to tell others what the tree stands for. Share its meaning with others and when you’ve told them about the tree, tell them also about Jesus and why he came to earth at Christmas.

**Let us pray:** Lord Jesus, thank you for the glory, the light and the life of Christmas. Help each one of us to bring your light and life into the world by telling others the true meaning of Christmas. Amen