

Jesus Christ the Great Swear Word -- to a world that rejects him

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Date: 25 December 2020

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Set aside fear. Banish lamentation. Strike up a song full of joy and mirth. Serve the all highest with glorious choirs.

Let us worship the name of the Lord. And our first carol this morning is Hark, the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king.

Would you like to stand to sing? Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[3 : 48] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. She's a natural kind of a massive The Lord, the Lord, the Prince of Peace, and the Son of Righteousness, light and light into the morning praise, with with me in his wings.

And he makes his glory light, all the last and the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, all the praise of the Son of God, all the glory and the Lord, all the hell of angels sing, glory to the new Lord.

[6 : 35] Amen. Well, as we sit, let's join our hearts together in prayer. Let's pray. Almighty God, who has given us thine only begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin, grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit.

And through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with thee in the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen. It's lovely to be here gathered on Christmas Day together, and lovely also that others can join us, I hope, by the live stream.

And we are glad to be here, to be praising the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who came to banish fear and to give us light and life.

And how greatly that's needed at this time of year, and especially this year. Before I read the Scriptures, I do want to show you a picture on the screens here of the latest addition to our congregational life.

There's little Ezra Ballengal. He's still in intensive care in Whishaw Hospital and needing a lot of support. You'll see there he's on a ventilator. But that was the first time that Lynn was able to hold him, just yesterday.

[8 : 23] So please do keep Lynn and Stephen and little Ezra very much in your prayers, and hold them in your hearts at this time. And let's ask the Lord to have his hand of healing upon him, to grant grace and strength and comfort to his parents, and to surround them with his wonderful love.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 2, and verse 1. Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, Gentile wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born, king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. And they told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, and you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly, and ascertained from them at what time the star had appeared.

[9 : 46] And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you find him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him. After listening to the king, they went on their way, and behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.

And then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far, and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

Noel, born is the king of Israel. The perfect great thing of Israel.

[11 : 14] Well now... O'er the angels this week? Once a certain worshipers in fields as they lay, in fields where they lay, are keeping their sheep, for a cold winter's night and was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, God is the King of Israel.

They looked at all and saw a star shining in the east, beyond and far, and to the earth, with deep red light, and so it continued on day and night.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, O'er the angels this week? Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, O'er the angels this week?

Noel, Noel, Noel, O'er the angels this week? Noel, Noel, Noel, By the light of the dancing star, He rise and came from country far.

[13 : 08] To see for Him was there intent, As you follow the star, wherever it stands.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, For is the King of Israel.

The star divine, to the kind of praise, On profess me, to his burial be.

And the hymn of spirit, For physically, I do in this side.

For Jesus' name, O'er, O'er, O'er, O'er, For is the King of Israel.

[14 : 29] Amen, and and and For is the King of Israel. Amen, and and and For is the King of Israel.

Amen, and and and For is the King of Israel. Amen, and and and and For is the King of Israel.

Amen, and and and and and For is the King of Israel. Amen, and and and and and and and and and And and And and and and and and For his and his, O Israel.

Matthew goes on to tell us, When Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel.

For those who sought the child's life are dead. And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

[16 : 46] And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. Then he went and lived in a city called Nazareth. But what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled.

He shall be called a Nazarene. Now, over some of our Christmas carol services this year, I've been looking at some of the things that we're told about Jesus Christ and what his coming to the world means.

What we're told by the New Testament apostles and the inspired writers. And at our first lesson in Carols a couple of weeks ago, we looked at Peter's words in 1 Peter 2, where he shows us that Jesus Christ is the great healer from the deadly virus, the virus of sin.

And how the message of Christmas brings the ultimate cure for the world's most devastating disease. And that is, of course, the sickness of our sin. By his wounds, says Peter, we are healed.

And then last night on Christmas Eve, we thought about what Hebrews chapter 2 tells us about Jesus Christ being the great liberator from the bondage of fear. And how Christmas brings us the only hope in the face of history's greatest enemy, and our greatest enemy, death itself.

[18 : 10] But he came, we're told, to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Wonderful things, we're told, about our Savior Jesus Christ.

And yet this Christmas morning, I need to tackle these things that Matthew tells us at the very end of his account of the nativity of the Son of God. And it's an astonishing truth, he tells us, and indeed it's an appalling truth, that Jesus Christ is the great swear word to a world that has rejected him.

The Christmas message brings the final exposure of a world that loves darkness rather than light. Over these last few Sundays in Advent, Paul Brennan's been opening up Matthew's account in Matthew 1 and 2 of the story of Jesus Christ under the title, Jesus Christ, the promised light dawning in a dark world.

And the theme of light in the darkness is very prominent in both the prophetic promises about the coming one. We all know the words very well, don't we? The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, says Isaiah, as he looks forward to the great coming day of the Messiah.

It's a promise that's prominent there in the prophets, and also, of course, in the gospel writers who speak of the fulfillment of these prophecies. Matthew quotes those words from Isaiah as we'll see in Matthew chapter 4.

[19 : 42] And John, of course, too, speaks so eloquently, doesn't he, of the light of the world come in Jesus Christ. In him was life, and that light, life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and behold, the darkness has not overcome it. And yet, just a little bit further on from that opening chapter of John's gospel, he gives us these very sobering words.

This is the judgment. Light has come into this world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

And so, though Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come, as we've seen Matthew explaining him in chapter 1 and 2 of his gospel, he is the promised Son and Savior to save us from our sins.

He is the promised Sovereign Shepherd to lead us into life everlasting forever. He is the true Son of God who has suffered in our place that our weeping should be assuaged, that we should instead inherit his everlasting blessings as true sons of God.

[20 : 53] Although he has come, the sad tragedy in our own nation today and in many nations today in the so-called Christian West, the sad truth is that the name of Jesus Christ is more often heard as a swear word than is anything else.

I remember someone once telling me about a little boy hearing the Christmas story, the story of the birth of Jesus for the very, very first time at a Christmas church event. And he asked the question to the leaders, why did they give that baby a swear word as a name?

Because on his little life, all he'd ever heard was the name of Jesus as a swear word. And yet, you know, that's been the case right from the very beginning.

And that's what this last paragraph in Matthew chapter 2 that I read is telling us in answer to the question that Matthew is asking and answering in these early chapters. What kind of a king was it who was born as the Messiah King at last, long promised to Israel?

Well, just as the prophets foretold, as well as being God's true shepherd, his true son, the Savior come to save us, and indeed because he was all of these things to the world, he will always be a swear word.

[22 : 23] He shall be called a Nazarene. And that is a term of utter scorn and shame, as I'll explain a little later on.

And yet, and this is what really matters, this name of scorn is still the name of our salvation. And he who was, and indeed still is, scorned by the world is the one who brings true light into our existence.

So in between our carols this Christmas morning, I want to just point you to three things that Matthew wants us to see in these verses that explain Jesus' birth according to all that was spoken by the prophets.

And first of all, he wants us to see that Jesus' birth is the dawning of light in Galilee. That's what verses 19 to 22 here in Matthew chapter 2 speak of as they tell us about the return to Israel of the Holy Family from their exile in Egypt where they'd fled from the murderous Herod.

And Matthew especially flags up this little geography lesson for us, telling us that they went to Galilee and they went to a town called Nazareth. He tells us because he's telling us that this is the dawning of the light of saving light.

[23 : 41] Saving life in Galilee of the Gentiles of the nations. And that is just what God had promised. That this really is light for the world and for all the peoples of this world.

Remember, Matthew is concerned in his opening of his gospel to show us that this story is not new. It's the continuation of an old, old story about God's promise of salvation right from the very beginning.

And so in chapter 1, verse 1 of his gospel, he reminds us that Jesus is the promised son of David and of Abraham. That is what he's saying is he fulfills all God's promises not just for Israel to restore her under the rule of a great king on David's throne forever, the Messiah, the Christ who was promised.

But also that he fulfills God's promise for the whole world. The promise way back to Abraham that through his seed all the nations, all the peoples of this world would be blessed.

And Matthew's saying this is part of that same age-old story. And he's telling us that it's in Jesus Christ that that story reaches its climax and its fulfillment.

[24 : 56] He is the son of David and he is the son of Abraham. He is Israel's king and he is the savior for all nations of the world as that promised seed was always to be.

And Matthew, although Matthew is very concerned in his story of Jesus about the Jewish origin of Jesus and to point the whole world to salvation only through him, the Jewish Messiah, he's also equally concerned to show that now is the time when at last God's promised salvation has come to all the peoples of the earth.

And the prophet spoke again and again of all peoples coming to praise the God of Israel alongside the natural seed of Abraham.

That's why Matthew is the one who records this visit of the Magi, the wise men. Because they're Gentiles come from far away in the east. And again, he makes a point of flagging up Galilee as the place that Jesus grew up.

Why? The importance of emphasizing Galilee. Well, let me read to you from a little bit later on in chapter 4, verse 12 of Matthew's gospel where Jesus begins his ministry.

[26 : 12] And again, Matthew flags up to make the point that Galilee is the place that Jesus began. Galilee of the Gentiles. So that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light for those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death on them has the light dawned.

Quoting there from Isaiah chapter 9. You see, he's saying, here is the light of salvation dawning not just for the Jews but for the whole wide world.

And as we'll see in a minute, Galilee and Nazareth may very well have been despised and looked down on by the Jewish people in Judea proper because of their Gentile associations.

It was a place where all the nations mixed. And notice also that it's called by Isaiah the way of the sea. this was one of the major ancient trade routes of the world.

[27 : 24] Traffic coming from north to south and east to west met and passed through that very place of Galilee. To the west was the Mediterranean Sea where the ships went to Rome and to Africa and so on.

To the north and south was the trade routes where caravans went to Damascus up to Egypt and so on. And so it was right there in the hub of travel in the ancient world like the Heathrow airport of today.

That is the place that Jesus the Son of God the Savior of all nations was brought up. He brought up hearing the voices and the languages of people from every tribe and language and nation traveling through his homeland right from the very beginning from his childhood.

he was in the midst of a mission to the whole world. And in his breath says Matthew all these peoples of the world Gentiles walking in darkness have seen a great light on them which includes us the light has dawned the dawning of light in Galilee for the world's salvation.

well we're going to pause and express that coming of joy not just for Israel but to the whole world in our next carol. Joy to the world the Lord has come.

[28 : 53] joy to the world the Lord has come let heaven receive and nature and Joe and the earth and a Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[31 : 46] the days of our Lord's infancy by the gathering shadows of darkness and of death over this little child who would who would be known as a Nazarene. Matthew's telling us that there is a wonderful light of salvation but also that there's a terrible darkness in it and that even now these dark clouds are gathering over this little child and this word of Matthew says that it's a fulfillment of prophecy but it isn't a direct quote here this time unlike all the other ones he's not pointing to one specific prediction you look closely you'll notice that he says that what was spoken by the prophets plural might be fulfilled in all the other instances in the first two chapters it's what was spoken by the prophet and it refers to a specific message and what he's saying here is that the birth and the life of Jesus will fulfill the message of all the prophets in general and what they all point to is the fact that the savior the messiah although he is the great king although he is the great head of all that he will be one who is despised and rejected and that's what this means you see to call him a Nazarene it was a form of scorn it was a form of contempt to the Jews of Jesus day it was a small-time Nazareth nothing going for it in a dodgy area full of foreigners and therefore it was a place that was never taken seriously say somebody was a Nazarene they come from a place that you look down on with contempt I suppose a wee bit like folks in Glasgow look at the folk who come from that place on the other side of the M8 across in the east

John chapter 1 in his gospel Nathaniel says can any good thing come out of Nazareth John chapter 7 the Pharisees say to Nicodemus no prophet ever arose from Galilee he was a place of contempt to be called Jesus of Nazareth was very very different to being called Jesus of Bethlehem the house of David but that's how he was known he was Jesus nobody from nowhere he was despised and rejected of men he grew up in a despised place he grew up remember no doubt with dubious parentage Jesus the Nazarene bastard is what they were calling him just as the prophets had spoken Isaiah 49 verse 7 he would be deeply despised abhorred by the nation Isaiah 53 like a root out of a dry ground despised rejected by men a man of sorrows acquainted with grief and so he was in many people's eyes all of his life a bastard child from a blighted time and all through his gospel Matthew tells us of the scorn of the rejection that was heaped upon the son of God himself during his ministry Matthew chapter 12 verse 24 it's by Beelzebub it's by the prince of demons that he casts out demons chapter 27 the crowd shouting crucify him because he's worse than Barabbas that murderous terrorist even after his death the authorities branded him that imposter a real swear word that is what Jesus Christ was all the days of his life despised rejected and humiliated a Nazarene scum from a scummy time and here even at his birth the shadow of suffering and death is drawing over him the drawing darkness over Jesus the Nazarene some of you I know will know of Rembrandt's famous painting the adoration of the shepherds some masterpiece and in the nativity scene all the light in the scene is emanating from the Christ child in the manger but in the background the beams are seen in the stable and the light shining on the beams casts a shadow on the wall of the shape of a cross because there's a great darkness about our salvation as well as a great light because in order that those dwelling in great darkness in the shadow of death in order that they might see the light of life he he who dwelt with the father in light inaccessible he came down and trod the dark valley of suffering and death himself he became a Nazarene in order to be our savior and friends if Jesus was called a Nazarene that also is what his followers were called wasn't it

Acts chapter 24 they called them that Nazarene sect the term of abuse and contempt and still today followers of Jesus are called that aren't they evangelicals fundamentalists extremists and a lot worse than that well we shouldn't be surprised should we Jesus said if they called the master of the house Beelzebub the devil how much more will they malign those of his household Jesus was always the Nazarene it was a name of reproach it was a swear word and so right here at the beginning Matthew is saying in the second chapter of his gospel behold the drawing darkness over the Nazarene even from his very birth Margaret Clarkson has a lovely hymn that speaks eloquently of this and Edward is going to come and sing it for us now there was no room in Bethlehem for him who left his throne but there was room at Calvary where he bore the sinner's blame

Edward there was no room in Bethlehem for him who left his throne to seek the lost at countless cost and make their griefs his own but there was room at Calvary upon a cross of shame for him to die uplifted high and bear the sinner's blame and bear the sinner's blame there was no room in Bethlehem and in the world today and in the world today man will not give him room to live but bids him turn away but there is room at Calvary and there he stands to give a home to all who heed his call and look to him and look to him and live there was no room in Bethlehem for Christ the Prince of Heaven come down to earth in human birth that man might be forgiven but there is room at Calvary for sinners to abide and all who come will find a home in Jesus crucified in Jesus crucified

Matthew insists on turning our eyes to Galilee to show the dawning light in Jesus' birth but also that drawing darkness and the shadow of death over the world's savior because that is what he had to do to accomplish our salvation but his gospel tells us far more of course because the whole story of the gospel is about the dawning of life from Galilee and for the whole wide world Jesus will not forever be called by name of scorn no!

[42 : 14] the Bible is very clear a day is coming when the one who was once scorned by the world will be seen by the whole world as the Prince indeed as the King of Heaven in his risen power and glory and in his risen life there will be life everlasting for all who belong to him indeed for the whole creation remade for his people it's often pointed out by the Bible scholars that there's another association of the name Nazarene in the Old Testament in the Hebrew word for a small branch an insignificant twig netzer and that's probably or it may well be why Nazareth got its name netzer netzer the small twig of a town insignificant but in Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1 we read this from the stump of Jesse a shoot will come and from his roots a little branch a netzer shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall be upon him in other words the prophet's saying that at the lowest point when the house of David is downtrodden when it's all but dead when nothing remains except for just what seems to be a tiny little insignificant twig then shall burst forth the most wonderful fruit for the world from this despised nothing

God will usher in the great day of the Lord the new life of a new heaven and a new earth listen to how Isaiah 11 and 12 go on and speak of that Isaiah 11 at verse 10 in that day the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the peoples of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious it will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble also the banished of Israel and gather the disperse of Judah from the four corners of the earth and you will say in that day give thanks to the Lord call upon his name make known his deed among the peoples proclaim that his name is exalted sing praise to the Lord for he has done gloriously let this be made known in all the earth shout sing for joy you inhabitant of Zion for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel and Matthew is saying to us and so it shall be for the whole world through this one who is born king despised rejected as insignificant as weak a Nazarene through his death for sins through his resurrection in power so he shall raise a signal for all peoples and that name once despised will be the name revered in power and glory and honour by this whole earth and because of that you see light has dawned now already from Galilee to this whole wide world in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of

Matthew's gospel after the resurrection of Jesus he says to the disciples what? go to Galilee and there you'll see me and from there from Galilee of the Gentiles Jesus commands all his followers go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name not of one who is despised and rejected and weak and thought of as nothing but in the name of the one who is now triumphant in glory mighty to save people all over this whole world friends that is the savior that we welcome this Christmas day not a baby rejected by the world laid in a trough outcast and stranger not a despised and forsaken savior hanging on the cross in the darkness he was thus once for us and for our salvation he became the man of sorrows acquainted with grief but as another of Margaret Clarkson's hymns puts it so magnificently earth shall not see him rejected again triumphant in glory the king comes to reign because life eternal life everlasting has dawned from Galilee for this whole wide world light and life to all he brings risen with healing in his wings and our eyes at last shall see him through his own redeeming love for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above and he leads his children on to the place where he has already gone not in that poor lowly stable with oxen standing by we shall see him but in heaven set at God's right hand on high when like stars his children crowned like him all in white shall wait around and so yes

Lord we greet thee born this happy morning never to us a swear word but rather always our glorious sovereign Jesus to you be glory given word of the father now in flesh appearing come let us adore him Christ our Lord let's sing Jesusclock the GMO awake And good pineapple O come ye, O come ye to heaven.

Come and behold him, for heavenly all angels. O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him.

[49 : 24] O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light, Lord, we are most of the merges, sir.

There in God, we have not created. O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him.

O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, words of angels, sing in exultation. Sing, holy citizens of heaven.

[50 : 41] Sing, holy citizens of heaven. Glory to God, Lord, in the highest. O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

May Lord be free, Lord, for our salvation, Jesus to thee be in glory.

Lord of the Father, now in flesh shall be, O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Let's pray as we stand. O God our Father, we pray for a world in so much darkness and fear. Bring light, we pray thee, the light of Christ, the great healer, the only cure for our great disease.

Christ the great liberator from bondage of fear to our great enemy of death itself. Turn the hearts, we pray, of people from naming your glorious son as a swear word to loving him as a savior and buying the knee to him as a sovereign.

[52 : 46] We pray, Lord, this Christmas for all your people all around the world in distress, despised, rejected, called the swear word of Nazarene. For suffering Christians the world over.

Bring succor and help, we pray. For grieving Christians the world over. And right here in the midst of our fellowship.

Shine the light of your glorious hope. And turn our eyes to the life of your everlasting kingdom that is to come. And for those in distress.

In worry. In fear of sickness. We ask your peace. And your guarding of their hearts with your everlasting hope.

And especially this morning, dear Heavenly Father. We lift into your hands little Ezra. And Stephen and Lynn. And all their family.

[53 : 47] May your hand of glorious healing, we pray, upon that little boy. And bring him through these days. Into the fullness of life. And so, almighty God.

Give us grace. That we may cast away the works of darkness. And put upon us the armor of light. Now. In the time of this mortal life.

In which thy son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility. That in the last day. When he shall come again in his glorious majesty.

To judge both the quick and the dead. That on that day we may rise to the life immortal. Through him who lives and reigns with thee in the Holy Spirit.

One God. Now. And forever. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

[54 : 48] Be with you all. Amen. Happy Christmas to you all. Amen. que■■■ por Hatte.

Amen. Trueploadaben North Hoo■■■■ Orchestra. See you all. Amen. Vanderho ■■■ro. Tan■■■in. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Bar abide and bear arriba. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.