

Carols by Candlelight - Jesus Christ - God's Gift of Salvation and Light

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Date: 12 December 2021

Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0 : 00] Well, welcome everyone to our service tonight, and we are always delighted to welcome guests to our Christmas services, and whether you've come with friends or family or whether you've come by yourself, we are so glad that you're here with us this evening. And we are so glad because our focus and all that we do in these Christmas services is the same. We want people to understand what Christmas is really all about, and above all, why Jesus Christ came into the world. And the claim of the Christian message is nothing less than that Jesus Christ is the unique and ultimate light of revelation of God to man, God made known universally for all the world, whatever your background may be. So let's begin. We're going to begin by singing an ancient carol, some 1600 years old, but which tells of how the story of Christmas began before even the dawn of time, in the love of the eternal God himself, of the Father's love begotten, ere the world began to be.

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CHOIR SINGS In the chosen kindness here And the healing praises me Father, glory and salvation
And eternal days to me Evermore and evermore And they heard the sound of the Lord God
Walking in the garden in the cool of the day And the man and his wife hid themselves From the
presence of the Lord God Among the trees of the garden But the Lord God called to the man And
said to him, Where are you?

[5 : 51] And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden And I was afraid Because I was naked
And I hid myself He said, Who told you that you were naked?

Have you eaten of the tree Of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, The woman who
you gave me to be with She gave me the fruit of the tree And I ate Then the Lord God said to the
woman What is this that you have done?

The woman said The serpent deceived me And I ate The Lord God said to the serpent Because
you have done this Curse through you above all livestock And above all beasts of the field 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 Then the Lord God said Behold, the man has become like one of us In knowing
good and evil Now lest he reach out his hand And take also of the tree of life And eat and live
forever Therefore the Lord God Sent him out of the garden of Eden To work the ground from which
he was taken He drove out the man And at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubin
And a flaming sword That turned every way To guard the way to the tree of life Part of the wonder
of Christmas Is that it tells of how this terrible estrangement From God Signified there in that
reading By the fierce angels With their flaming swords Barring the way to God's presence
Christmas tells us How that estrangement is overcome And it's not by us We have no power to do
that But by God himself Coming into our world As saviour So that now the angels 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 Towards women And children on this earth It came upon the
midnight clear That glorious song of old

From angels bending near the earth To touch their harps of gold To close it Comparerrh to the
place down the moon Of the tree of hope And this word The holy in Christ The End The End

[9 : 39] The End The End The End

The End The End The End The End

The End Words from Isaiah the prophet speaking hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus and telling of God's promise not to forget his people, despite all their waywardness and rejection, and telling of the wonderful promise of the coming of the one who would be Emmanuel, which means God with us to save.

Let's sing our next carol, O come, O come, Emmanuel. The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O Lord of God, who to thy tribes of Son has died, the nations I take in the law.

[17 : 00] In love and majesty and all. Rejoice, rejoice, in thy new world shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O Lord of God, come, O jealousy free, thy home from Satan's tyranny.

From decks of hell thy people sing, and give them victory, Lord, and pray.

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

O thou have this great God and cheer, our spirits by thy God and dear, this blest of glory comes of night, and yes, our shadows through to light.

[18 : 37] Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O the valley of David's love, that opened wide our heavenly home.

May save the way that leads on high, and close the path to victory.

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

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

[20 : 05] Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth, 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, and they will live securely.

For then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth, and he will be their peace. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

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

[21 : 30] 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.

Yet in thy dark streets shine, he ever-lasting light.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above. Huntington's■■■■■ great night.

ToBikind'sán Charles Lee.rosoft619,■■■ soul. Mother the author■ of Bethlehem, how still we see thee.

[22 : 34] Ruble to Trinity, probably among their pride. The praises sing to God the King, and peace to the Lamb on earth.

And silently, oh silently, the wondrous gift is given.

So God in us to human hearts, the blessings of His death.

Though we hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where these souls will receive Him soon, the dear Christ enters in.

Through all eternal heaven we have, descend to us to pray again.

[23 : 51] Through all eternal heaven we have, descend to us to pray again.

Through all eternal heaven we have, descend to us to pray again. Through all eternal heaven we have, descend to us to pray again.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this

might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

[25 : 23] 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 overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. The promise was for God himself to be with us.

[26 : 38] 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 he came 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. China's sotm and theater-infeld. Mild he has son, but this is sin which of the 100. March, that is the right. In the birth of Jesus Christ. Semper Lviet Beginning The Lord John 5 He has son, all the saints pray leave the saints since The angels sing, glory to the beautiful King.

Peace on earth and mercy mine, God and sinners reconcile. Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies.

[27 : 58] With the angelic hosts complain, Christ is born in heavenly heaven. Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the beautiful King.

Amen. Great in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.

Hail thee flesh, turn all their seed. Hail thee, God and deity. Jesus, my will have to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the new Lord King. Whose broadest desaptions, formersil thee,■■ number to wonder.

The nations canasons rejo mère, throes her name, R ■■■ AREAS in His name and ■■■f deion. Now the days his glory by For that land no more in time For to raise their souls on earth For to give and say a prayer Hark the herald angels sing For he's good and you are here And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

[30 : 21] This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria and all went to be registered each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary his betrothed who was with child.

And while they were there the time came for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

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.

He shall fruition againple santos CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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[33 : 47] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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CHOIR SINGS And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from then into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see the thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they had heard it wondered at those things which they were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

[36 : 19] And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, just as it was told unto them. A God who has not remained hidden, but has come from the realms of glory and drawn near, to make the heavenly light of his 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 Dei. Amen. Amen.

Praise osodom. Amen. miejsce. ■■■■■■■■. Dén partici■■ All in craplan, only ao ■■■■ENSAR Marche All in craplan, all Mär ■■■ series.

Xzi ■■■■ie 18■ Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[39 : 25] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.

[41 : 26] And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about him, and cried out, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.

For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only one, himself God, who is at the Father's side. He has made him known.

The good news that we've been rejoicing about in these carols is not just the story of Christmas, but the message of Christmas. The ultimate revelation from God about himself for people of all times and all nations of the world.

And that reading there from the opening words of John's Gospel, it sums up why Jesus Christ came into this world, and tells us he came to bring the ultimate light of God's self-revelation, so that all mankind may know the definitive light of truth about the heart of God himself.

[42 : 50] And that is cause for great joy. The Christmas message is one of rejoicing and great joy. And we'll do that on our next carol. Good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul and voice.

Now you need not fear the grave. Jesus Christ was born to save. Jesus Christ is born to the inside. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[45 : 57] Amen. Amen.

That reading tells of the joy of the faithful who had been waiting and longing for the fulfillment of all the prophets had spoken.

For God's covenant promise had glimmered down through the ages, through the darkness of human history. But the message of Christmas is that in the birth of Jesus Christ, all that was promised has now come.

In the birth of Jesus Christ, the yearning is over. Darkness is banished. Light has come. And the ultimate light of life itself.

And we're going to think in a moment about this message of Christmas as the great revelation of God himself in the flesh. But first, let's sing one of the simplest, perhaps best loved carol of all that speaks of that great revelation of the true God of love in our world.

[48 : 05] Son of God, oh how bright love is smiling from thy face. Strikes for us now the hour of grace, saviour, since thou art born.

No, we're going to thank Christ.

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[56 : 38] Those words. They are big, big claims about a child. And these aren't even words uttered by his parents. Parents have a tendency to be effusive in praise for their children.

One example that really stood out for me recently was reading words from Earl Woods, the father of Tiger Woods. He's a famous golfer. And these words were uttered, I think, when Tiger Woods was still a teenager.

And they were given at some small awards ceremony. Listen to what Earl Woods said about Tiger. He says, Please forgive me, but sometimes I get very emotional when I talk about my son. My heart fills with so much joy when I realize that this young man is going to be able to help so many people. He will transcend this game and bring to the world a humanitarianism which has never been known before.

The world will be a better place to live in by virtue of his existence, his presence. I acknowledge only a small part in that, in that I know that I was personally selected by God himself to nurture this young man and bring him to the point where he can make this wonderful contribution to humanity.

[57 : 46] This is my treasure. Please accept it and use it wisely. Thank you. And what do you think about those words from Earl Woods about his son Tiger?

We might laugh. These are words about a golfer, after all. A great golfer, but as we all know too well, a flawed human being, as we all are. And we might well chuckle to ourselves hearing those words, those diffusive words from Earl Woods about his son.

But no one laughed when we read those words from the old man Simeon about Jesus. You see, these extraordinary words we've just read about the child Jesus Christ, they don't lead to laughter, do they?

Why not? Why don't we treat these words in the same way we treat Earl Woods' words? Well, it's because of what Jesus would go on to do. He is the most influential man to ever walk this planet. So let's take note of these extraordinary words from that old man Simeon. And two things we're going to see about this gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, he is God's gift of salvation.

[58 : 57] And second, God's gift of light. So first, Jesus is God's gift of salvation. Jesus came to bring rescue to all nations.

The old man, Simeon. He has seen with his own eyes the salvation of the Lord in the child Jesus. This was just what he'd been waiting for.

Just a few verses before, we're told that he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. That's perhaps an odd phrase to our ears. But it means that he was waiting for the promised salvation of God, which all of the Old Testament was pointing forward to.

We've heard many readings from the very earliest books of the Bible, looking forward to, anticipating the one who would come and bring rescue and salvation. Right from the very earliest pages in the Bible, God's people were waiting for a savior.

Waiting for one who would come and rescue from sin. One who would defeat the power of sin and Satan himself and usher in a new age. And Simeon, he had been told that he would see that savior.

[60 : 08] He said it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And now he had seen him with his own eyes, held the child in his hands.

He'd seen the promised one, the promised Christ, the promised savior. You see, God sends Jesus, the promised savior, because humanity needs a savior.

Humanity needs a rescue. Just using our eyes and our ears leads us to that conclusion, doesn't it? Just look at the world around us.

You only have to watch the news for 10 minutes to know that things are not well. We need something to help us. We just need to look at the recent history of our world to know the horrors of which men are capable of.

Deceit. Theft. Infidelity. Murder. Genocide. Clearly, mankind have not got things worked out.

[61 : 16] Mankind has not found the solutions. Politics can't do it. Much good though it does, it can't deal with the biggest problems. Economics can't do it either.

That's because the fundamental problem is not one that we can actually solve ourselves. It's because the problem goes deeper and it cuts right through the middle of every human heart. It is our rebellion. It is our rejection of the God who made us. That's the foundational problem. And that's something that all of us, according to the Bible, are actually guilty of.

Perhaps you can imagine all of humanity that's ever lived stacked up like a huge skyscraper with the most terrible people you can think of at the very bottom.

Hitler and Stalin. People like that. And at the very top, you have the great and the good. Mother Teresa. Sir Alex. People like that.

[62 : 17] Where do you draw the line at being good? Where do you draw the line at evil? Where would you make that cut?

Between good and bad. Well, the problem with that is that we'll be making the cut in the wrong direction. The line doesn't go across the skyscraper of humanity.

It goes right down the middle. From top to bottom. Right through the middle of every single human being. Every heart of every person that ever existed. And if we're honest with ourselves, then we'll know that's true.

If we examine our own lives, our own hearts, we'll know that's true. See, the problem isn't somewhere out there. The Bible says the problem is actually in here. The problem with humanity is the problem of the human heart.

And we need a savior to come and rescue us from sin and to come and rescue us from its consequences. And the old man Simeon knew that.

[63 : 22] He knew humanity needed a rescue and a rescuer. And he knew that there was one coming. He had read his Old Testament. He knew all the promises that God had made.

He knew that a rescuer was coming. And now he had seen it with his own eyes. He had seen that salvation. One who would, through all that he would do later in his life.

Jesus would, through his life, his death, his resurrection. He would bring salvation to all the world.

To all who would receive him as savior. He brings that rescue.

See, he is the only hope. Only in this child. Only in the Lord's Christ. This baby Jesus. Only in him. Is there hope for all the peoples of the world.

He was God's gift. Of salvation. You see, gifts tell us about the recipients. And the fact that he sent a savior. Means that we need rescuing.

[64 : 21] That's the first thing that Simeon draws our attention to. Second is this. He's God's gift of salvation. But second, he's God's gift of light. Jesus came to bring revelation.

To all nations. And God sends this gift. Jesus. Not just for rescue. But for revelation. Because we need the truth to be revealed to us.

See, on our own. We can't find it. And all of us do. Without any prompting. We do at some point. We do all go searching for a larger meaning. For real answers to life's biggest questions.

We need something to live for, don't we? I was listening to an interview with Neil McGregor some time ago. He was the former director of the British Museum.

And he'd finished this long series on BBC Radio 4 called Living with the Gods. And he made the point in his interview. Having studied many of the world's religions. And in light of the observation that all across the world, apart from the affluent West, all across the world, religions are growing.

[65 : 30] Hugely. And he makes the point that all of us need a narrative that goes beyond the individual life. We need a narrative that includes suffering and death.

We need answers to those big questions. That was his observation. And he's right, isn't he? We all do need that narrative. And how true that is after these past couple of years.

So many confusing ideas. What's life really all about? How do I deal with the prospect of death?

And we all have, according to the Bible, an awareness of eternity.

It is set in each one of our hearts. Eternity is lodged there. Right in the core of our beings. But you see, any old narrative won't do.

The narrative we base our life on must be true. To commit your life to a false narrative. Well, that would be futile, wouldn't it? That would be a wasted life.

[66 : 34] No, the narrative that shapes our lives, it must be true. And that is the claim of the Bible. It's a big claim. In Jesus Christ, God himself stepped into this dark world.

And he was the light of revelation. In him and in him alone, we see God. Not only do we see ourselves, right?

But we see God, the one who made all things. Jesus Christ came to reveal the God who made all things. And Simeon sings that in this coming salvation, this child Jesus is the light of revelation to the nations.

This is a revelation with global significance. This wasn't just a meaningful event for a small but enduring ethnic group in the Middle East.

No, this was an event with implications for everyone, everywhere, in all time. And it's so because in this event, in the event of Jesus we've been reading about, this birth of a child.

[67 : 45] But in this event, in the coming of the Savior, God was providing a rescue from a universal problem. He was the Savior of a universal sin problem.

One that manifests every human heart. And every one of us needs to receive his light of revelation. Because only, says the Bible, only in Jesus is salvation found.

Only he is the light of revelation for all the world. And that is what we see happening all across the world. Folk all across this planet have responded to God's light of revelation in Jesus Christ.

Whether you're from China or Iran or Scotland, even England. Jesus came into this world to bring the light of revelation to you.

And that's such a relief, isn't it? We don't have to keep endlessly searching for meaning. We don't have to create our own meaning.

[68 : 53] What a crushing load that is. We don't have to create our own meaning. God has told us. God has brought revelation in Jesus Christ. Bringing truth and hope and certainty and joy and life.

That is what has come in the birth of Jesus. One cow we often sing at this time of year has these words in its final verse. It says, Here's the revelation of God for all nations.

For all peoples in all places and all times. So that we, so that you can know with absolute certainty the salvation that we need. And for all who respond in faith.

For all who seek forgiveness in Jesus alone. All who do that. They will find peace and hope again. And a home.

A lasting home. The home that we were created for. So will you hold, take hold, will you grasp hold of that gift this Christmas?

[70 : 35] Jesus is God's gift of revelation. Of rescue. Of light. Will you take hold of it? Or will you leave it under the tree unwrapped?

And if you'd like to receive this gift this Christmas time. Even right now. Then you can do that. Why not use the final verse of a little town of Bethlehem as a prayer.

We sung it earlier. Allow these words to be your words. And this Christmas receive God's ultimate gift of rescue and revelation.

It's the best gift you'll ever get. O holy child of Bethlehem. Descend to us we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in.

Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels. The great glad tidings tell. O come to us. Abide with us.

[71 : 38] Our Lord. Emmanuel. Or perhaps in the quiet. You might want to pray that for yourself. But let me pray. Before our final carol.

Let's pray. Our Father God. We thank you. For the great joy.

That we can enjoy together this Christmas time. As we're reminded of the birth. Of Jesus Christ. God himself. Come to earth. Bringing rescue.

Bringing light. And so we pray that you would descend to us. Cast out our sin. And enter in. Be born in us today.

That we would know. The great glad tidings. The joy of knowing you. Abiding with us. Hear us. For we ask it. In Jesus name.

[72 : 38] Amen. Well let's conclude our service together by singing. O come all ye faithful. Joyful and triumphant.

O come ye. O come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him. Born the king of angels. O come ye. O come ye faithful.

Joyful and triumphant. O come ye. O come ye. O come ye. O come ye.

Joyful and triumphant. O come ye.

O come ye. O come ye. Joyful and triumphant. O come ye. **CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS**

[74 : 39] **CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS**

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CHOIR SINGS And so may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and evermore. Amen.

Well, please do be seated. And it's lovely to have you with us here this evening. So glad that you've come along tonight. Please don't rush away. We have refreshments available, tea and coffee.

There's Malt's Punch, I believe.

And warmed mince pie is going to be coming around. So do stay and enjoy that. Join us again. We have services next Sunday, 10 a.m. All our venues, a Christmas morning service to enjoy with more carols.

And then next Sunday afternoon at five o'clock, we have our family carol service. That's a short service, really aimed at those with young families, but all are welcome. It'd be great to have many of you here. That's going to be here at five o'clock next Sunday afternoon.

[77 : 28] And looking a bit further ahead, you'll have on your seats a little flyer, which is giving details for our life course. We run this every term or so. And it's really a course designed for those who are looking into the Christian faith.

Perhaps this is all new to you, or perhaps you're coming back to church after a few years. Great opportunity to come and think about the basics of the Christian faith. What's life really all about? It starts in mid-January.

We're doing it in person and online and different days of the week. So you'll see the details on this little card, how you can find out more on the website. We'd love you to come, book in, and you'd be very welcome indeed to come to that in the new year.

But lovely to see you here this evening. Hope you have a good Christmas and do stay on for a few refreshments. Many thanks. Thank you.

Thank you.

[78 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.