

## **Thought for the Weekend BBC Radio Wales Fri 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023**

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Along with many other tearful grandparents, I've recently been to 2 nursery school Christmas performances. Our grandson was a shepherd, our granddaughter, his cousin in a different school, a crocodile. I love an unusual character in a Christmas show, especially because the Bible account in Luke's gospel is just the bare bones- Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger, because there was no room at the inn. We're told about the angels, shepherds, kings, wicked Herod – but when I try and 'run the video' in my head, I reckon there must have been a lot of other people around. I particularly wonder why there's no mention of the midwife, who would surely have come to Mary to help and support her through her first pregnancy labour pains, reassure her, assist the safe delivery of the Son of God, deal with the placenta to prevent excessive blood loss, keep baby Jesus warm and wrapped, help him latch on to start his breastfeeding off well, and ensure mum and dad were able to adjust to their new roles as parents.

Practical help like this is an essential part of Christian life -Jesus was born as the Word made flesh, no celestial onlooker, but an active participant in our messy, bloody lives. Laying aside any Godly powers, He becomes the most tiny and vulnerable human- a newborn baby – an action showing an incredible level of trust in the human race that it- that we - would accept, love, nurture and protect Him. The fury of Herod at a prophesied rival King even drove the Holy family to become refugees in Egypt before they could safely return home. These bible accounts of the conflict of good and bad from two thousand years ago resonate strongly with us today in 2023. Their eternal themes - humility, sacrifice, pain, exclusion, generosity, trust, acceptance, family - are the material of all our lives, our joys and anxieties. But the stories leave gaps which invite us to step in, fill in the details, relate them to our own lives and experiences to find meaning. So maybe the work of a midwife, delivering a better, safer life at a time of need, may turn out to be a lot like the work of Jesus in our lives. I'm still trying to work out where the crocodile fits in though.