

In Jesus Christ is God's Word of Ultimate Divine Restoration

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[0 : 00] We're going to read, and you've got, I think, on your seats a piece of paper which has two readings on it, and we're going to read from the first side, which is from Genesis, chapter 3 and 4.

First part of this, very familiar, we've heard several times in our Christmas services already, but I want to read on and remind us of what comes next. After the great rebellion of the first men and women, God said to Adam, And 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 were taken, but you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

[1 : 15] And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And if you read on in the story of the Israelite people, it becomes very clear that what that means is Abel offered the very best and the first of his produce to God.

And so the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. And there in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

And then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? He said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? Remember, the Lord said, what have you done?

[2 : 27] The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.

We'll come back to the rest of it later. But that story right at the beginning of the Bible reminds us how great was the need of a deliverer from man's disaster from the earliest times.

And all through the history of God's people, that promise shone. And people of faith longed for the one that God had promised, Emmanuel. God himself with us to save.

Do have a seat and turn to the other side of your sheet of paper where I hope you'll find the first few verses from the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews.

[3 : 28] We've been studying this book together for some weeks. And we've come back right to the very beginning for some of our Christmas services. And I want to just read again the first three verses of Hebrews chapter 1.

Long ago, says the Apostle, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things.

And through whom he also created the world. He is the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

We've been thinking about these opening verses of Hebrews which tell us that Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer. To many things, but to the intractable curse of the human condition.

[4 : 45] Jesus Christ is God's word of ultimate divine restoration. And we've been looking at these amazing words, which open the book of Hebrews.

Thinking about the inconsolable longing that human beings all feel as human beings. Because God has set eternity in our hearts. It's part of the way we're made.

And also the inescapable questioning that grabs the minds of men and women. Because we have tried as human beings to reject the truth about God.

And the symptoms of that great paradox, our yearning for God and yet our rejection of God explains our world. We are made for God and yet we've rejected him. We exist for fellowship with God our maker.

And yet, by and large, we put ourselves outside the realm where he can be intimately known and enjoyed and rejoiced in.

[5 : 46] And that's what accounts for so much of the loneliness, the confusion about identity that we see all around us in our world. The current epidemic of confusion around gender identity.

It's just the latest manifestation of that. How terribly sad it is. But you see, the message of Christmas, friends, is that the answer from God has come to all of this.

Because Jesus Christ is the answer. To the deepest yearning of our hearts. He's God's ultimate revelation to us. And to the deepest questioning of our minds. He is God's word of ultimate reason that answers those questions.

He's the answer to all the great questions of life. Of who we are, where we've come from, where we're going. Why the world is as it is. What the whole world is about. What it's here for.

But there's another really important question. And that's the question, how? How can that better world that we yearn for deep down, that we instinctively know should be there somewhere, how can it really ever be?

[6 : 52] How can this world that we know be transformed into that world that we long for? Well, to answer that question, first of all, we need to recognize the root of why this world is not presently as it should be.

Or as we would like it to be. And that's what the second half of verse 3 here in Hebrews chapter 1 tells us. Look. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

This little verse just tells us three very clear things about what Christmas is really all about. I want to share them with you this morning as we continue to sing our carols.

And I hope that these things, if you understand them, will fill your whole day with real joy. And this whole season with joy. But here's the first thing we need to get to grips with.

And that is a real curse. This world is far from being the world that we want it to be and we long deeply for because of the ultimate problem of human sin.

[8 : 01] And that's implicit in these words, isn't it? That Jesus came to make purification for sins. Because that is the root problem of this world. Paul puts it very succinctly in Romans chapter 5.

He says, Sin came into this world through one man and death through sin. So death spread to all men. Because all sinned. And death, he says, reigned in this world.

And that's the curse that we've read about. Mankind is separated from God by his sin and left in a world of his own rule. And we just need to look around to see what happens to our world when human beings are left in the driving seat.

Look at how this section that we read in Genesis 3 ends. God promises a curse on the whole world after man's rebellion.

And God casts human beings out of the perfect place, the garden of his dwelling. And you remember he placed angels with flaming swords barring the way back.

[9 : 09] So there was no way back to God from that dark path of sin that man had chosen. No human way anyway. And that, friends, is the real curse that explains our world.

When people say to God, we don't want you to be our ruler anymore. Go away. God says, well, so be it.

You insist on being your own ruler then. And what we read together in Genesis chapter 4 shows us, in a very personal way, the effect of that in individual lives.

Cain is an individual example for us of what happens when we reject God. He started showing hostility to his brother.

And then he killed him through his jealousy. And he personally, therefore, separated himself from God because of his sin. He brought the curse doubly down on his own head, is what God said to him.

[10:08] But did that give him the liberty? Did that give him the freedom that he was chasing? Well, it didn't, did it? Look at verse 13 there. What did he say?

My punishment is greater than I can bear. Why? Well, he lost his whole sense of identity. Look at verse 14. You've driven me away from the ground and from your face.

Your face will be hidden from me, he says to God. He's lost all sense of who he's created for and what he's created for. Working the ground for God. And he's lost his whole sense of society too, hasn't he?

I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. His relationships are going to disappoint. They're going to be restless. He won't find peace and he knows it. And as a result, he's lost all his sense of security.

End of verse 14. Whoever finds me is going to kill me. And so his life's going to be governed by fear of the future, fear of people, that they'll try to hurt him.

[11:11] And he'll be unable, won't he, to really trust anybody. Won't be able to commit to people, to relationships. Either personally or in business life or anything else.

There's a world full of canes out there today, aren't there? With very little sense of identity, of society, of security. I think that describes our world this Christmas.

It's a fearful place. There's a huge amount of fear all around us. A huge amount of trust disappearing and dissipating. That's the root of so much of the strife that we see nationally and internationally.

People can't trust one another to trade with one another. To keep the currency working properly. To not be snooping with the 5G networks and all of these things.

And on and on it goes. There's a great lack of trust. But all of these symptoms, you see, are just something that are symptoms of a far deeper thing.

[12:14] And it's that C word. The curse. The real curse. Because of human sin. It's like the other dreaded C word. Cancer, isn't it? Because often the symptoms at first seem quite unrelated to the primary pathology.

Sometimes it's just something as odd as signs in somebody's fingers. Or spots on their eyes. Or something as insignificant seeming as that. But they're harbingers of something deep and dark. Right at the heart of the body's life. And that's the root cause, friends, of all of our problems in this world. It's the fact of human sin.

It's the guilt of human sin. In every one of our lives. That's why this world is as it is. And not as we would love it to be. And the telltale symptoms appear all over the place.

In our own lives. Throughout the whole of society. In the restlessness. In the anxiety. In our spirits. In the unsettledness. In the longings. Deep down that we all feel. In the frustration.

[13:15] In the despair sometimes that we witness in others. That's the root cause. It's the cancer. It's the intractable curse. Right at the heart. Of the human story.

But you see the message of Christmas. Is the answer. And the only answer has come in Jesus Christ. He alone answers the deepest problems.

Of our human lives. Because he came to make purification. For sin. And he came to deal therefore with that intractable curse forever.

That's why the Christmas message is joy. Joy to the world. Because Jesus came to make his blessings flow once again. Far as that curse had been found.

He came to make an end to sin. Jesus Christ came. Jesus Christ came. Because. There is a real curse.

[14:15] On this world. And that's the reality. That explains our world. And nothing else can. But there's more. Because Jesus says this passage. Came.

To bring real cleansing. He made purification. For sins. That's a word that means. Washing. Cleansing. Cleansing. Cleansing. From pollution. From something that stains.

That stinks. So badly. That it causes you to be cut off. Completely from the place that you want to be. It's a term for example. That's used when Jesus.

Cleansed lepers. Leprosy was seen as a pollution. It separated people. It polluted people. And to be cut off. From all of human society. Condemned them.

Not only to. To disease. And to misery. But to total isolation. Into a. A subhuman existence. In distant colonies. In a world marked out by exclusion.

[15:13] By separation. By loneliness. And people knew that no human action. Could ever. Ever possibly bring cleansing. Or restoration. To full human life.

For a leper. Everyone knew that only. God. Could ever do something like that. Of course. That's why they were so astonished. At Jesus Christ. Touching. And healing. Lepers.

Bringing them back. Into life. But you see. That's a picture. Of something far. Far darker. And deeper. Of our sins.

Because they are. A terrible stench. They bring. They bring an indelible. Stain. To human beings. That keeps. Humanity. Separated. From God.

Outsiders. From the world. And the fellowship. That we were made for. On the wrong side of the door. Into the real world. Of fellowship with God. Locking us in the shadowlands.

[16:12] Of a monochrome world. Far from the. The glorious color. Of God's real world. But the message of Christmas. Is that Jesus came.

To bring real cleansing. He made. Purification. For sins. Something that no man. Could ever do. He did do.

Because he was no mere man. Because he was God. Made man. That's why the apostle Paul. Can say in Romans. That God has done. What the law. We can by the flesh. Could not do.

By sending his son. In the likeness. Of sinful flesh. And for sin. He condemned. Sin. In the flesh. In order. That the righteous requirement. Of the law. Might be fulfilled.

In us. Who believe in Jesus. That is. Jesus took our place. And took our punishment. Because he became.

[17:07] Sin. He. He took the blame. He bore the wrath. As the hymn says. So that we. Can stand forgiven. At the cross.

He dealt with the root cause. Of all the problems. Of our human lives. Which is the guilt of sin. And there is at last. Real. Cleansing. And as a result.

There is now. A way back. To God. From that dark path of sin. Because the stain. The stench. Is gone. It's been purified. And that means. The doors.

Of God's home. His own household. Have been opened. To people like us. Long time ago now. A group from the church here.

I think it was Paul Worth. If I remember. Who organized it. We went paintballing. It was a very great mistake. I nearly broke a leg. And.

[18:03] It was in this ghastly field. Foot of mud. And I came home. Absolutely covered. From head to toe. In stinking mud. I came to the front door. It was slammed immediately.

In my face. I was sent around. To the back door. Of the house. Told to strip off. All my clothes. I stood naked. In the garden. While my wife. Hosed me down. With a hose. Before I was even allowed.

Into the house. To go and have a proper shower. How much more radical. Is the real cleansing. That's needed. To satisfy the holy God. Who cannot. Sully his home. With the stink. With the stench. With the stain. Of our human sin. But Jesus.

Brings real. Cleansing. That's what Christmas means. There is. A real.

[18:58] Curse. The state of our world. The needs of all of our lives. Can only be explained. By that. Sad truth. That terrible truth. But there is. Real cleansing.

He made. Purification. For sins. And therefore. You see friends. The joyous message. Of Christmas. Is that there is real certainty. Real certainty.

About the future. Of this world. About the future. Of our own lives. Our personal worlds. If. We know. And love. Jesus Christ. Because in Jesus. God has.

Has not only spoken. His final word. To man. But in Jesus. He has completed. His final work. For man. That's what the whole. Of the book of Hebrews. Is telling us.

In Jesus. We have God's. Final word. And he has done. The final work. Forever. A finished work. It is finished. That was Jesus cry.

[19:54] On the cross. Because. His great. Redeeming. Cleansing work. At last. Was done. That's also. What signified. In the words. Here. In verse 3.

After. Making. Purification. For sins. He sat down. At the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. He sat down. Because. His work.

Is accomplished. Forever. There's nothing else. Needed. At all. For man's. Restoration. To God. His cleansing. Has been accomplished. And the door. Is open.

Now. To God's. Dwelling. Place. On high. A little later on. In Hebrews. Chapter 10. He says this. For by a single. Offering.

Jesus. Perfected. For all. Time. For all. Time. Those. Who are being. Sanctified. Who are being. Purified. Who are being. Made. Holy. For all.

[20 : 48] Time. That's. Certainty. Isn't it? There's no. Fear. Ever. That something. More. Might. Need. To be done. That something. Perhaps. Has been. Forgotten. Something. Left. To secure.

Our future. To ensure. That we'll be. Okay. That nothing. Will go wrong. Between us. And God. Again. Something else. That we might. Just need.

For that day. When we stand. Before the judgment. Sheet of Christ. No. Our future. Is certain. Because Jesus. Has done it. All. Already.

Having made. Purification. For sins. He sat down. The right hand. Of the majesty. The place. Of honor. And glory. At the apex.

Of heaven. Certain. For all time. Every year. At Christmas. Well. At least. Every year. Until now. I'll discover. Later on today.

[21 : 40] If it's still true. But our. Our family. Has bought us. Annual membership. Of the. The National Trust. And we're very thankful for it. Means we can go to. Colleen Castle. And all these nice places.

Without paying huge fees. But it needs to be renewed. Every year. If we don't get it this year. Well. We won't be quite as certain. Will we? Of our entry. But actually.

My in-laws. Many years ago. Made a very wise decision. They bought life membership. Of the National Trust. When it was available. Really quite cheaply. I think you can still get it. But it costs thousands. And thousands of pounds. They never have to renew it.

Every year. For the whole. Of the rest of their lives. There is complete. Certainty. Of entry. To any National Trust property. Anywhere. In the country.

It's been done. Forever. Once and for all. And friends. That's the message of Christmas. Jesus. Has come. And he's done it all.

[22 : 37] Forever. It's one of the favorite words. In the book of Hebrews. Isn't it? We've been seeing. Forever. Seven times. We're told. Jesus is a high priest. Forever. Because of his once.

And for all. Act of cleansing. And purification. He has secured the right. Forever. To entry. Into the royal palace. Of God's holiness. The right to be with him.

Freely. For everyone. Who is in his family. Family membership. Secured. Forever. Forever. And ever. That puts lifetime family membership.

In a very different light. All together. Doesn't it? That's why Hebrews 6. Verse 19. Says this. We have this. That is the good news. Of the gospel. We have it.

As a sure. And steadfast. Anchor. Of the soul. A hope. That enters. The inner place. Behind the curtain. The imagery there. Is the curtain.

[23 : 30] Of the temple. Screening off. The place. Where God. God himself. Dwells. And we have that. As an anchor. There. Certain hope. Because he.

Has gone there. As a forerunner. On our behalf. Having become. Our high priest. Forever. That's why he goes on. In Hebrews chapter 7.

To say. He. Jesus. Is able. Therefore. To save. To the uttermost. All those. Who draw near to God. Through him. Because he. Always lives. To make intercession.

For them. There is real. Certainty. There is real. An abundant. Hope. For the future. Because. In Jesus Christ. God has spoken. His ultimate. Word to man.

And he's accomplished. His ultimate. Work. For man. Jesus. Is the. Ultimate. Answer. Of God. His word. Of ultimate. Restoration. He.

[24 : 26] And only. He. Can answer. But has answered. The intractable. Curse. Of our human condition. He brings real. Certainty.

For the future. Because. He brings real. Cleansing. From all of our past. That's why he drives away. Forever. Every. Spectre. Of that real. Curse.

That has. Has overshadowed this world. Right from the very beginning. He brings. Restoration. And that is. The great message. Of Christmas. The real answer.

The only answer. To the solitude. To the estrangement. Of our guilt. Is in the cleansing. Of Jesus. That brings forgiveness. That brings real.

Fellowship with God. Forever. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. Of course. Christmas is just the beginning. The best. Is yet to be. It won't be.

[25 : 20] Until Jesus returns. In glory. To consummate forever. All that. All that he's already. Made certain. But it's real. Nonetheless. And just as we'll soon see.

In our gardens. The snow drops. Breaking through the ground. Even though it's still. The depth of winter. That remind us. That spring. Is just around the corner. And that summer.

Although it seems so hard. To believe. That this time of year. Summer will come again. So Christmas. In just that way. Is the harbinger. Of a future. Real summer.

Of glory. That is real. That is certain. And that shall surely come. Just as night follows day. There is real certainty. My friends.

In the message of Christmas. I hope that's something. That you will rejoice in. All through this Christmas day. That you're rejoicing in already. If it's not. Because this is all new to you.

[26 : 16] Then this is a gift. That can be yours. This very day. This Christmas. There is no greater gift. That you could possibly ever have. And God our Savior.

Wants you to have. That gift. Here and now. To know him. To rejoice in him. And it's yours. The very moment. You turn to him.

And you call on him. To be your Savior. Make sure. Won't you. That. Jesus Christ. Will be.

The answer. To the deepest needs. Of your life. This Christmas. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. For sending. Your only begotten son.

Through whom you made. The whole world. And for whom. This whole world exists. To be our Savior. To make purification. For sins. How we thank you.

[27 : 13] And we ask Lord. That the certainty. Of that great cleansing. Would belong to everyone here.

This morning. And cause us. Not only this day. But every day. To break forth. Into great. Great joy. In Jesus.

Our Savior forever. God bless. God bless.

God bless. Thank you. How God bless.■■■■■■■■. Thank you.