

Jesus Christ Came into the world to bring LIFE: Christmas is about Resurrection from the Dead

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone, and a very happy Christmas to all of you. Rejoice, exult, up, glorify the days, praise what the holiest this day has done.

Set aside fear, banish lamentation, strike up a song of joy and mirth. Serve the All Highest with glorious choirs. Let us worship the name of the Lord.

Our first hymn on the screen is Christians Awake, Salute the Happy Morn. Let us worship the Lord.

Let us worship the Lord.

Let us worship the Lord.

[2 : 28] Let us worship the Lord. Let us worship the Lord.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[4 : 39] Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Well, listen as we read together in the scriptures. You might like to turn, if you have a Bible there, to 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 10, page 995 in the Church Visitors Bibles.

But I'm going to read first some verses from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah. Isaiah, speaking some eight centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. And he said this, And he said this,

And if you have a Bible, that he may be glorified. And if you look at 2 Timothy chapter 1, this says the apostle Paul, is God's own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death, who abolished death, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

[8 : 08] Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. And may God bless to us his word. Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth.

That's the message of Christmas today. And so let's sing that in the words of this great carol. Hark, the Herald Angels Sing. Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Living on earth.

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

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[9 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And we come to the last of these texts that we've been looking at over Christmas from Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus about the purpose of the birth of Jesus Christ. And in some ways, really, this one is the most wonderful of all.

[11 : 42] Because Paul says that Christ Jesus came into our world to abolish death and to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Jesus Christ came into this world to bring life. I came that they might have life, said Jesus, and have it abundantly. For God so loved the world, a world even in rebellion against him, says the Apostle

John, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life, everlasting life.

A wonderful promise of life. But notice that that promise of life that God gives believers involved, he says, the giving, the giving of his Son.

It's very clear from the start of the story of Jesus that the giving of his eternal life to others involved the giving of himself in their place to death.

Jesus said, didn't he, that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, he's talking about himself there, then it remains alone.

[12 : 59] But if it dies, he says, it bears much fruit. Much fruit. And Paul says that here, doesn't he? That life and immortality only comes after Jesus' abolished death.

And so for us, the great promise of Christmas and the great power of Christmas begins with the great pain of Christmas. Christmas is suffused with the shadows of suffering, the shadows of death. We like to think of Christmas, don't we, as a time of great joy and happiness and beauty. And of course, that's true. We can't help being enchanted by the twinkling of the Christmas tree lights, by the words of the beautiful carols, the music.

And all around, people are engaged, aren't they, in a fantasia of great celebration at Christmas. But even amid all of that, there will be, won't there, dark shadows.

Dark shadows of grief. There will be some for whom this is the first Christmas for them after a painful and a hard bereavement. Many of our congregation this year are in that situation.

[14 : 11] A dear loved one has been lost, perhaps a lifelong spouse, or a mother, or a father, or a child, perhaps worst of all. And for nearly all of us, it is, isn't it, at Christmas time that we feel so keenly the loss of our loved ones, those whom we've lost, even though it might be a long, long time ago.

We feel it so deeply. We feel the bitterness. We feel the pain. We feel the darkness of the inescapable enemy of every human being.

The enemy that stalks us all and defeats us all always in the end in this world. The great enemy of death. And that's true, isn't it?

Death is the great tyrant. The one that robs us from everything that is most precious and dearest in our lives in this world. And that, of course, is the life and the love of those who are dearest and closest to us.

And we know that. We yearn deep down, all of us. We yearn for a world where death's dark shadows would be put to flight forever. Where the grave would no longer rob us of all the joy and light of life.

[15 : 24] But we know, don't we, that that is a world that lies way beyond even the greatest human power, even the greatest capacity, however much we can extend this mortal coil.

But it was to bring that world of our longings into this world of our experience that Jesus Christ came, says the Apostle Paul, to abolish death.

By tasting death himself for everyone. In order to destroy the hold of death over human beings. And to do that forever.

He came to break the power, to break the curse of death forever. The curse that is upon this world because of our human sin, our rebellion against God, our scorn against God, our true sovereign, our maker.

That's why we die. Human death is not just part of the natural cycle of life. It's not just like the cycle of nature where leaves fall off the trees and the trees die every winter and then eventually new buds come and so on.

[16 : 33] If that's all that human death was, why do we feel so deeply? It's misery, it's horror, it's terror. No, death is not natural for human beings.

Death is a curse. It's a blot on the beauty of our human life in this world. And the greatest sting of it all is that it's all our own fault.

Because the cause is our rebellion against God. It's our rejection of him. And that's what the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is and all of his apostles and all of the scriptures.

Right from the very beginning, the apostle Paul says, sin came into our world and death through sin. And so death spread, he says, to all people because all sinned.

And he says, death reigned in this world. Sin reigned in death. Human beings, in rejecting the gracious rule of our God and in choosing the tyrannical rule of the power of sin and death, we have

given our lives over to a brutal slave master, to a ghastly employer who pays us not a living wage, but as Paul says, a killing wage for the wages of sin is death.

[17 : 58] But our Savior, Jesus Christ, he said, came into this world to abolish death forever, to remove that power over us.

And he did it by receiving that wage for himself in our place. In his suffering and death, says the apostle, he tasted death for everyone.

He came, he says, and partook of our flesh that through death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that is the devil, and to deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

That's why he came, to abolish the horror of everlasting death, the everlasting death of terrible separation from the presence of God and from the eternal life of God, of which our mortal death is but a pale shadow and but a pale pointer.

And he did that by embracing himself, the horror of that eternal death in our place for our sake. That's why even the beauty of the story of the first Christmas is suffused with the shadows of suffering and of death.

[19 : 13] Because even from his birth, even from his manger cradle, the shadows of the cross were falling over him. As we sing, O are this babe still infant crying, shadows of the cross are lying.

That's why the gospels tell us about a king being born, and yet he's born amid homelessness, amid hostility, the sound of weeping, Herod's massacre of the children. Simeon's prophecy of a sword piercing the side of his mother, the pain of watching her son die on the cross.

The opposition of so many to the Christ, all through his ministry on every side. That's why you read through the gospels, and they'll go on to tell you about his life, bringing beauty for brokenness, healing every kind of disease and affliction in others, and yet living as an outcast, as a stranger with nowhere to lay his head, hated, opposed by so many.

All because in order to abolish death for us, he had to come into our soiled and sinful world, our doom-laden world, our world full of tragedies and sorrows and heartbreak and despair, and death because of sin.

And he came to bear our pain. That's what the prophets foretold. He took our infirmities.

[20 : 40] He bore our diseases. And the haunting beauty of many of the carols, they sing of that, these shadows of suffering and death gathering around him and growing darker, as we've just sung, trace we the babe who has retrieved our loss from his poor manger to his bitter cross.

That's why the one who was born a king on Bethlehem's plain is at last sorrowing and sighing and bleeding and dying and sealed in a stone-cold tomb.

That's the unspeakable pain of Christmas, of the incarnation of the Son of God, the altogether lovely one, despised and rejected in this world.

From his birth, outcast, homeless, acquainted with grief. And yet it was in and through that unspeakable pain that the ineffable beauty of Christmas shines because still he came.

Despite all of that, such was his love for lost sinners because he came to the squalor of a borrowed stable and was lifted on a cruel cross because he was pierced for a world's transgressions.

[21 : 56] He was suffering to save the lost. He fought for breath. He fought for me, loosing sinners from the claims of hell. And with a shout, our souls are free.

Death defeated by Emmanuel, by our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death for our sake. We're going to pause and sing that lovely carol that speaks of death defeated by Emmanuel from the squalor of a borrowed stable by the Spirit and a virgin's faith.

of the God for Terre of a tonight within the sun and a virgin's faith again.

He was speaking of thanks to him, who bore you in the silence, who bore you in the experience, who bore you in the lashes and his kindness.

He was answering the knee of a witness. Thank you.

[23 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[26 : 00] Thank you. Thank you.

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

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

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[28 : 34] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

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

[31 : 50] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. We're kind. Thank you. How do you have to do. Thank you. And we'll be back in. the way of the light that overcomes the darkness. And that is the great promise that Christmas brings to this world. It's a promise of a new day, of a new world, a world where death's dark shadows truly are put to flight forever and ever because our Savior Christ Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. So let's sing again of our great Savior, of Emmanuel, who has come and dispersed the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[36 : 28] Amen. Well, because of the great pain of Christmas, the coming into this world to live and to die and to rise again of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have the great promise of Christmas. But we can't finish this morning before we think also about the great power of Christmas, that the Christmas message must be shared. And for us as Christians, Christmas must always be suffused with a sharing of this great light of life to the world. Look again at this great verse, 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 10 this morning. Paul says, doesn't he, that life and immortality comes to us, our Savior Jesus Christ, that it's brought to light for our world through the gospel, through the gospel, which Paul himself was appointed a preacher and apostle and a teacher.

He was sent with this message into this world. That's what the word apostle means, one who is sent with a mission. And that mission was to preach and to teach and to share this glorious message of light and life among all the nations of this world. So that the people walking in darkness would see the light through this gospel and come to know themselves, the power of God for salvation, the power that destroys and abolishes the power of death. That's how the power of Christmas comes into our world still today. Because wherever Jesus Christ is proclaimed, wherever this gospel is heard, wherever it's shared, wherever it's believed, the power of God for salvation is unleashed. Paul wrote to the same church that he's writing to here, the church in Ephesus where Timothy was serving. And he said to them that when he reminded them that when he, the apostle, first came to them and proclaimed this gospel, he says Christ himself spoke to you. Christ himself preached peace to you and brought you to become, become members of his household of life, his household of everlasting life. And that same gospel that brought life to that church in Ephesus of the pagan people, that same gospel was delivered by the apostles to the apostles to the apostles to the church, the whole church once and for all, so that all down through the ages and today in our time, so that we will go on proclaiming it in the world until

Emmanuel comes again. We're to hold out that same promise of Christmas, to light, to life and immortality for all who will trust and follow Christ. Now Paul knows that that full revelation of life still awaits the coming again of Emmanuel as we've been singing about. He's quite plain in the verse before this one that he is still suffering as he preaches for this, preaches this gospel. He's unashamed of that suffering. He's unashamed of how weak his gospel looks at the present time because he's fully convinced of the coming of that day as he calls it, the day when he knows that he will secure at last the crown of life, the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus himself. But he knows, he knows that even now there is great and wonderful power in the gospel message. There is the power of salvation beginning even now in this world, bringing the life of the world to come now into the present for those who believe.

I am the light of the world, said Jesus. Whoever believes in me will not any longer walk in darkness, but will have the light of life begun, which will never be extinguished.

Of course the message of the Bible is that the best is yet to be, but Christmas was the beginning. Christmas is the harbinger of that coming day, which is absolutely sure and certain because Christ Jesus has come into this world. It's like the first snowdrops that you'll see even now burying up

under the frosty ground. They come up even through the snow, don't they, in the midst of winter. And they remind us that spring is coming, that winter will end, that summer at last will surely be there. And that's the message of Christmas of the one who came at first so quietly, so silently, unheard of in the world, to endure death in our place. It tells us that he will surely come again, but this time it will be with a fanfare of great trumpets. And then he will bring that everlasting life to our bodies. One of the great prayers of the church proclaims that when he had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers because our Savior, Christ Jesus, has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. That gospel, that glad tidings of great joy, which is the power of salvation, it lifts people out of darkness, out of despair, out of the darkness of death and into the kingdom of the Son of God, the Lord of life.

[42 : 48] And these great tidings, glad tidings of great joy, they are what have been given to us as the church of Jesus Christ. Not to keep to ourselves, not to hide away, but to share with the whole world.

That's what the prophet Isaiah said. Go and tell it, proclaim it on the mountains. Tell the good news to all the world. Lift up your voices, be strong. Herald that gospel loud and long because he is leading us on to our salvation, to the joy that at last his coming will bring when we who wait for him from every nation of this world, when we also, like him, will rise up with wings like eagles. Friends, that day is coming. It's sure and it's certain because our Savior, Christ Jesus, has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Well, amen. So let it be. And thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. We're going to sing as we close this Christmas morning, words from that great promise of Isaiah the prophet and the great message that we have to proclaim in all the world. We'll go and proclaim it on the mountain. Tell the good news to all the world.

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

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[45 : 01] Thank you. Bye. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[47 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen. Thank you.

[50 : 39] Thank you. Thank you.