

Carols by Candlelight -The True Lover of all His Children

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Date: 24 December 2017

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Well, good evening, everyone, and welcome to our Christmas Eve service by candlelight. It's lovely to see people here, and we're glad to have families with us.

Just for your information, there is a room just outside there down the first flight of stairs where young kids can be looked after, and if at any time any of you want to pop in there with the children, that's perfectly fine.

There is a screen in there, and the service also will be screened there for you. But our story this evening begins not on earth, but in heaven, not with man, but with God, because, of course, the Christmas story is, first and foremost, God's story.

Not the story of a distant God, a God who stays away, but the story of a God who has come near, and in the person of Jesus Christ has become Emmanuel, God with us.

as the Savior, as the lover of his people. He came down from earth, from heaven to earth, who was God and Lord of all.

[1 : 08] He came from His blessed stars to do esos Sons. He comes from heaven to earth. He came from my spirit, and his children, and Ph.D. His Father Kevin Wramy says, We are always in heaven.

In the Son of the Holy God, We are always in heaven, and God is in heaven, morning through the universe. There is an absolute apostle to heaven, and he goes to heaven. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 31] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[6 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[8 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[11 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[19 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

God.

[22 : 00] Thank you.

There's no.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

There shall come.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 00] Thank you.

And make you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[29 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

from the darkness, the gloom of anguish.

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[32 : 10] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. See, the message of Christmas is of one who comes to those walking in darkness to bring a great light.

Out of darkness we have light. And that's why on Christmas night all Christians sing. So before we think a little of what these words and the names of this one to come really mean, let's sing once more of the news of our merciful King's birth.

heaven on earth is the liberation of Jesus. Heaven's the main thing in the way for forgiveness of the peace of His dreams is called the einstomenal thateti arrame not the■ of the athlete but the advance of the endurance the one and the stretch the other's■ we'll be reminded in ourwinance of High stance eyes cup of this Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you.

Extraordinary reactions in the world at that time. Joy for the faithful Israelites, Simeon and Anna and others who were waiting for the time to come.

All from the magi who came to seek him from the east, the shepherds, even from the angels. And also great hatred from Herod the king, from many in the religious authorities.

Why were there such expectations of this child in the manger? Well, the answer lies in these words of the prophets we've been hearing, who foretold his birth hundreds of years before.

[36 : 07] We've been looking at the words of Isaiah, spoken in around 734 BC. And particularly at the extraordinary names that he says will signify what we need to know about who he would be and what he would do.

Names in the Bible are fraught with significance, much more so than I suppose our names tend to be today. Our names may have a meaning.

We might be named after a family member or somebody. But often it's our nicknames, isn't it, that tell much more about who we are and what we're actually like. So King Edward I, well, that tells you something about that king of England.

But Edward Longshanks, the hammer of the Scots, well, that tells you a bit more, doesn't it? It tells you he was a very tall man and it tells you he was the scourge of this nation in the days of William Warris and Robert the Bruce and so on.

Likewise, your name might be John, but if your friends call you Fat Boy or something like that, then that probably tells you a little bit more, doesn't it? Or in Glasgow, it seems that most men go by one of two names.

[37 : 18] It's either Big Man or Wee Man. As in, all right, Big Man! That common salutation that some of us are used to receiving. You get the idea, you see. And Isaiah's names given to this child are like that.

They tell us all about who and what he would be. And he tells us that the government would be upon his shoulder and his kingdom would know no end.

He tells us that he would reign forever. And so he's going to be the Lord of all the world. An extraordinary claim, isn't it, for any mere mortal?

Quite impossible. Then he says he'll be called the Wonderful Counselor. That is, the one who counsels wonders, who purposes wonders for his people.

That is, he will be the true leader of all mankind to lead them into the saving wonders of God. This morning we saw also that he'll be the true liberator of all the oppressed.

[38 : 18] He will be the mighty God. That is, he is God who comes to deliver his people with his own mighty hand. Out of the darkness of the shadow of death itself and into the light of everlasting life.

That's why the prophet says the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. The light of his salvation. Well, there's two names left there you can see that we're looking at tonight and tomorrow morning.

And they tell us of the wonderful things that this child, born to be the king and the lord of all the world forever. What he would bring to those who would bow to him and rejoice in his lordship. He will bring wonderful love and he'll bring perfect peace. Tonight I want to think of the first of these. He'll be called, it says, the Everlasting Father.

That is, he will be the true lover of all his children. Now again, we have to understand the Bible's language properly. The word father in the Bible means perhaps a lot more than we might at first realize.

[39 : 28] And by using this language of the Everlasting Father about this child, Isaiah is telling us that he is indicating his deity, that he is God.

Because that's language that's only used of God himself in the Bible. Isaiah chapter 64, he says this, But now, O Lord, you are our father.

We are the clay and you are the potter. And we are the work of your hand. You see, he's saying God is his people's father. He's their creator, just like a potter with the clay.

In chapter 63, he says, You, O Lord, are our father. Our redeemer from of old is your name. You see, he's not only their creator, but he's their redeemer.

He's their savior. And notice, from of old. There's another famous reading we often have at Christmas from the prophet Micah. But you, Bethlehem, Ephrata, from you shall come forth one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is of old, from ancient days.

[40 : 34] There's a great consistency across the prophets in the Bible when you read them, you see. And to say that this child will be called the Everlasting Father is to say that he, a human being born as a baby, would be the one who is called both the creator and the redeemer of all God's people.

That's why the carols bid us come now with all to something that is beyond our comprehending. Love in its fullness lies in mortal span.

Lo, within a manger lies he who built the starry skies. And see, that's what Isaiah means when he says he'll be called Everlasting Father.

He is the one who is himself both the creator and the redeemer of his people. And the New Testament tells us plainly everywhere that that is what Jesus Christ was.

Hebrews chapter 1 tells us that he is the radiance of the glory of God. He's the exact imprint of his nature. And he, Jesus Christ, upholds this universe by the word of his power.

[41 : 52] He is the creator. And it goes on, after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

He's also the redeemer. He, this child, says St. Paul, is the image of the invisible God. And he will come, says Isaiah the prophet, to make known the wonderful fatherly love of God as creator and redeemer here on earth in our experience, in human flesh.

That's why the apostle John, at the beginning of his gospel, says, No one has ever seen God, but the only begotten son who is at the father's side.

He has made him known. Made the father known. Jesus said, Whoever has seen me has seen the father. I and the father are one.

He, this child, the Christ child, the one who will be Emmanuel, God with us, he shall be called everlasting father.

[43 : 01] That's Christmas, according to Isaiah the prophet. And that explains the joy, the wonder, the awe of all those in the first Christmas story.

So I want to think for a few minutes just what it means for this child to be truly father-like in that way to his people. Three things that the Bible itself points us to in our thinking.

First of all, this child came to give his own children life. As a father gives life to his children, So he is called the everlasting father who gives everlasting life to those who are his.

That remains a simple fact, doesn't it? You can't have the beginning of life without a father.

Although, of course, our scientists are constantly dabbling in all sorts of things, quite controversial things these days, and talking about cloning and all that sort of thing.

But Isaiah is not thinking about anything like that. He's just thinking about plain, normal life. And he's saying that God is a father who gives life. He creates, just like a potter creates with his clay.

[44 : 10] Just like he fashions something beautiful out of something that was just a lump of clay, a lump of dust. And that's what this child was born to do, to bring life everlasting to bodies that are of themselves just dust, just like clay.

And he comes to make something beautiful, something lasting. Something useful and wonderful. Something beloved and cherished by its maker. And in the coming of Jesus, you see, the New Testament tells us that God's purpose and grace from the beginning, from before all ages, has now been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death, says the Apostle, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel.

He comes to give his children life, everlasting life, from the everlasting Father. I came, says Jesus, that they might have life and have it in abundance.

Not the dead religiosity of human religion. That is burdensome. That's flavorless. That kills the soul. Maybe some of you have had experience of that. It's put you off. That's not what Jesus is talking about. But life. Life that conquers death. Life that transcends death.

[45 : 37] Resurrection life. I am the resurrection and the life, said Jesus. Whoever believes in me, though they die, yet shall they live. Live forever.

This child came to give his children life everlasting. He is the everlasting Father who begets everlasting life. And there's no greater assurance, no greater comfort than to know that, especially as you get older and as your body begins to feel more and more like dust and clay.

But secondly, this child comes to give his children love. As a father gives love to his children and provides for them and protects them. So he comes to give eternally father-like love and protection and provision for his children.

Of course, we have to say, don't we, that sadly not all fathers do love and protect and provide for their children. And we live in a culture where the absent father is increasingly common.

And so many of us may have quite mixed feelings about fathers. Even though, of course, some absent fathers for sure do love their children dearly, would love and long to be with them much,

much more than they are, of course.

[47 : 01] But there are many people, aren't there, who have known great pain, great disappointment in their fathers. Not the love, not the provision, not the protection that I'm speaking about.

But you see, the very fact of that disappointment in itself and even that anger, it tells, doesn't it, that we know, we know what a father's love should be. We know what real fatherhood does speak of. And the Bible portrays God as an infinitely loving father. The prophet Jeremiah, another of the prophets, speaks of the Lord in these fatherly terms.

There's one who lavishes love, even on his wayward children. He says, I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path in which they will not stumble because I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn.

I will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock. He gives his children love. He cares for his lambs like a shepherd.

[48 : 05] And Isaiah uses exactly that same language of the father's shepherd-like love. Behold, he says, he comes with might and his strong arm rules for him.

Yes, he's a figure of authority, as any good father must be to his children if they're not to be ruined. Authority, but also great tenderness. He will tend his flock like a shepherd, a strong protector, a leader.

But also he will gather his lambs in his arms. He'll carry them in his bosom. He will gently lead those that are with young.

And when this child finally came as a man, Jesus said himself, I am the good shepherd. The one who loves his sheep so dearly that he lays down his own life for his sheep.

That they might come to him, that they might be protected by him forever and ever. He gives his children everlasting love to protect, to provide, to lead them, to cherish them as his own.

[49 : 17] I remember once watching a rather sentimental Hollywood film. I didn't really enjoy the film, but I remember one line that I've never forgotten from it.

And it's a father speaking to his as yet unborn child. And he said this, I will be a father to you from the day you are born until the day I die.

And that's true of the Lord Jesus Christ to us, to his people. Except that he will never die. Because having been raised from the dead, he will never ever die again.

He's the everlasting father. And that means that you can bank on his love. And on his care. And on his provision. Forever and ever and ever.

If you're his child. He will always stay with you. Through all the dilemmas that you face in life.

Through all the struggles that you'll encounter. He will always provide for your needs.

[50 : 22] So that you don't have to live in anxiety and fear. Not necessarily for all your wants. But like a good father, for what you need. Not what you want. That's why Jesus said, don't be anxious about clothes or food or all of these things.

For your heavenly father knows that you have need of these. And even when it seems as though he's being harsh with us. We know that it's those he loves. As his children.

That he disciplines. Because he does love with real father-like love. And you know. That like a father who cares for his children.

He also is interceding in prayer at the throne of grace for his own. Hebrews chapter 7 tells us. That he always lives. To make intercession for them.

Because he's the everlasting father. And his prayers. His intercessions. Never ever go unheard. At that great throne of grace in heaven.

[51 : 25] He comes as a father. To give life. And to give love. And third. This child who comes. Comes to give his children.

A legacy. As a good father gives a legacy to his children. A home. And a family. And an inheritance. And so. He is called the everlasting father.

Who gives an everlasting home. And an everlasting family. And an everlasting inheritance. To his children. And once again. And once again.

That's a wonderful thing. If you have a father. Like that. If you have a home. Of means. And of substance. And a family. Of real love. And many don't. Many fathers.

Leave a lot to be desired. Don't they? As we know. And even leave their children. Orphaned. But the wonderful message. Of the scriptures. Is that in this child.

[52 : 19] Comes one who will be the everlasting father. To extend his legacy. Even to those who have never ever known. That earthly fatherhood.

Who have never known the joys of home. Of family. And all that that brings to them. Listen to how the psalmist. The singer. Of the Bible. Describes.

The God of the Bible. Father. Father. Of the fatherless. Protector of widows. Is God. In his habitation. God.

Sets the lonely. In families. He sets the solitary. In a home. You see. He's an adoptive father. He's one who reaches out.

To draw. Into his own family. And under his own protection. And care. All of those. Who were. Who were otherwise outcasts. Who were otherwise. Strangers. And lonely. And lost. And solitary.

[53 : 15] And alone. With no father. With no family. But he comes. To draw them in. It's such a feature. Isn't it? Of our world today.

A loneless. Solitary people. Living solitary lives. Lost and lonely. In the midst of a. A noisy. Bustling. Busy world. You see.

All that and more. Is just a symptom. Of the far greater. Lostness. That the bible. That the bible.

Talks about. As the real problem. Of our human condition. It's the problem.

Of sin. It's the problem. Of rebellion. In our hearts. Against God. Our father. Our creator. Our lord. That. That is what has. Made us.

To be cast. To drift. Like this. That's what caused us. To be cast out. Of our true home. To be cast out. Of the family. Of God. From the place. Where God himself.

[54 : 11] Dwells. The garden of God. That's the imagery there. Barred. By those angels. With their flaming swords. Because of our refusal. To live in obedience.

To God. Our heavenly father. But in this child. In the birth. And the coming. Of Jesus Christ. Comes one. Who makes us.

Again. His children. He comes to be a father. To give us. Again. That true legacy. That true love.

That true life. The home. The family. Everything that we'd lost. Forever. In the fullness.

Of the time. Says St. Paul. God sent forth. His son. Born of a woman. To redeem. Those under the law. That we. Might receive. The adoption.

Of sons. So be heirs. Through. God. We've received. He says. The spirit of adoption. As sons. By which we. Cry. Abba. Father.

[55 : 07] Father. That's what Jesus Christ. Accomplished. By bearing away. Our sins. On his body. On the cross. Says Peter. We were once.

Straying like lost sheep. But have now returned. To the shepherd. To the overseer. Of our souls. As a loving father. He has moved.

Heaven and earth. To come. And to bring us. Home. To a real home. To a real family. To a real inheritance. Forever.

And ever. That's why Jesus said to his disciples. Just before he went to the cross. In my father's house. Are many rooms. And I'm going. I'm going to prepare a place.

For you. Who believe in me. And he did that. Through his death. The good shepherd. Laying down his life for the sheep. That they might. At last.

[56 : 00] Come home. And have the legacy. That he had won for them. He. Came to bring. A father's love. An everlasting life.

And love. And legacy. And that is what belongs. To all who know him. As the everlasting father. As the true lover. Of all his children. So let me ask you.

Tonight. This Christmas Eve. Is he that father to you? Are you. In his family. Do you belong. To him?

His door. Is an open door. Jesus said that. I am the door. Said Jesus. If anyone. Enters by me. He will be saved. Clear. As day. And yet.

It is still possible. Isn't it? To refuse. To have. Anything to do. With his family. That was so in Jesus day. It is still the same today.

[57 : 03] You refuse. To come to me. That you might have life. Is what Jesus said. To his hearers. He said that. To some very religious people. To some very.

Particular church going people. You. You refuse. To come to me. To have life. And when he said.

I am the good shepherd. Who loves. And cares. And provides. For all his own. There were some. Who refused. And said. He's a. He's got a demon. We want nothing to do with him.

This is all. Nonsense. Friends. His is a glorious legacy. Of everlasting love. Of everlasting life. But that legacy. Can't be. For those. Who insist. On writing themselves. Out of the will. By scorning. Jesus Christ.

[57 : 59] And his offer of life. But listen. This Christmas Eve. Even now. The door is open.

Even for those. Who have. Who have. Scorned him. All their life long. Who have spat on him. Who have rejected him. Who have called him. Demonic. And wanted nothing to do with him. Still. He is willing. To be. An everlasting father. Perhaps the best known. Of all Jesus stories. Is that wonderful parable.

He tells in Luke chapter 15. Of the prodigal son. Many ways. That we much better called. The parable of the waiting father. Because the father is waiting. And watching. And longing. For the return. Of his lost son. And at the first sign. Of his returning son. He is off. And Jesus says. He felt compassion. And he ran.

[58 : 52] And he embraced him. And he kissed him. And even as he is trying to get the words out. And confessing his sin to his father. His father is. Is clothing him. And putting a ring on his finger. And a great robe on him.

And preparing a great feast. A great celebration of joy. At his return. A return. A return to new life. And to his true family and legacy.

And to his father's house of love. And to the joy. Of all the angels in heaven. Says Jesus. Friends. That is the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. That is. What Christmas is all about. In Jesus Christ. The wonderful fatherly love of God.

Is revealed. To rebellious human children forever. He came to be. The everlasting father. To bring home.

[59 : 48] To bring home. Those who are lost. Don't write yourself out. Of his life. And his love.

And his legacy. This Christmas. Why would anyone. Why would anyone ever want to do. Such a thing. Amen.

Well we are going to sing. As we close our carols this evening. The last carol. That speaks of where this story begins. In councils of eternity. In the father's heart of love.

Who declares. That he will be an everlasting father. To bring home. Children. Forever. grounds through offers ■■■■■■ what fool on.

Thank you.

[61 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[63 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[67 : 28] Thank you. Thank you. And in doing so,