

SIGNS  
LUKE 1:26-38

We showed some familiar road signs and building signs.

What do these signs mean?

What happens if we don't see the signs or ignore the signs? *Either we are penalised for breaking a law, or we miss out on something important.*

The Bible verse which we read at the start of the service talks about a sign: "*The Lord...*" (*Isaiah 7:14*) The world into which this promise came was not a good world: it was a world where nations were fighting each other, a world where even the people who were supposed to believe in and trust God were ignoring Him, trying His patience; it was a world where evil was in control. God gave Isaiah a sign that He was going to save the world; the sign was a child, born in totally unique circumstances, a child who was given a totally unusual name and title; the child was the sign that God would save the world and move heaven and earth to save the world.

Hundreds of years later, the sign begins to come true. Mary is visited by an angel who tells her that she is going to have a baby, a young woman who had never been with a man, yet she will have a son and the baby is given great titles. He is the "Son of Most high God", a king for ever, His kingdom will never end. In turn, Mary asks for a sign: "*How will...*" (*Luke 1:34*) the angel gives her a sign and the sign is her cousin Elizabeth, an older woman who has never had any children is now expecting a child; she is 24 weeks pregnant; what God has done for Elizabeth, God can do for Mary. Mary believes the promise and the sign and gives herself to serve the Lord, full of faith and courage as she sees not just the signs but what the signs mean!

"Immanuel" – Jack and Olivia are the top names for children in Scotland in 2019; I'm not sure that Immanuel registers on that list! I'm not sure it would have registered on the list of top baby names even in the seventh century BC! It is not so much a name, but a title. The title is part of Isaiah's sign and when Matthew tells the story of Joseph, he quotes this promise and tells us what Immanuel means – "God with us!" I was talking to the Primary school children on Friday about Jesus as God with us, but do we recognise God in the baby? They recognise me on the street often and greet me with "hello Mr Dewar" but I suggested to them that they might not recognise me quite so much if I was dressed in my "See-you-Jimmy" hat and sunglasses! They were sure they would recognise me. Immanuel has come, God with us, but sort of in disguise! As a baby, then as a man, a real human being, Jesus is God in disguise.

As Jesus goes about His business, people begin to see through that disguise. He heals the sick; blind people see; lame people walk; the deaf hear – signs that Jesus is no ordinary human being, signs that God is here. His death and resurrection convince many that God is here and that Jesus is exactly what the signs tell us and what He says about Himself. God humbled Himself to come into the world to save the world; this is the way Jesus was, the kind of person that He was, this is what He did, this is how the power of God is at work in Him all of that persuades us to trust Him and follow Him. Paul tells us that we are to be like Jesus: we are to humble ourselves, to serve others, and by being like that and doing these things, we become signs to the world, signs that point people to Jesus so that they see Him in us and believe.

Immanuel – God is with us. This is a fantastic truth; there is comfort and encouragement, and challenge for us. We see the sign, we read what it means; in turn, let us be the sign for others to read.