

# Christmas Eve Carol Service

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Date: 24 December 2016

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome, everybody, to our Christmas Eve by candlelight service this evening.

And our story begins not on earth, but in heaven. Not with mankind, but with God, because the Christmas story is first and foremost God's story.

But it's not the story of a distant God. Rather, it's the story of the God who, in the coming of Jesus Christ, has become Emmanuel, God with us, as Saviour and as Liberator.

Of our human race. He came down to us from heaven, who is God and Lord of all. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 2 : 12 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[ 5 : 39 ] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Amen. It's a wonderful picture isn't it, of the world as it was meant to be. The world as God created it to be. And the world of course that we would love it to be.

Perfect peace, harmony, male and female, man and nature, but man with God. No wonder the next carol that we'll sing calls us to sing praises to God our Creator.

But notice when we come to the last running of this next carol, it tells another story. We're to praise God who has made heaven and earth of naught, yes, and also because he with his own blood mankind has bought.

[ 6 : 59 ] And after the carol, the next reading will begin to explain why that must be so. Take a word.

To give us this time you click on our patience to speak answers, that when you are talking about God throughout the next carol, it is your youth.

The angels this day, O seven who shepherds In fields as they lay, In fields where they lay And here in their sheep, And from winter's night That God stood here, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, God is the King of Israel.

They would get up And so on our star Shall be in the east beyond and far, And still the earth They take great light And so it continues For day and night.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, For Israel, King of Israel.

[ 9 : 04 ] And by the light of the passing star The eyes they came from God Is.

Hlysses Soir Very good For the King was there in sight, as to follow the sun wherever it rains.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel. For Israel, King of Israel.

This time to fly to the Lord's rest, for every day is good with its rest.

And there it is, O strong and strength, right over the place where Jesus lay.

[ 10 : 31 ] Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel. For Israel is the King of Israel.

Take our charge. Those wise and free Who never did But all ready And all that came In His presence Their golden blood And frankness Noel, Noel Noel, Noel God is the King Of Israel Let us all With one accord

Sing praises to Our heavenly Lord That hath made heaven And earth of God And with His blood And light and cross Noel, Noel Noel, Noel God is the King Of Israel Now the serpent Was more practical Than any other piece of the field That the Lord God had made He said to the woman Does God actually say

You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent We may eat of the fruit of the tree In the garden But God says You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree That is in the midst of the garden Neither shall you catch it Lest you die But the serpent says to the woman You will not surely die For God knows That when you eat of it Your eyes will be opened And you will be like God And like good as evil So when the woman saw That the tree was good for food And there was a delight to the eyes And that the tree was to be desired To make one rise She took a bit straight And ate And she also gave some To her husband Who was with her And he ate The Lord God said to the serpent Because you have done this Cursed raise you Above all the livestock And above all the sick fields On your belly you shall go And dust you shall eat All the days of your life I will put enmity

Between you and the woman And between your offspring And her offspring He shall bruise your head And you shall bruise his children To the woman he said I will surely multiply Between the children And pain you shall bring forth children Your desire shall be for your husband And he shall rule over you And to Adam he said Because you have listened To the voice of your wife And have eaten of the tree Of which I commanded you You shall not eat of it Cursed is the ground Because of you In pain you shall eat of it All the days of your life Thorns and thistles It shall bring forth children And you shall eat the plants Of the field By the swipes of your face You shall eat bread Till you return to the earth For I say that you are taken For you are dust And to dust you shall return A curse upon human relationships A curse upon nature A curse upon our very lives

[ 14 : 55 ] To dust you shall return And that is more like The one we actually know Isn't it That's all because Our rebellion At instrual Has put us in bondage Through the fear of death People are subject To lifelong slavery That's how the Bible puts it But you've heard God's promise Even if that curse Was being pronounced That evil would not have The last word God himself Would intervene In history Through the offspring Of the woman Who would at last Destroy the work Of the devil And would liberate His people And all that is through history That promise shone Despite long ages of darkness Until at last At the first Christmas That offspring came To save us all

From Satan's power When we had gone astray God bless me Merry gentlemen That one in your display In heaven For Christ our Savior Whose blood on Christmas may To save us all Cause... Those little seeds And power When we were gone astray And old CDC And old ■■■■ ■ Of comfort and joy And old son Who ■■■■ At fifth of pain, and unto certain shepherds, O tidings of the same, I'll ask me, thank the heavens for the star of God by name, O tidings of love, words and joy, wonders and joy, O tidings of love, words and joy.

Dear God, bless the angel, let not bring you the price, This day is for us, Savior, of worship and light, Stop me when free to the breakfast, all the prayers of Satan fight, O tidings of love, words and joy, Come as my joy, O tidings of love, words and joy.

The shepherds at those tidings, which trust and punch in mind, And let their thoughts have feelings, endless storm and wind, And whence to break me and straightway, this blessed grace will find, O tidings of love, words and joy, words and joy, O tidings of love, words and joy.

[ 18 : 40 ] O tidings of love, words and joy, But whence to break me and take me, where I was in the grave, They planted in a manger, where I'll send thee away, His mother's name, His mother, His mother, may be healing, until the Lord we pray, The Lord's dying, so proud, words and joy.

The Lord's dying, so proud, words and joy, The Lord's dying, so proud, words and joy. The Lord's dying, so proud, words and joy, The Lord's dying, so proud, words and joy, There's only in this place, and we do love and brother with each other now embrace.

This holy prayer is not so always for the place. O time is the power of God's men's joy, always enjoy.

The rock of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

[ 20 : 32 ] So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

[ 21 : 44 ] They are gossipers, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, inventors of evil, disobedient appearance, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Well that makes pretty grim reading, doesn't it? People dismiss often Genesis as just ancient history or even myth, but it isn't.

St. Paul is presenting there exactly the same picture, just in plainer words. And both simply describe the reality of the contemporary world that you and I know really too well.

How great is the world's need of saving, liberated from the darkness of our own humanity. But because of the message of Christmas, out of darkness we have light.

And that's why on Christmas night all Christians sing. God ■ Ông!

[ 22 : 58 ] Hallelujah. Hmmm, I can't see you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stomach of Jesse, and a branch from his fruit fruits shall bear fruit.

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the key of the Lord.

[ 25 : 46 ] Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples, of him shall the nations inquire, and his rest on face shall be glorious.

In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong swords will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad. The desert shall rejoice and blossom like crocus. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy at the same.

Be strong, fear not. Behold your God will come with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the newt singing for joy.

[ 27 : 01 ] And the ransom of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall attain gladness and joy.

And so will you say, but freely. Blast the Christ and the prophets, that faithfully were told, is born.

The seed of the woman, the shoot of Jesse, son of David. At last he comes, as promised, with power to destroy that twisting serpent, the dragon.

A terrible force of evil that lies behind all evil in this world. To reverse the curse of sin, and to make his blessings flow far as that curse.

To be found. And that's why Christmas is indeed a message of joy to the world. For the gift of the world, but the love of others in this world.

[ 28 : 06 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 32 : 36 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. your womb? Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. In the Bible there is great joy and wonder about the Christmas message, but there's absolutely no sentimentality. It is a message of real liberation, real peace, descending from heaven. But, of course, real peace doesn't come to rebellious human beings without the almighty cost of making peace. And that cost is a cost to God himself. And so, or that bay, still infant crying, shadows of the cross were lying. Before we think together, I'll speak for a little about what all this means. Let's sing again this lovely carol about the angel's final message.

The angel's final message. Shepherds be said to God, in the wise somewhere and the loud Reyrankings. We're so glad to be able to. One day, you feel you a little bit about the irresponsAME of God as you wish. Do the peoples' means.

Shepherds be. . Praise God, in the wisecore voice in the wise acids, Sep, where the sized leader of 1949, of Hisämä did cycles inclusion, pressure Rud Ability of Angel is, and Logo as a policeman means for Him. For haste is a money thatiziert for us. It is something For a star is brightly glowing, Peace and heat their names are showing, To the King whose lips are slowly, Gentiles be the Gentiles be.

For a star is still in and crying, Shadows of the cross are lying, Precious birds have gone to be dying, Till its creatures set at me.

For a star is still in and upon. Out of our hearts are ringing, Space their awesom Knowledge was singing, All their black their bestategies, Grace within the ladyless king.

[ 35 : 51 ] To the major power glory, hearts in thankfulness of glory, to the child to peace restoring, there is Son of God and King.

I wonder how you would picture Christmas most perfectly. What scene for you would make the perfect Christmas card?

Maybe it would be Snow, a white Christmas. I don't think we're going to get one this year, but you never find that it would be. Maybe it would be a lovely scene of Robin, a kind of Dickensian picture of old England.

Maybe it would be Santa and his reindeer. Or perhaps a star and shepherds and angels. Perhaps it would be a little closer. And I guess we've all seen plenty of these just this year.

But I wonder if you've ever had a Christmas card picturing a leaping calf. I certainly haven't. But that is the picture that Malachi the prophet gives of Christmas yet to come.

[ 37 : 16 ] You shall buy a leaping like calves from the stall. In our Christmas services this year we've been looking at the promise of Christmas.

According to Malachi, this last of the prophets. And his view from some 400 and some years before the birth of Jesus was that that day would be like a sunrise.

It would be the dawn in life of ultimate meaning for our world. With wings of righteousness. The healing wings, he calls them, of ultimate restoration for our world.

But now he talks about leaping calves. What on earth does that mean? Well it is a picture of the leaping joy of ultimate freedom.

C calves kept in their soles all night, kept away from their mothers during milking perhaps. And now at last set free to go and join their mothers. To leap, to frolic with joy.

[ 38 : 18 ] Leaping speaks of extreme joy and celebration, doesn't it? I know we Scots are a fairly saved race, but even we have the highland fling, don't we? And certainly it is a very common association in the Bible.

King David leaped and danced for joy before the Lord. In the song of songs, that erotic love poem, the beloved comes leaping over the mountain to our beloved.

Joyfully anticipating that mother's Christ. And when the prophets like Isaiah spoke of the glorious coming of the Lord, he says, The rainy men would leap for joy even as the dumb would sing.

And so here, Malachi also speaks about the leaping joy of liberation, ultimate freedom. And that would be a great, great feature of the coming of God to this earth.

Freedom. Liberation from captivity and bondage. That's one of the Bible's most consistent ways of describing what salvation is all about, what it means.

[ 39 : 28 ] If you go back to the very beginnings of the Old Testament, the story of the Exodus is a story of great liberation from bondage. And it became a picture of God's great salvation ever

afterwards.

And the prophets like Malachi, they pointed forward for far, far greater liberation than that. A liberation out of the captivity of life as we know it as human beings.

And into the glorious liberation of nothingness and a whole new world. They look for that day of liberating joy. You shall go out of joy, he read, and be led forth in peace.

And the mountains and the hills will break forth into singing. And even the trees of the field will clap their hands. Such will be the joy. And that's the message of Christmas that Malachi is longing for. It will bring liberation. It will bring liberation. Freedom from the dark, oppressive forces of this world. That rob us of true joy and rob us of true freedom.

[ 40 : 35 ] That's what Malachi saw would begin at that first Christmas. And I've tried to hear it in the past for us. And that's why there was joy.

That's why there was great joy all surrounding the events of Jesus' birth. And there was leaping. You heard it in the reading. Remember John the Baptist. In the womb. Leaping for joy.

When Mary came to visit Elizabeth. And told her about the child in her own womb. The one who would be born and saved. But why?

Why is Christmas about liberation? What's all this about human beings like us needing to be liberated? Let me explain it in Jesus' own words.

Because first, Jesus said that human beings, every one of us, is in slavery. And that we're in need of liberation. We're all slaves, he said.

[ 41 : 35 ] We're all controlled by the ruthless power. And we are helpless in the grasp of a ruthless master. And he called that ruthless master sin. Truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

And that's what he says here. Because it's not what we tend to think of ourselves. According to Jesus, we commit sins because we are slaves to sin.

Because sin has a power to hold over us. Sin isn't all a list of pecan arrows and skeletons in the closet. That we've all accumulated through our mind and led to hide away.

No, sin, according to Jesus, is a power. It has us in a grip, like a vice. And that's what explains so much human behaviour.

Some years ago, I remember reading, I think it was in one of the weekend newspapers, an article by the zoologist Desmond Morris. You'll have read some of his books.

[ 42 : 44 ] And it was at the time of Tiger Woods when he, well, let's say, appeared quite markedly off the fairway as far as his marriage was concerned. And was shown up to be having multiple affairs and so on.

Desmond Morris was writing about this. And what he said was this. Tiger Woods is driven by primal instincts to spread his genes wildly. So that's sort of a bit of okay.

Well, Tiger Woods' wife clearly didn't think it was okay. I read that his divorce sentence cost him \$750 million. But there is a grain of truth.

A grain of truth. In Desmond Morris' words. The Bible explains it much more clearly and much more fully. Of course, we are all responsible for our actions.

Of course, we are all moral beings. We're not just animals. But, yes, we are in the grip of base and evil powers. Now, primal instincts, as though some things like that were just natural and somehow innocent, but therefore excusable.

[ 43 : 51 ] But Jesus says we are in the grip of the power of sin. And it is far from natural and it is far from good and innocent. And he says, yes, we are in slavery to its mastery.

We are not free. Because otherwise, our will would be marked in every relationship, not by infidelity, but by total fidelity, wouldn't it?

And divorce lawyers would be out of a job. Our will would be marked not by deceit, but by honesty in all things. And so, humanitarian customs would be out of a job.

Our will would be marked not by suspicion, but by trust in every relationship in the world. And so the foreign office and the diplomats would all be had of a job. And our will would be marked not by wars, but by peace between all nations.

And neither could be disbanded. Because it wasn't needed, not just because Mr. Trump might not want to face it. Well, let me ask you, is that the world as it really is?

[ 45 : 02 ] Well, you know the answer to that, don't you? Of course you do. But Jesus says, this world is as it is. Because we human beings are enslaved, we are captive to the power of sin.

It is an alien intrusion into true humanity. And we tend to use euphemisms. Well, we recognize it all the same.

We say, well, that's human nature. What we mean is, well, we are far from perfect. Isn't that right? And so, boy, of course the Lord Jesus in his letter to the church and room, he describes that God of power of sin.

He describes it as a harsh master. As a brutal general. As a tyrannical ruler. Domineering us. And as a vicious employer.

As exploiting us. Subjugating our human lives. To de-joy them. And indeed to de-humanize them. That's a consistent message.

[ 46 : 01 ] From the beginning of the Bible. Right to the very end. That we human beings are not free. We're in slavery. And we are in desperate need of liberation.

Now you might very well be saying to yourself. Hang on a minute. What are you talking about? We just have too much to like Christmas and all of wine. That is nonsense. You might be saying, we're not slaves.

I'm not a slave. I'm a free person. This is a relatively free country. I can live my life the way I want to. I'm free. How will you do it, my friend? How dare you infer?

That I'm some kind of slave. That I'm in bondage. What a cheap. Well. I'm just reporting Jesus' words. And his view.

And I see that's the very response that he got. When he first spoke to them back then. People said to him. We're offspring of Abraham. We've never been a slave to anyone.

[ 47 : 01 ] How dare you say. We are feeding. Freed. Or cheap. No. Said Jesus. In reply.

You are absolutely wrong. Everyone who sins. Is a slave to sin. And that is most certainly the contention of Jesus Christ. Well.

Maybe you say. Well. So what? But who says I ever sinned? Well come on. Are you really perfect? Are you always the person that you really want to be?

You never let others down? You never let yourself down? If that really is the case. Please come and see me afterwards. I'd like to take you on to our church staff. But you never had anybody like that. And you've never met anybody like that myself. I'm certainly not like that. Let me ask you this. Are we really free as we think we are?

[ 48 : 01 ] Are we really joyfully liberated as people to be everything that we can be? Everything we want to be? Everything we long to be in life? The Bible's intention is that we're not.

St. Paul says that by nature we are enslaved to things that by nature are not God's. St. Peter says. Whatever overcomes a person.

To that he is enslaved. These things are not really God's. These things have no power to help us. And yet we look to them for the fulfillment.

For the salvation that we long for. We look to them to give us liberation. But these things we know have no power to save us.

But they are indeed. They do have power to enslave us and to condemn us. Most years I visit India. And I see every time people worship, giving homage, giving money to idols.

[ 49 : 11 ] To amateurs. I've even seen them giving money to trees. Literally in bondage of idols. Made by the imagination of man.

And people in the West might scoff at that. But let me tell you. We in the secular West are really noticed with that at all. Because I know many, many people. Who are just the same kind of bondage to things that have no power whatsoever to liberate them, to bless them.

Artists. Intellectuals. Who so often are slaves to the great quest for meaning and expression. Many, many people are slaves to the great quest for wealth.

To find liberation and salvation. Or many are seeking liberation and fulfillment through their relationships. Through their lovers, their spies, through their children, whatever it might be. Or through finding their identity.

In their particular way of wanting to express passion. Or express their sexuality, for example. The latest tragic fashion. Seems to me people believe in a mutilate their bodies.

[ 50 : 20 ] In a quest for happiness. By identifying as a different gender. To the body that they have. There are very powerful masters.

That are bound in our 21st century culture. Controlling people with great power. With great persistence. Be it beauty. Or body shape. Or gender expression.

Academic success. Or sporting image. Or wealth. Or whatever it might be. Sometimes it's just the desire. To be liked. To be loved at school. Or to be loved by someone special. I don't think I'm exaggerating. I think that's all around us. Powerful masters. Craving our wishes. And ruthless masters. Powerful to condemn for failure. All too easily. All too quickly. All too quickly. And the following is all around us. In our society. All the tragedies of these poor people. Have been spat out. [ 51 : 23 ] Have been rejected. By these gods that they look to. To be their saviors. People desperately see. Liberation from the dreadful tyranny.

To escapism. Into alcohol. Into drugs. Into suicide. Suicide is still the biggest killer of young men in our culture today. Isn't that a terrible thing? And by the way. The suicide rate. Among those people who have had gender reassignment surgeries. Twenty times the rate in the normal population. Is that liberation? One of the most awful tragedies I think. Is when we read about young children taking their own lives. Because they felt crushed. Or excluded. By their peers. At school. Just because they fell short somehow. Of the ruthless standards. Of the fashion gods. Or the popularity gods. Or the looks gods. That rule. In teenage culture. I'm not at all sure that any of us can really kind. [ 52 : 26 ] That we're as free as we like to think we are. And there's certainly one master isn't there? That I don't think any of us can deny. Has an icy grip over our lives.

That's a master of death itself. None of us I think can deny that we're slaves to our own mortality. Can we? I find Woody Allen sometimes very witty and penetrating. Some of his wittiest things are actually about life itself. Listen. Life is full of misery, loneliness and suffering. And it's all over much too soon. For this. I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying. Well that's funny. It was isn't it? Because there's a serious edge to it. Here's one. It's just plain and stark. No humor I think at all. Just dark. He says alienation, loneliness, emptiness, virgin or madness. The fundamental thing behind all motivation and all activism is the constant struggle against annihilation and death. [ 53 : 33 ] It's absolutely stupefying and terror. And it renders everyone's accomplishments meaningless. That is just a recognition of what Jesus says.

That we are all captive to many, many ruthless powers that have a hold on our life. And above all others, the power of death itself. And Jesus says we are all in slavery. And we're all in need of liberation. But second, he tells us that the message of Christmas is that Jesus is also the saviour who came to bring liberation. The truth about me, says Jesus, is what will set you free. And if the Son of God sets you free, then you will be free indeed. You see, the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ liberates us because it faces head on the whole truth about time and eternity. It recognizes, it doesn't hide from the awful reality of sins and enslaving power over the human heart to over our whole human world. [ 54 : 49 ] But it also recognizes and it rejoices in the wonderful reality of the saviour's liberating power to set us free. To liberate our human hearts.

To liberate our human hearts. To liberate the whole human world if it will be liberated. That's what Jesus Christ coming into this world is all about. He came to bring liberation. To set us free in Jesus Christ from the law of sin and death, as I think was in Paul. To deliver us from the dominion of darkness and transfer us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. A total liberation. Because it's a total rescue from the power and the sway of the great times itself. The power of sin. Some of you will remember perhaps, 27 years ago this very night, that the world witnessed the overthrow of the time of Ceaușescu in Romania. [ 55 : 53 ] And on Christmas morning 1989, he and his wife were executed and the world news bulletins showed those pictures of him and his wife crumpled by that wall. And he and his wife crumpled by that wall, dead bodies, and the chiefly ring crowded people full of the joy of liberation from that tyrannical regime.

From darkness, from tyranny, from bondage. And there was the rejoicing that began the beginning of a whole new era of Jesus.

But the first Christmas, 2,000 years ago, saw a far, far greater liberation begin. The beginning of total and ultimate liberation from this world.

Waking up to overcoming the power of sin itself. You might say, how is that?

Because death is still here. Even Christians die. It's the same as everybody else. But yes, that's true. The Bible is very clear. And I'm embarrassed about that.

[ 56 : 56 ] It tells us that I'm not yet about our salvation. And that is because the liberation that comes in Jesus is not just a personal liberation for men and women.

It is a truly cosmic liberation for this whole world, the whole cosmos. This whole creation is a way to get groaning, says the Apostle Paul, longing for the great thing of consummation.

When the dead are raised at Christ's return. And the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will raise all those who are things likewise.

And all of us to complete. Nevertheless, in the meantime, that great liberation has begun. Because we who trust the Lord Jesus, we know that that day is certain.

And we know that joy there is a bit of that liberation. We know it already in our lives. We're no longer slaves. We're not yet full.

[ 58 : 01 ] Inherited. But we have a certainty. Because we have become true heirs. And we live on the basis of what we know. It's promised to be ours one day. That's the definition of an heir. You live knowing that the inheritance will certainly be yours.

We live as well. Like a football team that's already qualified for the World Cup. And has a whole lot of games left in the group. And the team is liberated there.

So they don't just worry about losing goals. They're able to play the greatest football ever. Because they know they're already there in the finals. And that's what Christmas means.

For all who fear his name, says America. Who love and know the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a certainty of the future. Full of the leaping joy of ultimate fear.

And that day is not yet. But even now there's joy in the knowledge of that liberation to come.

Because we're liberated from the fear of death itself.

[ 59 : 06 ] And because we're liberated from that. We can therefore be liberated from every other self-defying tyranny. That we have all of our lives here in this world.

We're liberated from the need for others' approval and praise. What a bondage that is to be liberated from. We're liberated from the burden of self-judgment.

Of self-esteem. We're liberated from the tyranny of the need to achieve. The need to possess. The need to perform. The need to be something or somebody.

So we're free. Free to rejoice in being what God has so wonderfully made us to be. And called us to be in Jesus Christ. Friends, it's that truth in its entirety.

The hard, unpalatable truth about sins and slaving power. And the glorious truth about the Savior is a liberating power. It's that truth.

[ 60 : 12 ] That will set you leaping for joy this Christmas time. The author. If you'll accept it. If you'll receive it. In the lips of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you haven't done that yet. Won't you make it yours this Christmas Eve? If you do, you will know the truth.

And the truth will set you free. The leaping joy of ultimate freedom. That Jesus longs to give you. Longs to give you. For the person. Now and forever.

If you will say, Amen. Lord, so let it be. My prayer is that you will. This very Christmas time. Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, risen and reigning forever. Grant us, we pray, to receive this year.

Your living and liberating gospel way.

[ 61 : 17 ] Amen. Amen. So that we might also rejoice in the true freedom. That you and you alone can give. For which you promise to give.

To all who know. To all who ask. To all who seek. From you. For whom to be our Savior. Hear us, we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen. We sing as we close. A hymn that speaks of the story. Of God's searching love.

From the counsels of eternity. Through the birth and the death. And the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And still calling us today. In counsels of eternity. Before all worlds were formed.

No sun or moon shed light on earth.

[ 62 : 32 ] Of stars and skies the Lord. Then he will live the Father's heart.

One issue in the free. The sun's love and the lost in sin.

Thy royal egg shall be. To all who know. To all who know. To all who know. To all who know.

The Lord Jesus. The Savior promised long. Through ages are His name broken.

In vision and His song. The eternal Son. The eternal Son. In self. For all.

[ 63 : 28 ] Among us. His name. angels. Love. Lord. The eternal Son. Who are.

The eternal Son. flavor. His glory was revealed.

For all the faithful, saving depths will are nearly concealed.

The common hands be sealed in blood, their power not yet denied. He blessed the gates of hell to rise, His people justified.

And now He reigns and hold on high, His praises build the skies.

[ 64 : 43 ] For all the earthly spirit moves, the finished work of lies.

Where they receive the gospel, the bread of life in Christ.

Now seal the sun, the bread of life, His spirit in our hearts.

With Father, Son, and Spirit now, the cross will be our Lord.

Keep glory as it was and is, and shall be evermore.

[ 65 : 40 ] For where can sure His promises, His work has filled the past.

He provide us with my ■chism, and will will evermore.

that shone into this world in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the light shatters in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome it.

So we pray that that light will overcome every dark in our hearts. And for each one of us here to the light that is in Jesus and Jesus alone.

And so, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.