

December

From the Vicar

I went into Tesco the other evening and was having a mooch around the freezers, as you do, when I came across the newly sectioned off Christmas Turkeys. Nothing remarkable in that, after all it is nearly December and the decorations are up in all the shops, people are buying presents and even I'm playing a few Carols in the car cd player. What was odd was that the Turkeys in Tesco are already half price! How does that work?

Now I like to think I'm not daft when it comes to sales pitches and scams; after all I am the generation that saw the birth of the MFI sale where everything was on an everlasting discount until the Monday morning when it went off sale and straight back on promotion - different words, same price. I watch the various sofa manufacturers flogging furniture at knock down prices that must end this weekend!

But to launch a range of goods (this time the festive bird) and to immediately say they are half price has got to be a con of the first order. Here we are told is a product that is expensive, has high value and by rights should cost you more. But within the blink of an eye of them being loaded into the deep freeze the price is slashed and we are suddenly getting a bargain. Full of the Christmas spirit Tesco has decided that all shoppers should be able to afford a turkey and so they have knocked 50% off the tag!

Well pardon me for being suspicious!

Just how stupid do they think we are? In my book there is no such thing as a bargain, it's all just one big marketing ploy. In fact it's worse than that. It simply confirms what we all already knew. Tesco and all the other supermarkets are fleecing us most of the time. There's no altruism in this seemingly generous act, it's not as though they have been left with stock they cannot shift – it is only the 25th November not December or they realised they may have bought an unpopular line of products. No this is a cheap product that they are now selling at a cheap price!

How daft do they think we really are? *(Just before some retail experts tell me about 'loss leaders' and methods to get people to do the rest of their Christmas shopping at Tesco's, none of that fits with my next bit so just play along – it is Christmas after all!)*

We like to think that we know the true cost of what we are buying, after all that helps us feel like we've got value for money. We put quality in the same bag as cost: "You get what you pay for!"; "You don't get something for nothing!"; "There's no such thing as a free lunch!" particularly when it comes to Christmas Lunch.

Particularly when it comes to Christmas – FULL STOP!

No not presents, just Christmas. It cost so much.

If we want a quality Christmas then we need to start totting up the cost.

One young woman no doubt rejected by family and friends for falling pregnant before she was married.

One man labeled as a fool for still marrying her.

One family taking shelter in a filthy stable, giving birth to their first child.

One gift of precious metal, a distant memory of heavenly palaces left behind.

One gift of funeral perfume, a sign of things to come.

One King intent on massacre.

One refugee family on the road to Egypt.

One young man on the road to Easter and the cross.

Not so cheap now!

What a cost there is to this festival but wonderfully God is not like the Tesco board. He really has given us a bargain opportunity. He has taken something of the highest value and put a ticket on it that we can all afford. True it's not free – if you want to know Jesus there is still a cost. We offer our life to him, our lives of struggles and hurts and worries along with the joys and the dreams. We make that small offering and given to us in return is God's gift of his Son Jesus Christ who came from heaven to the earth to show us the way back into a wonderful loving and life transforming relationship with a Father God whom we have long since forgotten. If we had to buy that present at full price there is not a person who could afford it but thankfully our God has an offer on this Christmas and its genuine!

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3.16

*Happy Christmas and a Great New Year,
Rev Rob Hinton Vicar of All Saints.*