

Jesus Christ Came into the world to bring a LEGACY: Christmas is about Restoration of Beauty

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 December 2018

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Well, good evening and welcome to our Christmas Eve by candlelight service here at the Tron Church. There is a creche for young children just halfway down the stair there, and so please do feel free to make use of that.

And do stay behind afterwards. We'll have some refreshments downstairs, an opportunity to share that time together. Well, the Christmas message is nothing less than that in Jesus Christ our world has seen the unique, indeed the ultimate, revelation of God to man.

And so our service tonight begins not on earth but in heaven with God himself because our story is about God but not a distant God. God who in the coming of Jesus Christ became Emmanuel, became God with us as the Savior and indeed as the Restorer of his people.

He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all. God who in the coming of Jesus Christ God who in the coming of Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

God who in the coming of Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

[2 : 07] God who in the coming of Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God who in the coming of Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

God who in the coming of Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, That's a wonderful picture of the world as it's meant to be, the world as God created it to be, and, of course, of the world as we would love it to be.

[6 : 07] Perfect peace and harmony, male and female, mankind and nature, man and God. No wonder the next carol tells us to praise our creator God.

But notice when we come to the last line of the carol, it tells another story. We praise God who has made heaven and earth of naught, yes, but also because he, with his own blood, mankind has bought.

And after the next carol, the next reading, we'll begin to explain why that has to be so. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[7 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

- Thank you. Thank you.
- [11 : 33] 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.
- [13 : 39] 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.
Thank you. Thank you. Audience Church. And it's because our rebellion against God has put us in bondage.
Through the fear of death, people are subject to lifelong slavery, is how the Bible puts it. But you heard God's promise there, even as that curse was pronounced, that evil would not have the last word.
- [14 : 41] That God himself would intervene in history through the offspring of the woman, who would at last destroy the work of the devil, and at last liberate and restore his people.
And down through history, that promise shone brightly, despite long ages of darkness, until at last, at the first Christmas, that promised offspring came to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray.
God rest him. Than this we know God had on earth.
This week's a whole podcast was sent to change■ randomly. This week's a whole podcast was sent to changeove my thoughts about our relationship with God, was sent to change to change the path of the plants.
- Thank you.
- [16 : 17] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
- [18 : 47] Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- [21 : 15] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you.
- [24 : 49] Thank you. Thank you.

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

Thank you. How can the same person possibly believe that one day sorrow and sighing will flee away? And instead there will be everlasting joy.

Well, because God had promised that at last one would arise. The promised seed of the woman. The branch from King David's line. Who would be the savior to restore all things.

And in this coming one, as Isaiah said, Your God will come and save you. To banish darkness and evil. To make sorrow and sighing flee away forever.

[26 : 14] And to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found. And that's why Christmas is indeed a message of joy to the world. So the first quote is hard.

God will come and save you. And even if they say CHRISTIAN. And then there will always be a blessing. And there will be a desire to do. And the dynamics of who is and is not call your word. And there will always be a blessing. Like, if there is a blessing coming from Heaven.

And we will see you in the heart. And as Isaiah said, Do not put the yoke away forever. But he will come and be born. And go again to God. And he can free it. To make sure, Asa the Douce and More House Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[28 : 30] Thank you.

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, he saved us. Listen to this brief reading from Titus chapter 2.

The apostle says, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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

[30 : 45] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possessions, zealous for good works.

[32 : 47] What the Apostle Paul is telling us here is that Jesus Christ came into this world to bring a legacy as the ultimate restorer of beauty to our humanity.

That's one very important way of looking at what the Bible means by salvation. The Bible is a book all about God's salvation. It comes to its climax in the birth and the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But the question is, what is salvation? It's a vital question, isn't it? Whether you're a Christian believer or not. And surely it's a worthwhile subject for us to think about for a few minutes this Christmas Eve before we go home and get the turkey ready, hang up the stockings, try and get the children into bed before they wake you up at goodness knows what time tomorrow morning.

It's worth knowing, isn't it, what Christmas is meant to be about, even if it's only to know, well, why you don't want to make it for you, why you want to reject it.

Honest people, open-minded people want to do that, don't they? They want to understand the truth about what they're thinking about. Well, here's a succinct little verse from Christ's Apostle that gives us one way of looking at this whole question of salvation.

[34 : 02] He says here in Titus that God's salvation is the story of humanity being rescued from grim lawlessness and to glorious life by the great liberator, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born into this world at that first Christmas.

And Paul says he gave himself. And he means, of course, when he died on the cross at Calvary, that was the destination of his mission right from the very beginning.

He says he gave himself to restore us from the blight, from the brokenness of human life as we know it, without God, to the boundless beauty of human life with God.

That's what he says here. Christmas is all about the ultimate restoration of beauty to human beings. It's as big as that.

Let me try and talk you through it. First of all, let's focus on what the Bible might call the bondage of man's grim lawlessness. Lawlessness, says Paul, is what Christ came to redeem us from, to rescue us from, to liberate us, to set us free from.

[35 : 15] So lawlessness, that is, ignoring God's law, that is not the path to freedom, according to the Bible, but to bondage. In fact, the Apostle John defines sin as lawlessness.

Sin is lawlessness, he says. It is not lawlessness is sin. That's true as well, of course. But rather what he's saying is that the very meaning of the heart of sin is lawlessness.

And that's why it's such a serious and a destructive thing, a fearful thing. Think of the scenes of lawless chaos that we've seen just recently in TV reports of France with the yellow jacket movement.

It's quite frightening, isn't it? People have died on the roads in France. There's been anarchic chaos. The rule of law has been thrown off. And it leaves people imprisoned. It doesn't liberate people.

It leaves them afraid to go out. It leaves them fearful on the roads. It leaves them captives to fear. Well, how much greater the fearful chaos and the captivity when it is God's rule that is overthrown and rebelled against?

[36 : 26] But that is the story of humanity, according to the Bible. As you know, the Bible story begins in Genesis, in Eden, with a picture of mankind living peacefully under God's rule.

We heard it. Kept safe, kept healthy by God's good and perfect law. But then comes man's great fall.

And the beautiful rule of a sovereign God is exchanged for the baleful reign of selfish humanity. Actually, the word fall, that is not how the Bible describes it.

Almost as if it could be accidental. But it was far from accidental. Writing to the church in Rome, Paul says that man trespassed, that we transgressed, that it was ranked disobedience to God.

It was nothing less than rebellion, than revolution against God and against God's rule, against God's law. And so, as he says, human beings became slaves to iniquity and lawlessness.

[37 : 31] Note that, slaves. You replace God's rule with your own self-rule, it leads not to liberty, but to bondage. Not to the way of liberating beauty, but to the way of lawless blight and brokenness.

People tend to think of the book of Genesis as just ancient history and irrelevant to us. But in fact, it's just full of the story of human life as we know it to be, still today.

It's full of the same things that you read about in the papers and you watch on reality TV. Genesis chapter 4 onwards tells us about the downward spiral of human lawlessness.

It begins, as you know, with the famous story of Cain and Abel. It just epitomizes the personal effect when you turn your back on God's rule over your life.

You start turning your back then on your fellow human beings as well, in selfishness and in self-preservation. You know the story? Cain was jealous of his brother Abel. He hated him.

[38 : 34] And then eventually he killed him. He separated himself from God's rule and he became his own ruler in life. Did it make him happy?

Of course it didn't. Did it liberate him? Far from it. In fact, Cain says, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Why? Well, because he's cut himself off from God's rule over his life.

And so he's lost his whole sense of identity. You've driven me away from the ground and from your face I shall be hidden, he says. He's lost all sense of what he's created for and who he's created for.

For God and for work. For God. And so he's lost also his whole sense of society. I'll be a fugitive wherever I go on the earth, he says. So his relationship's disappointment.

He's restless. Can't find peace. And as a result, he's got no sense of security any longer. Whoever finds me, says Cain, is going to kill me.

[39 : 39] So his life is governed by fear of the future. Fear of people. Fear that people will hurt him. He can't trust anybody. Can't trust to commit himself to anybody else.

Any people in relationships. Or indeed in business or commerce or anything else. Is that ancient history? I don't think it is. Because our world is full of Cains in the 21st century, isn't it?

Full of people with very little sense of identity or of society or of security. See, this world of relational holocaust that we live in, with its swathes of breakdown and of bitterness and of blight, that is the world of lawlessness.

It's the world that has rebelled against God's rule. Against the gracious, good rule of our Creator. That's why there's fear. That's why there's uncertainty all around us this Christmas time.

Whether it's Brexit fears. Whether it's a loss of trust in Parliament or in the government. Whether it's a crisis in trust that seems to be breaking out all around the world. And fueling tensions in so many countries in the world today.

[40 : 52] There is a reason for the way the world is. And the Bible says, yes, it is a curse. You human beings in rejecting God's rule, you've put yourself in bondage to lawlessness.

In bondage to that autonomous self-rule. And that, says the Bible, is the cancer that's at the root of all the symptoms of disease and distress that we experience in human society today.

You know, the symptoms and the signs of cancer, they can often seem quite unrelated, can't they? But to the trained eye, they can be signs just in the hands or in the eyes or in the face or in the bones or even in the brain.

And they can all be traced back to that primary malignancy deep within the body. And the Bible writers are just like that.

Astute physicians that pinpoint the diagnosis of what's wrong with the whole world. All the restless anxieties in our lives. All the unsettled longings.

[42 : 01] All the frustration, the despair, the grief. All of these things that stalk our human lives here on earth. All our sense that life is just so much less than we imagined it would be.

It's all due to the cancer deep at the heart of our human story. That brings disease. And in the end, that brings death to our existence.

This lawlessness that right at the very heart of our human nature. And it's the rejection of God's sovereign rule over us.

And we imagine ourselves to be our own gods. We imagine that we're ruling ourselves. But the truth is, friends, that has led our world into disaster. Hasn't led, has it, to great beauty and purpose in our human lives.

Hasn't led to fruitfulness and fulfillment. So often it's led only to pollution, to blight. To lives that are futile and fruitless. As human beings, we've said, we will rule ourselves.

[43 : 06] We will not have God's rule over us. And God has said, all right. Have it your way and do it your way. If that's what you want.

The Bible says God has given human beings up to our own foolish desires. And friends, the result of that is the world all around us. The evidence of our own eyes and our ears.

The world that we have made through our own human wisdom. We've refused to live as God's creation, as God's possession. And instead we've insisted on self-possession.

And the result is the world we live in. Humanity rejected God and reaped not great life, but death. Not majesty, but mortality.

And that's the Bible's diagnosis of why life on earth is as it is. As it really is, not as we wish it were. It's a life and it's a whole world that's in bondage to grim lawlessness.

[44 : 15] As a rejection of our sovereign God. And yet the apostle Paul says that despite all this, God who is the rejected sovereign has become God our Savior.

And that Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem us from grim lawlessness and for glorious life. That's what it means that at the first Christmas, through the birth of Jesus Christ, the grace of God appeared bringing salvation.

He's come to redeem us for the beauty of God's glorious life. Paul says Christ came to purify for himself a people for his own possession.

Zealous for good. To restore them from lawless blight. To the liberating beauty that we were made for. From life that was so much less now than we imagine it could be.

To a life that is abundantly more than we could ever, ever imagine. Forever and ever. Purify. That's a word used of the refiner of precious metals.

[45 : 26] It wants to get rid of all the dross to make it shine again magnificently and beautifully. But it's also a word that's used in a more personal way of the Lord Jesus himself.

When he purified and cleansed lepers during his earthly ministry. Lepers were soiled. They were impure. And therefore, as a result, they were separated.

They were isolated. Excluded from participation in normal human society as it should be. And that's Paul's point here. Sin and its lawlessness pollutes us.

It soils our lives. And it separates us. It excludes us from the true humanity that we were made for. And for the true life that can only be had in real fellowship with God himself.

It leaves us in our life of self-possession. In floundering, fruitless, futility and mortality. But he is saying that Jesus Christ came to restore us to God's possession where we truly belong.

[46 : 29] To a true life of flourishing. Of fruitful fulfillment. Of life that truly is everlasting. So that just as sins polluting cancer blighted our whole lives in countless ways.

Not just our deeds. But our words. Even the thoughts that shame us. So Christ's purifying cleansing will beautify every aspect of our humanity.

Now that we belong to him. That we are his possessions. So that all that we do and all that we are can be and will be good. And wholesome.

And lovely. And true. And we will never have to be ashamed of ourselves ever again. Of course that full fruit of our salvation is not yet ours.

The Bible is very clear about that. Paul is explicit here. He said, didn't he? That we are waiting for our blessed hope. The appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Only then will we be fully restored.

[47 : 37] When as Paul says elsewhere. We also will receive our resurrection bodies like him. And when we will see him as he truly is. And we will be like him. But already.

Paul is telling us that the first sunbeams of that glorious new day for our world are here. In the coming of Christ our Savior. To redeem us. His grace is already transforming those who have thrown themselves on him.

Training us, he says. To live even now in this present life. With godly lives. As we wait for that great day. That great day will fulfill all that the prophet spoke of.

When the desert will bloom like the rose. When the eyes of the blind will be opened. The ears of the deaf unstopped. When the lame will leap like a deer. When the tongue will sing for joy.

And everlasting joy will be upon the heads of God's people. That day is coming. The Bible is quite clear. When the full glory of God our Savior is revealed. And it's certain because the grace of God our Savior has already appeared.

[48 : 50] In the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ that first Christmas. That's why we sing. Strikes for us now the hour of grace. Savior since thou art born. The very last prophet of the Old Testament.

Malachi promised of a coming day. That would be the rising sun of righteousness for our world. It would rise with healing in its wings. That's exactly what the Christmas message means.

Nothing less than the first rays of dawn of that promise. And it's already begun. That's what John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, sang about. As he anticipated the birth of Jesus.

Because of the tender mercy of our God. He says the sunrise will visit us from on high. In the birth of Christ. To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

And to guide our feet into the way of peace. See the light of heaven's grace and mercy. That purifies all that leads only to human darkness and death.

[49 : 51] It opens the way to peace with God and everlasting. It's come in the person of Jesus. To lead us from pain and into ultimate peace. And from blight and the brokenness of our grim lawlessness.

To the brightness and the beauty of God's glorious life. And that's the message that Christmas sings to our broken world. To every human being within it. The grace of God has appeared in the person of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

To purify for himself a people. To be restored to the beauty of life as God meant it to be. It's a message of glorious possibility.

For every kind of possible human need. For the heartbroken. For the grieving. For those who are burdened with guilt. With shame in their lives.

For the lonely. For the unwanted. For those who have failed and disappointed others. Perhaps most of all for those who have failed and deeply, deeply disappointed themselves.

[50 : 55] Jesus Christ is the gracious and glorious restorer of human beings. He came to bring back the beauty into our lives.

To purify everything that's soiled. And spoiled. Everything that's shameful. Everything that's sorrowful. And out of the ashes of even the most burnt out wrecks of human life.

To bring forth the promise of a new day. A day that will swallow up every last vestige. Of the poor and pathetic mortality that we live with.

In the profound majesty of everlasting life. With him. And in a glorious new creation. Friends, that is the true message of Christmas.

That is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing less than the sure and certain promise of a whole new creation. Filled with the restored beauty of human life.

[51 : 58] Recreated in the image of God. Repossessed by God our Savior forever. And that restored life. Can begin now.

In this present age. That's what Paul is saying here. Salvation has begun for all who are in Christ. All who have entrusted their future to him.

He says elsewhere. Wherever anyone is in Christ. Already there is new creation. Already those healing wings. Those purifying wings of his grace. Are penetrating the darkness of our lives.

With the new rays of dawn. The moment anyone gives their life to Jesus Christ. There is an invasion of his heavenly light. The transformation of heaven has begun in that person's life.

That self-possession gives way to God's possession. And just so the pollution and the pain gives way to purity and to purpose.

[53 : 00] And lives of fruitlessness and futility become lives of fruitfulness. Lives of fulfillment. Even now in this dark world. As we wait for the coming of the Savior.

Because we're back where we belong. We're no longer in bondage to our own disastrous self-rule. But we're gladly bowing the knee to his beautiful divine rule over us.

That's just what it means to be a Christian believer. To be back under the control of the only one who knows how to lead our human lives. Of course there's a long way to go.

But like a sick man who's had the abscess. The source of his sepsis cut out of his body. The decisive intervention is done.

He's convalescing. He's awaiting full restoration to health and strength. But the restoration has begun. And the restoration of our world has begun.

[53 : 57] It began that first Christmas. When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared. To bring his salvation to human beings. It's begun for our world.

But it can begin for you and your own human life this Christmas. If you will let go of the disaster of lawlessness.

The folly of imagining that you can be God over your own life. And instead if you grasp hold of your true destiny. True life as God's possession.

To be shaped forever in his image. His way. And reshaped in beauty and love. That will be everlasting. Do that and his beautiful restoration will begin right now.

As his purifying light will start to penetrate your life. It will penetrate your mind. Your heart. Your whole being. Bringing cleansing. Bringing wholeness. To your thoughts.

[54 : 56] To your words. To your deeds. To your relationships in life. To every part of your life. You'll begin to see the beauty returning. As the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ within you.

Teaches you the way of his grace. Leads you as the apostle says. To renounce ungodliness. And to live a godly life in this present age. As you wait for that blessed hope of the return of our Savior Jesus Christ.

And on that day friends. If you have believed and trusted in him. When he returns. You will see him as he truly is. In all the beauty of his glory. And you will be like him.

You'll be restored fully and forever. To a life of meaning. And of purpose. And of nobility. And of grandeur. And of beauty. Beyond anything that you could ever have hoped.

Anything you could ever have dreamed was possible. But will be real. And permanent. Forever and ever. Because Jesus Christ came into this world to bring that legacy.

[56 : 06] Christmas is all about the restoration of human beauty. The restoration of our lives. The restoration of this whole cosmos. This whole creation. For all eternity.

Don't let the beauty. Of Christmas pass you by. The apostle Paul says.

Give yourself to him. The one who gave himself for you. And you will share. In that transforming beauty.

Both now. And forever. And ever. Amen. Let's pray. Blessed Lord. Who caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning.

Grant that we may so hear them. Read. Mark. And learn. And inwardly digest them. That by patience. And the comfort of thy holy word. We may embrace.

[57 : 08] 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 eternity. Now. Fulfilled. For all eternity.

Because it was there. Deep within the father's heart. That love. Issued in decree. That sons of earth. Though lost in sin. His royal heirs. Should be.

This verse holy. D Thank you.

Thank you.

[59 : 09] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[61 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

We'd love to see you tomorrow at our Christmas morning service at 11 a.m. Thank you so much for being with us tonight. Do stay behind for refreshments downstairs, mulled wine, mince pies, and so on.

And let me wish you a very, and let's pray. Before we part, let's close with a word of prayer.

Amen. May we pray, let's pray, amen, and let's pray, and let's pray, and let's pray, and let's pray, through Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, may we pray, having heard your words of hope and of beauty.

[63 : 46] Put our trust in you, put our trust in you, put our trust in you, and live under your gracious rule every day for the rest of our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.