

# Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight

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Date: 24 December 2019

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] . Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 3 : 00 ] Thank you. Thank you. And this God is not a distant God.

Rather, he is one who in the coming of Jesus Christ has become Emmanuel, God with us, in order to answer all the inescapable questioning of our human minds.

He came down to earth from heaven, who was God and Lord of all. Amen.

Amen. And this God, we is one who hinges upon the earth and the Tot JAKE HAS RAN adalah With Damit. Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 5 : 28 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 7 : 59 ] 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, And the Lord God said, Perfect peace and harmony between male and female, between humans and nature, between man and God.

No wonder the next carol calls us to sing praises to our creator God. But notice when we get to the last line of the carol, But notice when we get to the last line of the carol, it tells another story. We praise the God who has made heaven and earth of naught, yes, but also with his own blood mankind has bought.

And after the carol, the next reading will begin to explain why that had to be so. God bless the Cause here is And the heavy from there, so with the cold, yea, shin' on multi-femouth's Timothy was named blamed for the curse.

And so many people. And so many of us should be here to forgot the name of the hymn of Score andidades. Instead, without the Hail Do niin, I'll tell you about the lawsuit, but the true italiano in our country. But what now is, what? So great There's a Loan do. Thank you.

[ 10 : 32 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 14 : 32 ] Thank you. Thank you. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did 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 trees in the garden, but God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

But the serpent said 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, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit 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 are you above all livestock and above all the beasts of the field.

[16:17] 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 heel. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.

In 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 for you.

And you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you are taken.

[17:26] For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. A curse on human relationships. A curse on nature.

A curse on our very lives. To dust you'll return. That is more like the world we actually know.

Through the fear of death, people are subject to lifelong slavery.

That's how the Bible puts it. But you heard God's promise. Even as the curse was pronounced. That evil would not have the last word. That God himself would intervene in history.

Through the offspring of the woman. Who would at last destroy the works of the devil. And liberate his people. Restore the world. And down through history.

That promise shone. Despite long, long ages of darkness. Until at last. That the first Christmas.

That promised offspring came.

[18:26] To save us all from Satan's power. When we had gone astray. For sin removed. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Allah. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Si. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[19:59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

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

Thank you.

[23:37] 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. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[27:05] Amen. Amen.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots 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 fear of the Lord.

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 resting place shall be glorious.

In that day, the Lord, with his hard and great and strong sword, 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 the crocus. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

[ 29 : 10 ] Be strong. Fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, 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 men leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy.

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Your God will come and save you.

As the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah, more than 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, promising the coming of God himself to banish darkness, banish evil.

[ 30 : 17 ] And to make sorrow and sighing flee away forever. God himself with us, with power, to reverse the curse of sin.

And to make his blessings flow again as far as the curse is found. That's why Christmas is a message of joy to the world.

■■ God is an Snape.

Thank you. Life Steam población. This is course not an abbot. Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 32 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 34 : 30 ] 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.

[ 38 : 16 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

What? and perhaps above all where are we going to go when we die they're big questions they're vital questions to answer if we're going to make any sense at all of our lives and friends i want to persuade you that only the christian faith can give you the real answers to those questions because the definitive answers to these supremely existential questions they can come only from outside of ourselves just as the the definitive answer to the meaning and the message of a play doesn't just come from our impression put from the author's clear statement this is why i wrote it this is what i'm saying and god you see the creator of all things god has spoken definitively in his word of ultimate reason in one place indeed in one person alone in jesus christ the incarnate son of god god has spoken to us by his son says hebrews chapter one whom he appointed heir of all things through whom he also created the world and he upholds the universe by the word of his power jesus he says is the source of this universe and everything in it he's the goal of this whole world and he upholds it right now by the word of his power he is the answer to where we've come from to what we are and to where we're going and if you reject that revelation from god that word of ultimate reason and explanation of life of the universe of everything then you will end up living in a world of great uncertainty and will be faced only with a universe of implacable absurdity of course in our western societies largely that is what we've done and friends that's what explains our world our so-called enlightenment has actually only led us into darkness into the fog of of ignorance into a great great deal of misery and that is because we have willfully rejected reality that's what the bible means by the word sin by the way just rejecting the reality of god and rebelling against the rule of god that's what sin is not sex or drugs not socialism if you read the daily mail it's not fossil fuels or wearing fur if you read the guardian it's a reckless rejection of reality and reason the reason and the reality that god has placed before us and it is choosing instead the absurdity of a world without god and you see if you abandon reality you will end in disaster now politicians will surely discover that again with all their the promises that they can't keep with all the promises of reckless spending with money from the magic money tree but what happens to our human experience when we abandon god's reality when we abandon god's answers to the great questions of life i want to speak a little tonight about these verses from that last reading from hebrews chapter one because they tell us that jesus christ is the answer to all the inescapable questioning of the human mind because he is

god's word of ultimate reason for this world and i want to just take three statements from these verses in turn first of all jesus is the source of the whole universe us included god has spoken to us in his son through whom he created the world now of course most people around us today in our world in our society have said we reject that we don't believe that we won't have that that kind of explanation anymore we've listened haven't we to the philosophers like bertrand russell who says that well we are just quote an accidental collocation of atoms we've listened to uh fanatical anti-religious zealots like richard dawkins who says there is no design there's no purpose in the universe there is nothing he says but quotes blind pitiless indifference and we're all just blindly dancing to the music of our dna and many people accept these things just because well these are very clever men who are speaking but the question is friends where has that thinking really got us in terms of personal life bertrand russell's example is pretty salient in itself read his biographies read of his multiple marriage failures and affairs read of the bruised and battered personalities he left all around him pretty sad story but where is that rejection of reality got us as a society well if we don't know where we come from if we don't know why we're here at all then not surprisingly we will be a society increasingly confused about our identity who we are and what we really are increasingly rootless more and more a people without any sense of anchor without any sense of belonging 21st century britain is a very lonely place for lots of people actually not long ago a government minister was appointed as the minister for loneliness because the problem has reached such epidemic proportions a fifth of our population a third of under 25 is reported in a huge survey being nearly always or often lonely isn't that sad but it's not just sad it's actually dangerous studies have shown that that loneliness vastly increased the risk of well depression and suicide yes dementia in old age but also you know this the risk of high blood pressure the risk of heart disease and strokes in fact loneliness is as big a risk of smoking 15 cigarettes a day it increases the likelihood of premature death by over a quarter isn't that staggering over 50 years ago the Beatles sang that song didn't they look at all the lonely people well there's a lot more of them today and confused people some people so confused about who they are and what they really are that increasingly they seem to be wanting to mutilate their bodies with drugs and even with surgery to try and find themselves by changing their sex and we all know don't we that knowing about our origin is really really important it's vital to our sense of identity to who we really are that's why people who grow up not knowing their real parents often have a deep deep urge to find out who they were where they come from is part of knowing who they really are well friends that is the way it is for the whole of the human race and yet we have repeatedly rejected the truth we have to believe that this universe can only be explained by knowing its source by knowing God himself in ultimate clarity through Jesus Christ we've rejected that but still we want to know the answers and so we search for other explanations we spent billions of pounds on a hadron collider trying to find the explanation for life the Higgs boson particle but even if we find that there'll still be a question won't there well why is there a Higgs boson particle or we delve deeply into the genetic information in our DNA to try and find the answers but again that just raises more questions why is all that vast intelligent information stored there and how could it possibly have got there by sheer chance in an absurd universe without any design at all you see when you reject the truth about where we've really come from that shouldn't surprise us should it that we find ourselves singing along with Eleanor Rigby all the lonely people where do they all come from all the lonely people where do they all belong well they don't know and they can't know as long as they suppress the truth that Jesus is the source and therefore he is the reason for everything in this world the second word though in Hebrews is that Jesus is not only the source it tells us he's the goal of the whole universe he has been appointed heir of all things well again people reject that but when you reject reality when you reject God's revealed reason you don't somehow become more enlightened about the meaning of life you lose the light of that meaning almost completely that's what Paul says in Romans chapter 1 that we read when you exchange the truth of God for a lie you become debased and futile in your thinking and human society forgets what it is and what it's for and descends as the apostle says I'll quote again into envy and murder and strife and maliciousness and gossip and slander hatred insolence boastfulness disobedience to parents foolishness heartlessness ruthlessness well pick up any paper and have a read of it we've rejected God's reality about what the goal of creation is and that means friends that as a society we just don't know where we're going and when that is so people people have no hope they have no hope for the future and that means very often they don't have any sense of meaning for the present and the symptoms of that are all around us aren't they

you know you've seen in the news Scotland has the highest drug deaths in Europe and Glasgow is the worst in Scotland and despite all the the Scottish government's best efforts some might say it's because of their mistaken efforts things have just got steadily worse but UK wide the biggest killer of young men in our society is suicide think of some of the desperate estates that have that great sense of hopelessness pervading them but you know it's not just the hopelessness of social deprivation it's not just the drugs the violence the gangs that hopeless search for meaning and for purpose is just as evident in the world of art in the world of culture in the world of intelligent thought because it doesn't matter who you are rejecting the truth cannot be done with total success the truth remains true nonetheless that we are made for God and that by denying that we have become guilty in God's sight and friends guilt is a very destructive thing that brings great conflict into our experience and it's not something that can just be resolved by therapy because these are not just misplaced feelings of guilt this is real guilt which needs to be forgiven and the only source of real forgiveness is the God whose existence we are denying and so there is conflict in people's hearts and deep down they have a real problem needing a real solution but they are determined to deny the reality of the problem and therefore the only solution and that's the fact that's what explains the restlessness the anxiety the longing for satisfaction for true meaning that is such a distinctive mark of our human world and it comes out so often in the world of culture in the world of the creative arts this is what one writer says this sense of conflict the sense of groping vainly in a dark room for a door that it's felt must be there it's often urgent and acute whether it's in the tragic pathos of romantic music such as Tchaikovsky's or Rachmaninoff's or the despairing intellectual brilliance of Sibelius the aching longing of the romantic poets like Keats or Wordsworth or the gloomy fatalism of Arnold or Thomas Hardy the aberrations of Cubist and Surrealist art the near pathological distortions of Van Gogh the great question mark over the whole of human existence is more tragically and sensitively evident in the world of culture than anywhere else one artist actually who betrays that often with great humor is the film director

[ 51 : 43 ] Woody Allen life he says is full of misery loneliness and suffering and it's all over much too soon well that's funny isn't it and it's clever but there's a very serious point in there listen to a more sober comment from him quoted by the writer Francis Schaeffer alienation loneliness and emptiness verging on madness the fundamental thing behind all motivation and all activity is the constant struggle against annihilation and death it's absolutely stupefying in its terror says Woody Allen and it renders everyone's accomplishments meaningless not only that the individual dies or that man as a whole dies but that you struggle to do a work of art that will last and then you realize that the universe itself is not going to exist after a period of time and he says until those issues are resolved in each person religiously psychologically existentially the social and political issues will never be solved except in a slapdash way and Francis Schaeffer comments and says if there is no personal God nothing beyond what our eyes can see and our hands can touch then Woody Allen is right life is both meaningless and terrifying and we might add pretty depressing too you may know these words from William Shakespeare all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players they have their exits and their entrances and one man in his time plays many parts his act being seven ages at first the infant mewling and puking in the nurse's arms and then the whining schoolboy with his satchel and shining mourning face creeping like a snail unwillingly to school and then the lover sighing like a furnace with a woeful ballad made to his mistress eyebrow then a soldier full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard jealous in honor sudden and quick in quarrel seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth and then the justice fair round belly with good cape unlined with eyes severe and beard of formal cut full of wise saws modern instances and so he plays his part the sixth age shifts into the lean and slippered pantaloone with spectacles on nose and pouch on side his youthful hose well saved a world too wide for his shrunk shank and his big manly voice turning again towards childish treble pipes and whistles in his sound last scene of all that ends this strange event for history is second childishness and mere oblivion sans teeth sans eyes sans taste sans everything is that it our life and all it means is life as shakespeare makes macbeth say but a walking shadow a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing is that true well if we don't know where it's all going we don't know what it's all for there isn't much more is there no wonder that we live in a world of increasing escapism a flight from reality now into virtual reality searching for something more here's something

John Gray the professor of European thought at the LSE says in one of his essays each day he says we may encounter a filthy environment dysfunctional public services but in the virtual world we're all only a moment away from wealth and freedom for many people this fantasy world is more real than their disjointed everyday actions and perceptions you see if you reject reality you will end up seeking refuge in fantasy won't you but does it work of course not but it can further ruin reality I've read of cases perhaps you have too of marriage breakups that have happened because of people having a virtual affair in the virtual world not even with a real person what an absurd world we find ourselves living in now we just don't know what we're doing because we don't know where we're going and what it's all for we've closed our minds to the truth that Jesus Christ is the goal of all things that he created the world that he is the heir of the world that he's the goal of all things including you including your life and you can't find what it means to be truly human unless you find the goal of what being human is all about finding fellowship with God our creator through Jesus Christ his son this is eternal life said Jesus that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent he is the source of all life he's the goal of all true life and the final word in Hebrews 1 about Jesus is this

Jesus is the guide of the whole universe he upholds the universe by the word of his power that's the truth about this cosmos Jesus is the guide of the present he really does have the whole world in his hands but our society has rejected that too denying the possibility of a sovereign God who can be in control of all things and guiding all things and commanding everything that happens in this world we've thrown off that burdensome repressive idea for blissful liberation for joy isn't that right we've done what John Lennon sang about we've imagined that there's no heaven that above us there's only sky and so what do we see all around us all the people living life in peace is that what we see is that our world you tell me that's the world that truly is imaginary you see we've said God certainly isn't in control but the result is we don't know who's in control and so the one thing we do not have is peace our world is full of the opposite isn't it anxiety fear uncertainty foreboding especially right at the moment what's going to happen in 2020 a new government

Brexit the pound trade tariffs trade wars that's what the markets are fretting about our jobs house prices mortgage rates and all of these things that's what normal people are worrying about what about Iran and North Korea and Syria and Turkey and Russia and all of these things are all the people living life in peace oh the other one we live in a world of existential angst that is so great that it has made vast fortunes for the big drug companies pumping out anxiolytics and antidepressants like there's no tomorrow because tomorrow is such a fearful thought for so many people because friends we've rejected God's truth that Jesus Christ upholds this universe by the word of his power the power that created the world in the beginning as we're depriving ourselves of the present peace which only that true knowledge can bring and we do that because we're proud because we can't understand

God's ways how he could control the whole world how he could be truly God and omnipotent and yet why evil things and bad things still happen we can't grasp that well of course not by definition we are finite creatures and God is infinite how could we he's beyond us but you see we hate the fact that something is beyond us and our proud intellect would rather reject the truth that's beyond us and above us and has to be revealed to us we'd rather do that than admit that we're actually inferior to God so we like instead to imagine that there's no God above us only sky but it doesn't bring peace it brings anxiety and worry and fear because we don't know who's in control but friends Christian people they know that Jesus Christ is in control that he upholds this whole universe by the word of his power and that is why they do have peace even in the midst of a world of turmoil of tragedy and of great pain that they suffer along with everyone else last night just like every year at Christmas

[ 61 : 04 ] I spend time with a dear couple in our church who lost their 16 year old son he was knocked down by a car on Christmas Eve 12 years ago now but you can imagine that's forever blighted the whole season of Christmas for them and over the last year many in our congregation have had to deal with great sadnesses too some real tragedies in life life threatening sicknesses premature deaths of loved ones even tiny newborn babies I can tell you in the midst of that real pain and real suffering in all these cases there has also been great peace because they know that Jesus is in control they can't understand everything fully but they know that he upholds this whole universe by the word of his power and he's in control of all of that and of all of their personal lives too and they know him and they trust him and they entrust themselves therefore to him and so they have peace even amid the darkness of reality peace that transcends any mere human

understanding they don't have to flee away from reality into the pretense of virtual reality because they know the greater reality that Jesus Christ is in control of this world and you can trust him because he knows what he's doing some years ago in the Christmas letter of a friend of mine a pastor from

America shared the great sadness that they lost a young grandson aged just one and a half just before Christmas but here's what his letter said was particularly sad at the funeral to gaze at that lovely little casket resting on a stand at the front of the church yet appropriately it was situated right in front of the communion table where we regularly remember the death of another our grandson's death is hard but what if we had to face it without Jesus' death so we sorrow but not as others who have no hope friends life is hard and death is really hard that's reality but what if you have to face that without Jesus Christ without knowing where you're really from without knowing where you're really going to without knowing who is in control now in the whole world over everything that surrounds your life not knowing where you really belong or what your life really means or who you can really trust to take care of your life that would be sheer living hell but why would anyone want to reject reality in order to endure that awful fantasy the Christian message of Christmas is that you don't have to the message of

Christmas is simply this it's God saying come back to reality listen to God's word of ultimate reason in Jesus Christ that answers all the inescapable questionings of the human mind because Jesus Christ is the source and the guide and the goal of everything everything including you and your life don't reject him when he wants to hold you and everything that's yours in his hands forever and ever that's his message to the world and to you this Christmas let's pray blessed Lord who caused all scripture to be written for our learning grant that we may so hear them read mark learn and inwardly digest them that by patience and the comfort of thy holy word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given us in our savior Jesus Christ amen well our closing carol reminds us that the message of Christmas is the fulfillment of God's unshakable plan from all eternity which can now be reality for all of us in Jesus Christ our Lord forget heaven ■■■■ feels te■ glad■ Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 67 : 01 ] 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.

[ 70 : 15 ] Thank you. I'd love to give you one of those just to take away and to look at. As we stand, let's pray. Heavenly Father, for the light of your eternal glory made known in our world forever through Jesus Christ, your son.

We give you praise and thanks and glory everlasting. We ask that our eyes and the eyes of our hearts would be open to your light this Christmas.

And always. 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 now and always.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[ 71 : 50 ] Thank you.

Thank you.