

# Carols by Candlelight -Jesus Christ Came into the world to bring LIGHT

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Date: 09 December 2018

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening and welcome to our service tonight.

We're always very glad to welcome guests to our Christmas services, whether you've come with friends or with family or whether you just come by yourself. We're delighted always to have you with us.

And we're so glad because our focus in all of our Christmas services is the same. We want people to understand what Christmas is all about and why Jesus Christ came into our world.

And the claim of the Christian message is nothing less than that Jesus Christ is the unique, the ultimate revelation of God to man.

God, our Savior, made known universally to all the world, whoever you are, whatever your religious background, whatever your cultural background, Jesus Christ is God, the Savior made known.

[ 1 : 13 ] So we're glad you're here to explore that message with us this evening. There is a crash downstairs for children up to the age of eight, if anyone to make use of that. But otherwise, we're going to begin by singing an ancient carol.

It's about 1600 years old. But it tells how the story of Christmas began long, long before even that, before even the dawn of time in the love of God himself.

Of the Father's love begotten, er, the world began to be. The Lord's love begotten, er, the world began to be.

The Lord's love begotten, er, the world began to be. The Lord began to be. The Lord began to be. The Lord began to be. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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SINGS And we hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the flow of the sea.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. For the Lord God calls the man and says to him, Where are you?

And he says, I heard the sound of the garden, and I'm not afraid, because I was naked. I hid myself. He said, Who told you, you were in the gate, have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, The woman who gave you with me, she gave you the fruit of the tree, and I eat. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done?

The woman said, The second is to eat, and I eat. The Lord God said to the second, Because you have done this, cursed are you about all the livestock, and about all beasts of the field.

[ 7 : 01 ] On your belly you shall go, and dust shall you 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 heel. Then the Lord God said, Behold the man to become like one of us, in knowing good and evil.

Now, my spirit tries to stand and take also of the tree of man and eat, and live forever. Therefore, the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden, to work the ground from which she is taken.

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed the chair in the lake, and he has flaming swords that turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Well, the wonder of Christmas is that it tells of how that terrible estrangement from God, signified there by those fierce angels and the flaming swords separating man from God, tells us how that estrangement is overcome.

[ 8 : 21 ] Not by us, we can't do that, we have no power. But by God himself coming into our world as saviour. And that means that the angels now have a new role, not barring the way, but proclaiming the good news that now at last there can be peace and goodwill from God towards men and women on earth.

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. and that means that the angels now have a new role, not barring the way, to the earth to touch their hearts.

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Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 11 : 38 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Those words are from Isaiah the prophet speaking hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

[ 15 : 52 ] And telling of God's promise not to forget his people despite all of their waywardness, all of their rejection of him. and telling of that wonderful promise of a coming one who would be Emmanuel, God himself with us to save.

O Lord, we have our life to help, and has surrounded Israel, and once in all the earth are near, until the sun of the Lord appear, Rejoice, rejoice, in the angels of the Lord, in the Lord Israel.

O God, O God, O Lord of might, who's who I've tried to say, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, in the nations of the Lord, in the nations of the Lord, and the nations of the Lord, Rejoice, rejoice, in the nations of the Lord, shall come to me for Israel.

O God, O God, O God, let me free, by all cross.

Jesus stillef be, countenance of there my sencill people say, and in them victims be Emmanuel, come to me, O Israel.

[ 18 : 43 ] O love, how disting love and cheer, our spirit is by thy hand and dear.

This person who gave our hearts so might, that gets our shadows through to flight.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O God, O God, O Israel. O come, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God.

The Lord, come, O God, O God. He is alive, and those of us who live for history.

[ 19 : 57 ] Rejoice, rejoice, in the hand you shall come to me for Israel.

But you, Bethlehem, and Perthah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, although you will come for me, one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from ancient times.

Therefore, Israel will be abundant until the time when she who is in labor is called, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they will live securely.

For then his great us will reach to the Anselm here, and he will be their peace.

[ 21 : 13 ] O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by, and yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.

The hopes and the fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by, As in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.

The hope of the south fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

[ 22 : 35 ] O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee forty batheel, Now I personally have DP many behemothed. O little town of Bethlehem , Meg, including my hope of the force, Pean years with Carl 20 hockeyzes bersamhterite with Dr. U. Jaw eleemot on Bethlehem egil to Matthew 30 thevoons go by, As in thy light panheel, he may our God pull on my Remove.

Hoshésorde on thee to the nineteleton's knee. O Little town of Bethlehem, When we see thee lie. All the hyggs disposition, Of hyng shud deities call theiblings are met in thee tonight. O Christ, let us Lord make ■■■■born, let that praise the saints llege unto who they will come .

O silently, O silently, the waters give this day.

So call in hearts with Him at once the blessings of Israel.

O silently, O silently, the waters give this day.

[ 23 : 58 ] O silently, the waters give this day.

Through the vision of the world, He shall to us be made.

O silently, the waters give this day.

O silently, the waters give this day. O silently, the waters give this day.

O silently, the waters give this day. O silently, the waters give this day.

[ 25 : 10 ] O silently, the waters give this day. O silently, the waters give this day.

to her and said, Precinct, O favorite one, the Lord is with you. But she was quickly troubled at the same, and tried to discern what so decreasing this might be. And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God, and behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will be shall you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your mother to Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son. And this is the sixth month with her who is called Pharaoh. For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Then be to me according to your word, and be the part of the Father.

The promise was for God himself to be with us. And in the birth of Jesus Christ, he who was truly God became truly man. He really did come to be with us and to be one of us.

Jesus, our Emmanuel. And for a purpose. Mild he lays his glory by. Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth. Born to give them second birth.

[ 27 : 32 ] My God is your mother and him. And the people who peace, wouldn't you be with me? Come on in the name of Jesus Christ.

Come on in the name of Jesus Christ, your name of Jesus Christ. Say us is anima greeman. If we are forever now and be accomplished, we are so appreciative. Oh, we are pure and at other BOB's Sabbath.

Amen. Lord will... All that sin is there inside. Joyful all the nations rise, Joyful triumph of the skies, May the joy in those proclaim, Christ is born in the end.

Honor, O angels sing, Glory to the Lord King.

Christ, I am my stern adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, Praise in thy remoting heart, O spring of the virgin's womb.

[ 29 : 03 ] Hilt in flesh the God has seen, Hilt in darkness the earth see, Please as my big man to dwell, Jesus, God, we bow in hell, Hark and herald angels sing, Glory to the Lord King.

Hilt in the remembrance of peace, Hilt in the sorrow of righteousness, Hilt in the glory of the grace, Blessed at the noble hope in his grace, Hilt in the Ryu's name, Phrase in the creation light, Hilt in the■■■■■, CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain. Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. And yet, in the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

[ 32 : 47 ] The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
 [ 33 : 56 ] The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
 The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
 The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
 The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
 Lord, I need you, Lord, I'm so young.  
 [ 35 : 21 ] If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.

If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.  
 If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.  
 If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love. If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.  
 If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love. If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.  
 [ 36 : 31 ] If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love. If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.

If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love. If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love.  
 If I'm not a shepherd, I will bring the love of the Father now.  
 which the Lord has made known on his house, and the healing of peace, and how Mary and Joseph and the lion in nature.  
 And when he has seen it, he knew the prophecy which was told to them concerning the child. And all the backers in wonder how his things which were told by the shepherds.  
 [ 37 : 39 ] But Mary kept all these things and would come to them in her heart. And shepherds' affairs, glorifying and praising God for all the things that were heard and seen, just as it was to all the time.

A God who has not remained hidden, but has come from the realms of glory and drawn near to make the light of his heavenly presence shine in this dark world forever.  
 God with man is now residing. Yonder shines the infant light. Glory to God in the highest. Gloria in excelsis Deo. ■ 3 Amen.  
 Amen. Amen.  
 Amen. Amen.  
 [ 40 : 58 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.  
 Amen. Amen.  
 Amen. Amen.  
 Amen. Amen. Amen. That reading tells of the joy of the faithful who'd been waiting and longing for the fulfillment of all that the prophets had promised. because God's covenant promise had glimmered brighter and brighter all down through the ages and through the darkness of human history.  
 [ 44 : 02 ] But the message of Christmas was that in the person of Jesus Christ, all that was promised has now come. The yearning is over. Darkness is banished.

Light has come. And that's why the Christmas message is one of great joy. Good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul and voice. Now ye need not fear the grave.  
 Jesus Christ was born to save. Christ is born to save.  
 Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. It may be to love to save.  
 Let's pray to Jesus Christ. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save.  
 [ 45 : 18 ] Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save.

Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Christ is born to save. Now ye hear our endless bliss.  
 Joy, joy, joy, in Jesus Christ who's born to save. Christ is born to save. In the north of every tube at minus best forevermore.  
 Christ Donna Wilcoxure, Christatfried Pall jedenard. Weston ■■■■ all-■, with ärdans llas och består en bloms.  
 Amen. Amen.

[ 47 : 11 ] God's self-revelation to be proclaimed to all the nations and believed on in this world. The apostle of Christ says this, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory.

We're going to think a little in a few moments about this message of Christmas as the great revelation of God himself in the flesh.

But first, let's sing one more of perhaps the best-loved carols of all that speaks of the light of God's love being made known in our world. Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face, strikes for us now the hour of grace, Savior, since thou art born.

Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face, and that's the light of God's love being made known in our world.

[ 48 : 23 ] Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face, Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face, singing in heavenly prayer.

Sill the night, holy the night, shepherds first, summer light, earth resounding clear and long, far and near the angels song, Christ the Redeemer is here, Christ the Redeemer is here, Sill the night, holy the night,

Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face, shining from thy face, shining from thy face, shining from thy face, shining from thy face, shining from thy face, shining from South thatkon sight, Amen.

We've been studying this letter recently, the words of the Apostle Paul. Here's what he says in 1 Timothy 3, verse 15. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh.

Now, Paul's saying there the same absolutely astonishing thing that John, the Apostle, begins his gospel with. Where he says that the one who was in the beginning, the one through whom all things were made, the one in whom is life itself, he became flesh and dwelt among us.

[ 52 : 09 ] And we have seen his glory. Jesus Christ, he is saying, came into this world to bring light. Christmas is all about the revelation of God to humanity.

Jesus Christ is the unique, the ultimate, the universal revelation of God to all humanity. He came to show us the real truth about God.

And in doing so, he came to bring the revelation that answers all of our deepest human longings and all of our deepest human needs. Paul speaks there about a mystery.

But don't be mistaken. Whenever the Bible uses that word mystery, it is to speak about something that is no longer a mystery because God himself has explained it.

He has made it known. And that's so here. It's a mystery no longer, says Paul, because it's a mystery made manifest. God's extraordinary truth has been revealed, has been manifested in the flesh, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 53 : 19 ] Now, the Bible's point there is clear, isn't it? That without that revelation of God in Christ, the world would still be shrouded in mystery, in darkness.

And indeed it is where the revelation of Jesus Christ is ignored or is unknown. So I want for a few minutes this evening just to examine the claim of the Bible, the claim all through the Bible.

That the coming of Jesus Christ is indeed the manifest answer of God to all the mysterious agonies of our human condition.

Of our life as we know it to be in this world. Now, you yourself might be a skeptic about these things. I understand that. Or perhaps you just don't know what you think. But will you hear me out? Will you bear with me? As I try, as best as I can, to articulate how the Bible explains and describes our world and its real problems. And the answers that the Bible proclaims in the person of Jesus Christ.

[ 54 : 24 ] Let me start with us, with our own experience of life on this earth. I think it's not unfair, is it, to call that the universal agony of humanity. The agonizing mysteries of our mortal human life, which is so full often of darkness and of despair.

I think it's true to say that our experience of life as human beings is full of unresolved tensions. We live in a world of great beauty. And yet at the same time, that beauty, not only in the world of nature, but also in the world of our humanity.

That beauty coexists alongside great barbarity. Perhaps at Christmas time, more than any other time, we get glimpses, don't we, of the beauty and the love in the human spirit.

It's a season of peace, of goodwill. It's a time for giving. It's a time for expressing love. It's a time for acts of kindness and generosity. And that's lovely to behold, isn't it? Come on, we say to somebody who's being Scrooge-like.

It's Christmas. Join in the joy. Join in the fun. And in the end, even old Ebenezer Scrooge does join the joy, doesn't he? And at Christmas, all the feel-good movies will be rolled out again on television.

[ 55 : 37 ] Films like Love Actually. There's no accident, is it, that all the love stories in that film are centered around Christmas. And the theme song of that film, Christmas is all around.

It's an adaptation, isn't it, of love is all around. I feel it in my fingers. I feel it in my toes. Love is all around. And love is all around at Christmastime. Beauty, kindness, all that is genuinely lovely in human existence.

And that's especially evident at Christmas. Actually, that's quite interesting in itself, don't you think? What is it about Christmas that does that? My last Christmas at school was 1984.

Those of you who remember will remember that was the year that Band-Aid got together to raise money for the Ethiopian famine. And whatever you think of Bob Geldof and all the rest, it was a beautiful thing.

It was a generous and a loving response to fellow human beings. So don't be in any doubt about it. There is real beauty in our human world. No one wants to deny that.

[ 56 : 42 ] But there is also great barbarity, isn't there? There's great hate as well as great love. There are so many things that make us ashamed.

Just as many, I suspect, as there are things that make us proud as human beings. Famines, like the one that Band-Aid was put together to help. They're far more often due to war and oppression and great corruption in governments than they are just due to the weather, aren't they?

And in fact, even the extreme weather, we're told these days, is being affected by human thoughtlessness, by greed, by exploitation. And so we live with that tension.

And we see human beings so creative, so creative of beauty in the arts, in music, in song, in poetry, in architecture, in so many things. Above all, of course, in the beauty of giving and receiving human love.

But we also see human beings so destructive in wars, in terrorism, in corruption. All sorts of ways, but also, of course, much closer to home for most of us, in the losing and in the poisoning of human love.

[ 57 : 57 ] In love that turns to hate, that turns to resentment, to breakup, to rupture. And all the agonies that these things bring to our human lives.

It's an agonizing mystery, being human. This tension that we have to live with, of both great creative beauty on the one hand and great destructive horror on the other.

How do we explain all these unresolved tensions? And how do we explain another fact of our humanity that we can't deny? The unrequited longings of our hearts.

I don't just mean unrequited love. Christmas, of course, is a time for wistful thoughts about that, too, isn't it? I think the number two record in 1984, if I remember rightly, to Band-Aid, was Wham!

Last Christmas. That's a song all about unrequited love, isn't it? Last Christmas, I gave you my heart. And the very next day, you gave it away. Funny how you remember all those songs from your school days, isn't it?

[ 59 : 00 ] Actually, every time I hear that song, I can still see the face of the older sister of a friend of mine at a certain party. But, no, actually, I'm not going to tell you any more about that story. But there's a lot of unrequited love in the world, isn't there?

And that's very painful. But there are also other, deeper longings in all of our hearts. And when we're honest for a moment, when we really listen to the yearnings that rise up deep within us, there are yearnings for more, yearnings for something better.

Yearnings for something that we feel must be out there in life, but we just haven't quite yet grasped it. Even the happiest people, even the most fulfilled people, have these yearnings.

The writer C.S. Lewis called that the unappeasable want. The inconsolable longing in the heart for we know not what. And even a wide atheist like Bertrand Russell can't shake off that unsatisfied longing for the contentment of a really deep and satisfying understanding of the meaning of life.

Here's what he said. One of the world's most celebrated atheists. Listen. He says, it's odd, isn't it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it. And yet, what is it all for?

[ 60 : 21 ] There must be something more important, one feels. I don't believe there is. And he's expressing that inconsolable longing, that tension, the unresolved mysteries of mortal life.

But he's trying to deny it. And as C.S. Lewis points out, almost our whole education, he says, has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent inner voice.

Almost all modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found in this earth alone. Now, I think that's probably true now in this country, isn't it?

It is certainly true in China. A lady here from China told me recently that her whole education under communism was directed at precisely that.

The quenching of that voice within that seeks and searches for more. And wants more. And asks, where is that more to be found? But that voice couldn't be quenched in her, even by the full force of the Chinese Communist Party.

[ 61 : 31 ] And it can't be quelled in any one of us, friends, can it? At our most honest, heart-searching moments. As C.S. Lewis says again, Do what they will then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy.

He says, creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger. Well, there's such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim.

Well, there's such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire. Well, there's such a thing as sex. And he says, if I find within myself a desire that no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

And that is the Bible's explanation for this universal agony of humanity. For the deep desires and longings for fulfillment, for love, for belonging, for identity.

For we know not quite what. We just know we haven't yet found it. The Bible tells us that God created us for himself. And for an eternal world.

[ 62 : 45 ] A world of beauty and bounty that even the very best of this world's highest beauty and experiences are merely pale shadows of. He created us to know him.

And to love him. And to be like him. In creating man, God gave us his heart. And yet, almost the very next day, we threw it away.

And we've lived with the agony of that ever since. The beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter 3, tells that story very graphically. The rebellion in Eden.

But in Romans chapter 1, the apostle Paul tells it starkly and bluntly. Claiming to be wise, he says, human beings became utter fools. Exchanging the glory of an infinite God and the truth of God for a lie.

And turning from the worship of God the creator to the worship of themselves. Mere created mortals. And the result?

[ 63 : 50 ] Well, Paul says. God gave human beings what they asked for. He gave them up. To doing it our way. And the result is the world that we all know and that we live in.

Which is not, is it? The utopian world that John Lennon sang about and said, If people would only imagine there's no heaven above and no God, we would be living in. Do we see all the people living life in peace?

Those tinted specks of John Lennon must have been very, very rose tinted, don't you think? Now the world we have chosen in rejecting our creator is a world of war.

A world of strife. A world of misery. And a world full of universal, agonized longing for that lost world that instinctively deep down we crave.

And longed for. Because we were created for it. And we can't find it inside this fallen existence.

Don't you sense that agonizing mystery deep down in your own soul?

[ 64 : 59 ] We may try and crowd it out with noise, with busyness, with all sorts of other things. But aren't there times when you wonder? In the darkness of a sleepless night?

In the face of tragedy perhaps? Or pain? Maybe in the face of a bereavement? Don't you find yourself saying with Bertrand Russell, There must be something more important?

I do think that most of us do. And what we are experiencing is simply what the Bible says. That God has put eternity into the human heart.

But because of our sin, we cannot find out what God has been doing from the beginning to the end. We're in a fog. We crave the light. We long for the light. We feel it must be there.

But our rebellion against God has left us in the dark. And that's the universal agony of man. Life is an agonizing mystery of tension.

[ 66 : 01 ] But you see, Paul says here that in Jesus Christ coming into this world, We have the unique answer of God. The answer manifested in the human flesh of God the Son.

One in which the mystery of God has been made known uniquely, universally. To bring light, to bring hope in the place of darkness and in the place of despair.

He was manifested in the flesh. But who and what was manifested in the flesh of Jesus Christ? Well, Paul loves to call him God our Savior.

Listen to what he says writing to Titus. When Jesus came into our world, he says, The grace of God appeared, bringing salvation for all people. When the goodness, the loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

You see, he is the God of such loving kindness. And he so loved, even brazen, rebellious rejecters of his love, he came to save them.

[ 67 : 06 ] The God made manifest in the flesh is God our Savior. And that's because he is the God of love. The God who is love.

That's perhaps one of the best known things that the Bible says, that God is love. But just listen to what the Apostle John actually says in full. God is love. And in this, the love of God was made manifest.

Notice the words. Manifest among us that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. How so? Well, he goes on.

In this is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. That means to turn away God's justified anger at our sinful rejection of him.

By God himself bearing that anger, bearing that punishment for our sins. So that we might find that life that he made us for. That life that deep down our human spirit longs for.

[ 68 : 13 ] He's the God who saves because he is the God who is love. One of the carols says it. Love came down at Christmas.

Love all lovely. Love divine. Love was born at Christmas. Star and angels gave the sign. He's the God who saves because the true God made known to this world is love.

And the true God, the only God, is love because he is Trinity. In the incarnation of the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father is revealed to this world.

We heard the angel say to Mary in Luke chapter 1. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High God will overshadow you.

Therefore, the child born will be called holy, the Son of God. We don't have time tonight. But if you read through John's gospel for yourself, you'll see all through.

[ 69 : 20 ] Jesus is constantly saying he was revealing the Father in heaven. And he says, I and the Father are one. If you have seen me, you've seen the Father.

He tells his disciples about when he will rise from the dead and ascend to heaven and says, The Holy Spirit will come down and be with you just as Jesus had been with them on earth. So that they will not be orphans.

And that through the Holy Spirit of God, both the Father and the Son would make their home with every Christian believer. And we could go on and on.

But what is absolutely unmistakable is that according to Jesus himself, the God who is made manifest in the world through him is the triune God.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and no other. And you see, it's that God and that God alone who is love in his very being. Because only the triune God, one God in three persons, only a God like that can be love in himself.

[ 70 : 22 ] With no need of others to love. Because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have shared perfect love within themselves forever.

And that means, you see, that God created human beings to love them, not because he needed someone to love. Freddie Mercury sang that, didn't he? We all need someone to love.

Well, that might be true of us. Indeed, it is fundamentally true of us human beings because we are made for the love of a loving God. But God doesn't need someone to love.

He is love. And there has been perfect, beautiful love within the Godhead all through eternity. It's because God is triune, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that we can say God is love within himself.

Perfectly. Abundantly. Only of the triune God can love be the ultimate truth about his nature. So yes, the Bible tells us God is powerful.

[ 71 : 25 ] He is mighty. He is glorious. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. But it is love that is primary. He is love. The God who is truly sovereign is manifested in the flesh as Savior because, as John 3.16 tells us so marvelously, because God so loved the world of rebellious, recalcitrant human beings.

He so loved that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. God is manifest in this world as Savior because God is love.

And he is love because he is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It couldn't be, you see, that a unipersonal God like the God of Islam or any other religion, that such a God could be love in himself.

That God would have to create in order to love. That means then that for a God like that, it's God's power that is primary.

It can't be his love. You can't love if there's no other to love. But you see, the true God didn't create in order to love. There was love in the Godhead from all eternity.

[ 72 : 49 ] No, the true God created to share his love, to give his love, not to get love. And so the true God's power and the true God's glory is all conditioned and characterized by his love.

Not the other way around. His power and his might and his sovereignty express and extend his love. And that's why the Bible shows us that the greatest display of God's almighty sovereign power was at the place where he poured out his love for human beings.

At the cross. And in his own body bore away our sins. So that, as John said, we might live through him. In this is love.

Not that we love God. But that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. There is divine power manifest.

Serving the divine love. And we know instinctively deep down, don't we, that love is more foundational. That it is more important than power.

[ 74 : 04 ] Because we feel terribly sorry for somebody, don't we? Who has amassed huge power, huge wealth, huge prestige, influence, possessions, all these things. But is lonely and isolated and devoid of real relationship of human love.

We don't want to be that person on our deathbed, do we? That's because deep down within ourselves, we know that love is primary.

That it's foundational. That it's what we as human beings were made for. And that's because, friends, we are made in the image of the triune God who is himself love.

And that is the God that has been made manifest in this world in the person of Jesus Christ.

Through the Holy Spirit's power, God the Son was incarnate in the flesh to reveal God the Father truly and flawlessly and forever.

And that means that in Jesus Christ, we can know the only true God as he truly is. He was manifest in the flesh. God our Savior made known.

[ 75 : 18 ] So there is nothing un-God-like at all in the person of Jesus Christ. Read through the Gospels. You will see there is nothing, nothing at all in the Gospel that will ever make you ashamed of Jesus Christ.

He did not take young girls pre-puberty to wife. He did not exploit his enemies and call people to raise arms against them. It was the grace and the goodness and the loving kindness of God that he manifested here on this earth.

And just as importantly, there is nothing un-Jesus-like in God. He has made God truly known. There is no other side of God that we don't know that we might have to fear.

No dark side. No disappointing side. He has shown us the true God. Yes, he is holy.

And Jesus himself was absolutely plain about that. He is utterly true and utterly just. He will judge all people. And there will be no escaping from his justice.

[ 76 : 26 ] But the message of Christmas is that the God who is love was manifested in Jesus Christ to save from that judgment. That's why Paul, who wrote these words, said that his whole life was given to teaching and striving to proclaim the great message of hope.

The living God, the Savior of all who believe. Friends, Jesus Christ came into this world to bring light and so to bring hope.

There is so much hopelessness, so much despair in our world, so much to disappoint in the human condition. And there is only so much that pills and psychologies or indeed prosperity, there is only so much that these things can do to alleviate it.

Even if you are the happiest, cheeriest, most fulfilled person alive, there is one professional service that you will not be able to avoid. And that's the undertaker.

But the message of Christmas is that there is hope. There is hope in the living God who is the loving God. Who was made manifest in the flesh so that we might live through him.

[ 77 : 40 ] And that's why Paul says all through this letter, take hold of eternal life. Put your trust in him. He was manifest in the flesh to be proclaimed to all the nations and to be believed on in this world.

That's why he came. Jesus Christ is the unique and ultimate and universal revelation of God to all humanity.

He came to show us the truth about God. And he came to lead us to the one who alone can meet all our longings and all our deepest needs.

Why would you ever want to resist and not receive the call of God our Savior? The God whose sovereign power serves his saving love.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Let's pray. Take hold of eternal life.

[ 78 : 55 ] O come, all you faithful, joyful, triumphant. Come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of angels. Come. Let us adore him.

Christ the Lord. Gracious God, may you grant that. To be the response of all of our hearts this Christmas.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

Come to Bethlehem. Chúnigaly with aling de'er.

Of Jehovah's Monstric■,encie of God's presence. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

[ 80 : 56 ] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing words of angels, sing in exultation, sing all His blessings of heaven above.

Glory to God in the highest.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him.

[ 82 : 43 ] Lord, for our salvation, Jesus, to be the Lord.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him.

Please do be seated.

Just as we close, let me mention one or two things. We have lots more Christmas services still to come. And at the doors there are these Christmas cards. Please do take them. They have all the details inside of many more good things to come.

[ 83 : 52 ] And we'd love to see you back at one of those. There are also little booklets here. A little book by a friend of ours called Rico Tice called So This Is Christmas. It'll take you about 10 minutes or 15 minutes to read.

And if you'd like to take one of those away, you'll be very welcome indeed. It's a good read. Thirdly, we also have these books called The Word One-to-One, which is an introduction to the beginning of John's Gospel.

I mentioned John's Gospel this evening. And one of the best things that you can do, if you've never really familiarized yourself with what the Christmas message and the Christian faith is all about, is to read through one of the Gospels.

And this is just a little help to lead you through reading John's Gospel, Chapter 1. If you've come with a friend or a family member this evening who's a Christian, they'd love to read this with you.

And so some of these are at the door. Pick one up, have a look, and ask them to read through it with you. And there's nothing they would be more glad to do this Christmas, I can assure you.

Finally, we also have a course called Christianity Explored, which begins just after Christmas, Monday the 14th of January.

[ 84 : 53 ] There are cards again for these just at the doors. That's a seven-week course where we go through one of the other Gospels, Mark's Gospel, looking through the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord Jesus Christ, what he said, what he did, what he claimed.

And it's just another opportunity for you to look at the primary evidence and make up your own mind. All we want to do is show you what the Bible says so that you can understand what the Christian claim really is.

No coercion, nothing else. But understanding is what we seek. Because we believe that the message is so compelling, it speaks for itself. All of these are opportunities for you to take these things and to ponder them in your own heart and to see what you make of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for being here this evening. There will be refreshments at the back of the church and also downstairs where there's mulled wine, mince pies, coffee, and perhaps even other good things. We'd love for you to stay behind and enjoy that time together.

But as we close, let's pray. Great God of heaven, God of love, God our Savior, we praise you that in Jesus Christ you have made yourself known in our world, in our language, and in our experience so that we might know you and find the love that you long to share.

[ 86 : 29 ] Lighten our hearts, we pray this Christmas with the love of heaven itself that we all might be drawn to his light. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.