

## Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

I had a conversation with someone very recently who introduced themselves and then said - completely uninitiated- 'I'm not religious mind'. They continued to tell me about their life and every now and again punctuated it with 'I'm not religious mind'.

Eventually I said 'this may shock you but I'm not religious either'. Looking amazed and aghast they said 'well that's a mind bender....how come?' I went on to say that I'm a 'Jesus follower' because He's good news and religion is frankly.....not!

In fact on closer inspection of the gospels, you'll find that Jesus himself struggled massively with religious people who didn't want to know about his outrageous grace, compassion and forgiveness but rather held onto a rigid framework of legalism, control and hierarchy that suited their status quo.

As we approach Christmas, there are lots of people who are curious about Jesus but condemning of religion. And for good reason.....For many, they've been hurt in the name of religion, they've been isolated because of religion, they've felt worthless in the eyes of religion. Over recent years, I've come to realise that people don't have a problem with Jesus, they do have a problem with religion. Because of the latter, they can't see the former and it's incumbent on us to change that narrative, Because.....Jesus is the healer of wounds. Jesus brings the isolated in from the cold. Jesus tells the worthless 'you are the apple of my eye'.

The only way the barrier of religion can be smashed through is when people discover Jesus and all that He has to offer us.

As followers of Jesus, we are not here to defend religion, and nor should we, we're here to direct people to God Incarnate, Light of the World, Prince of Peace, Hope in Despair. This Christmas, may it be said of us that we shun religion but shine Jesus.

I'm not religious mind.....guilty as charged.