

The Leaping Joy of Ultimate Freedom - He comes to give us real liberty

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[0 : 00] The curse vanished, and the world was stored to be as God created it to be. The promise of Christmas was about a great victory, which means that the world will one day be put right forever.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, he did come to bring liberation. He came out of promise to bring the leaping joy of ultimate freedom to enslaved human beings.

Listen to these words from Malachi, the very last of the prophets, speaking as he was some 400 or so years before the birth of Christ. And then listen to what the Gospels record of the events of that first Christmas.

Malachi says, Behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven. When all the Arabs and all the engledoers will be stoned. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

But for you who fear my name, the Son of Righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the storm.

[1 : 20] And so it came to pass. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will wear a sun, and you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from her sins. And those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a time in Judah.

And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you, my woman, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. In the Bible there is great joy and wonder about the Christmas message, but there is absolutely no sentimentality.

[2 : 42] It is a message of real liberation, real peace, descending from heaven. But, of course, real peace doesn't come to rebellious human beings without the almighty cost of making peace.

And that cost is a cost to God himself. And so, or that babe, still infant crying, shadows of the cross were lying.

Before we think together, I'll speak for a little about what all this means. Let's sing again this lovely carol about the angel's finite message. Let's sing again this lovely carol about the angel's finite energy.

Look behind the angel's finite connected career. In the angel'sazi honest have couches. Let's sing again this lovely carol about the angel's finite message.

When he sees that she paid forgiveness, she loves the cycle of my inst Zachary Man.
Gystly speaking to heaven, she loves the angel's finite message. She loves the angel's
quel on thearchy. And from man's uniquevé en route.

[3 : 53] Yes! She loves the angel's kind. When he sees thatufen than heaven's eighteen eran.
Shepherds, sweet your shepherd king. All the stars brightly glowing, Eastern kings their
lips are showing, To the king whose gifts are showing, Gentiles, sweet the gentlest king.

Forests, lakes, will live and crying, Shadows of the cross are lying, Precious earth and
cross be crying, Till its creatures sent me.

Now all the heavens are ringing, Saints their morning's end to singing, All the night's
pervasive praying, Praise with them our Savior King.

To the manger come adoring, Hearts in thankfulness are pouring, To the child whose gifts
are pouring, There is Son of God and King.

I wonder how you would picture Christmas most perfectly. What scene for you would
make the perfect Christmas card? Maybe it would be snow, a white Christmas, I don't
think we're going to get one this year, But it never quite better be.

[6 : 08] Maybe it would be a lovely scene of Romans, Or a kind of Dickensian picture of old
England. Maybe it would be Santa and his reindeer, Or perhaps a star, And shepherds
and angels, That would perhaps be a little closer.

And I guess we've all seen plenty of these, And it just this year, But I wonder if you've ever
had a Christmas card, Picturing a leaping calf.

I certainly haven't. But that is the picture that Malachi the prophet gives, Of Christmas yet
to come. You shall buy a leaping, Like calves, From the stall.

In our Christmas services this year, We've been looking at the promise of Christmas.
According to Malachi, This last of the prophets, And his view, From some 400 and some
years, Before the birth of Jesus, Was that that day would be like a sunrise.

It would be the dawn in life, Ultimate meaning, For our world. With wings of righteousness.
The healing wings, He calls them, Of ultimate restoration, For our world.

[7 : 22] But now he talks about, Leaping calves. What on earth does that mean? Well it is a
picture, The leaping joy, Of ultimate freedom.

Cards kept in their souls all night, Kept away from their mothers, During milking perhaps,
And now at last set free, To go and join their mothers, To leap, To frolic with joy.

Leaping speaks of, Of extreme joy, And celebration, Doesn't it? I know we Scots are a
fairly staid race, But even we have the island fling, Don't we?

And certainly, It is a very common association, In the Bible. King David leaped, And
danced for joy, Before the Lord. In the song of songs, That erotic love poem, The beloved,
Comes leaping, Over the mountain, To her beloved, Joyfully anticipating, That love is
Christ.

And when the prophets, Like Isaiah, Spoke of the glorious coming, Of the Lord, He says,
The lame men, Would leap for joy, Even as the dumb, Would sing.

[8 : 28] And so here, Malachi also speaks, About the leaping joy, Of liberation, Ultimate freedom.
And that would be, A great great feature, Of the coming, Of God, To this earth.

Freedom, Liberation, And captivity, And bondage. That is one of the Bible's, Most
consistent ways, Of describing what salvation, Is all about, What it means.

You go back to the very, Beginnings of the Old Testament, Of the story of the Exodus, Is a
story of great liberation, From bondage. And it became a picture, Of God's great salvation,
Ever afterwards.

And the prophets, Like Malachi, They pointed forward, Was far, Far, Far, Greater liberation, Than that. A liberation, Out, Of the captivity, Of life, As we know it, As human beings.

And into the glorious, Liberation, Of nothing less, Than a whole new world. They look for that day, Of liberating joy. You shall go out with joy, You shall go out with joy, Be read, And be led forth in peace, And the mountains, And the hills, Will break forth into singing, And even the trees of the field, Will clap their hands, Such will be the joy.

[9 : 46] And that's the message of Christmas, That Malachi, Is longing for. It will bring liberation, Freedom, From the dark, Oppressive forces, Of this world, That rob us, Of true joy, And rob us, Of true freedom.

That's what, Malachi saw, Would begin, At that first Christmas, Two thousand years, In the past, For us. And that's why, There was joy, That's why, There was great joy, All surrounding, The events, Of Jesus' birth.

And there was leaping, We heard it in the reading, Remember John the Baptist, In the womb, Leaping for joy, When Mary, Came to visit Elizabeth, And told her about, The child in her own womb, The one who would be born, The saviour.

But why, Why is Christmas, About liberation? It's all this about, Human beings like us, Needing to be liberated.

Let me explain it, In Jesus' own words. Because first, Jesus said, That human beings, Every one of us, Is in slavery. And that we're in need, Of liberation.

[11 : 03] We're all slaves, He said, We're all controlled, By the ruthless power, And we are helpless, In the grasp, Of a ruthless master. And he, He called that, Ruthless master, Sin.

Truly, I say to you, Everyone who commits sin, Is a slave. To sin. And notice what he says there, Because it's not, What we tend to think, Of ourselves.

According to Jesus, We commit sin, Because, We are slaves, To sin. Because, Sin has a power, A hold over us. Sin isn't all a list, Of peccadillos, And skeletons, In the closet, That we've all accumulated, Through our life, And like to hide away.

No, Sin, According to Jesus, Is a power, That has us, In a grip, Like a vice. And that's what explains, So much, Human behavior.

Some years ago, I remember reading, I think it was in one of the, Weekend newspapers, An article by, The zoologist, Desmond Morris, You'll have read, Some of his books, And it was the time, Of Tiger Woods, When he, Well let's say, Feared quite markedly, Off the fairway, As far as his marriage, Was concerned, And was shown up, To be having multiple affairs, And so on.

[12 : 25] And Desmond Morris, Was writing about this, And what he said was this, Tiger Woods is driven, By primal, Instinct, To spread his genes, Wildly. So that's, All okay.

Well Tiger Woods, Wife, Truly didn't think, It was okay, I read that, His divorce, And cost me, 750 million dollars. But there is, A grain of truth, A grain of truth, In Desmond Morris' words.

The Bible, Explains it much more clearly, Much more fully. Of course, We are all responsible, For our actions. Of course, We are all moral beings, We're not just animals.

But, Yes, We are, In the grip, Of base, And evil powers. Not prime evil instincts, As though some, Things like that, Were just natural, And somehow innocent, But ever excusable.

But Jesus says, We are, In the grip, Of the power of sin. And it is far from natural, And it is far from good, And innocent. And he says, Yes, We are, In slavery, To its mastery.

[13 : 35] We are not free. Because otherwise, Our will would be marked, In every relationship, Not by infidelity, But by total fidelity.

And divorce lawyers, Would be out of a job. Our will would be marked, Not by deceit, But by honesty, In all things. And so, Humanity's revenue, And customs, Would be out of a job.

Our will would be marked, Not by suspicion, But by trust, In every relationship, In the world. And so, The foreign office, In the little man, That's the goal, We had of a job.

And our will would be marked, Not by wars, But by peace, Between all nations. And later, It could be disbanded, Because it wasn't needed, Not just because, Mr. Trump, Might know what to think of it.

Well, let me ask you, Is that the world, As it really is? You'd know the answer, To that, don't you? Of course you do. But Jesus says, This world is as it is, Because we human beings, Are enslaved, We are captive, To the power of sin.

[14 : 44] It is an alien intrusion, Into true humanity. And we tend to use, Through the Muslims. But we recognize it all, We say, Well, that's human nature.

What we mean is, Well, we are far from perfect. Isn't that right? And St. Paul, Because the Lord Jesus, In his letter to the church in Rome, He describes that dark power of sin, He describes it as a harsh master, As a brutal general, As a tyrannical ruler, Domineering us, As a vicious employer, Exploiting us, Subjugating our human life, To de-joy them, And indeed to dehumanize them, And indeed to dehumanize them.

That's a consistent message, From the beginning of the Bible, Right to the very end, That we human beings, Are not free. We're in slavery, And we are in desperate need, Of liberation.

Now, you might very well be saying to yourself, Hang on a minute, What are you talking about? You just had too much of that Christmas, And all of wine, That is nonsense.

You might be saying, We're not slaves, At least I'm not a slave, I'm a free person, This is a relatively free country, I can live my life, The way I want to, I'm free. And I will do it my way, And how dare you, Infer, That I'm some kind of slave, That I'm in bondage, Or a cheat form.

[16 : 13] Well, I'm just reporting, Jesus' words, And his view. And I would say, That's the very response, That he got, When he first spoke from back then.

People said to him, You're offspring of Abraham, We've never been a slave to anyone, How dare you say, We are a living, Freeing, Of a cheat.

No, Said Jesus, In reply, You are absolutely wrong, Everyone who sins, Is a slave to sin. And that is most certainly, The contention of Jesus Christ.

But maybe you say, Well, So what? But who says, I never sinned? Well, Come on, Are you really perfect? Are you always the person, That you really want to be?

You never let others down? You never let yourself down? If that really is the case, Please come and see me afterwards, I'd like to take you, On to our church staff, But we've never had anybody like that, And we've never met anybody, Like that myself.

[17 : 20] I'm certainly not like that. Let me ask you this, Are we really as free, As we think we are? Are we really joyfully liberated, As people, To be everything that we can be, Everything we want to be, Everything we long to be, In life?

The Bible's intention, Is that we're not. St. Paul says that, By nature we are enslaved, To things that by nature are not God's.

St. Peter says, Whatever overcomes a person, To that, He is enslaved. These things are not really God's, These things have no power to help us, And yet we look to them, For the fulfillment, For the salvation, That we long for.

We look to them, To give us, Liberation. But these things, We know have no power to save us. The irony is, They do have power, To enslave us, And to condemn us.

Most years, I visit India, And when I go there, I see, Every time, People worship, Giving homage, Giving money, To idols, To animals, I've even seen them, Giving money to trees, Literally in bondage, To idols, Made by the imagination of man.

[18 : 53] And people in the West, Might scoff at that, But let me tell you, We in the secular West, Are really noticed, At all, Because I know many, Many people, Who are just the same, Having bondage, To things that have no power, Whatsoever, To liberate, Or to bless them.

Artists, Intellectuals, Who so often are slaves, To the great quest, For meaning, And expression. Many, Many people are slaves, To the great quest, For wealth, To find liberation, And salvation.

Or many are seeking, Liberation and fulfillment, Through their relationships, Through their lovers, Through their spouse, Through their children, Whatever it might be, Or through finding, Their identity, In their particular way, Of wanting to express, Fashion, Or express, Their sexuality, For example.

The latest, Tragic fashion, Seems to be, People, Believing, Mutilate their bodies, In a quest, For happiness, By identifying, As a different gender, To the body, That they have.

There are very, Powerful masters, That abound, In our 21st century, Culture, Controlling people, With great power, With great persistence, Be it beauty, Or body shape, Or gender expression, For academic success, Or sporting image, Or wealth, Or whatever it might be, Sometimes it's just the desire, To be liked, To be loved at school, Or to be loved by someone special, I don't think I'm exaggerating, I mean that's, That's all around us.

[20 : 33] Powerful masters, Craving our worship, And ruthless masters, Powerful to condemn for failure, All too easily, And all too quickly, And the fallout, Is all around about us, In our society, All the tragedies, Of these, Poor people, Have been spat out, Have been rejected, By these gods, That they've looked to, To be their saviors, People desperately, Seeking liberation, From the dreadful tyranny, Through escapism, Into alcohol, Or into drugs, Or even through suicide, Suicide is still the biggest killer, Of young men, In our culture today, Isn't that a terrible thing?

And by the way, The suicide rate, Among those people, Who have had gender reassignment surgery, Is twenty times, The rate in the normal population, Is that liberation?

One of the most awful tragedies, I think, Is when we read about, Young children, Taking their own lives, Because they felt crushed, Or excluded, By their peers, The schools, Just because they fell short, Somehow, Of the ruthless standards, Of the fashion gods, Or the popularity gods, Or the looks gods, That rule, In teenage culture, I'm not at all, Sure that any of us, Can really claim, That we're as free, As we like to think we are, And there's only one master, Isn't there, That I don't think any of us, Can deny, Has an icy grip, Over our lives, And that's the mask, Of the death itself, None of us, I think, Can deny that we're slaves, To our own, Mortality, Can we?

I find, Woody Allen, Sometimes very witty, And penetrating, Some of his wittiest things, Are actually about life itself, Listen, Life is full of misery, Loneliness, And suffering, And it's all over, Much too soon, Or this, I don't want to achieve, Immortality, Through my work, I want to achieve it, Through not dying, Well that's funny, It was, Isn't it, Because there's a serious edge to it, Here's one, That's just plain and stark, No humor, I think at all, Just dark, He says, Alienation, Loneliness, Emptiness, Virgin or madness, The fundamental thing, Behind all motivation, And all activity, Is the constant struggle, Against annihilation, And death, Is absolutely, Is stupefying, In its terror, And it renders, Anyone's accomplishments, Minimus, That is just, A recognition, Of what Jesus says, That we are all, Captives,

To many, Many, Ruthless powers, That have a hold, On our lives, And above all others, The power, Of death itself, And Jesus says, We are all, In slavery, And we are all, In need of liberation, But second, He tells us, That the message, Of Christmas, Is that Jesus, Is also the saviour, Who came to bring, Liberation, The truth about me, Says Jesus, Is what will, Set you free, And if the son of God, Sets you free, Then you will, Be free indeed, You see, The truth of the gospel, Of Jesus Christ, Liberates us, Because it faces, Head on, The whole truth, About time, And eternity, It recognizes, It doesn't hide, From the awful reality, Of sins, Enslaving power, Over the human heart, Over our whole human world, But it also recognizes,

[24 : 20] And it rejoices, In the wonderful reality, Of the saviour's, Liberating power, To set us free, Delivering our human, Hearts, To liberate, The whole human world, If it will be liberated, That's what Jesus Christ, Coming into this world, Is all about, He came to bring, Liberation, To set us free, In Jesus Christ, From the law, Of sin and death, As the apostle Paul puts it, To deliver us, From the dominion, Of darkness, And transfer us, Into the kingdom, Of his beloved son, Of total liberation, Because, It's a total rescue, From the power, And the sway, Of the great tyrant itself, The power of sin, Some of you will remember, Perhaps, 27 years ago, This very night, That the world, Witnessed, The overthrow, Of the tyrant, Ceausescu,

In Romania, And on Christmas morning, In 1989, He and his wife, Were executed, And the world news bulletin, Showed, Those pictures, Of him and his wife, Crumpled by that wall, Dead bodies, Amid a cheering crowd, Of people, Full of the joy, Of liberation, From that tyrannical regime, From darkness, From tyranny, From bondage, And there was the rejoicing, That began, The beginning of a whole new era, Of free existence, But the first Christmas, 2000 years ago, Saw a far, Far greater liberation, Again, The beginning of total, And ultimate liberation, From this world, Waking up, To overcoming, The power of sin itself, You might say, How is that?

Because, Death is still here, Even Christians die, It's the same as everybody else, I guess that's true, The Bible is very clear, And unadvanced about that, It tells us, Because I'm not yet, About our salvation, And that is because, The liberation that comes in Jesus, Is not just, A personal liberation, For men and women, It is a truly, Cosmic liberation, For this whole world, The whole cosmos, This whole creation, Is waiting, Is growing, Says the Apostle Paul, Longing, For the great day of, Consummation, When the dead, Are raised, At Christ's return, And the same spirit, That raised Jesus Christ, From the dead, Will raise, All those who are things, Likewise, And all, Will it thus be complete, Nevertheless, Media time, That great liberation, Has begun, Because we, Who trust the Lord Jesus,

We know, That day is certain, And we know, The joy there, Of that liberation, We know it already, In our lives, We're no longer slaves, We're not yet, Full, Inheriters, But we have, The certainty, Because we've become, True heirs, And we live, On the basis, Of what we know, And promise to be ours, One thing, That's the definition, Of an heir, You live, Knowing that the inheritance, Will certainly be yours, We live, As it were, Like a football team, That's, Already qualified, For the world cup, And has a whole lot of games, Left in the group, And the team is liberated, Therefore, They don't just worry, About losing goals, They're able to play, The greatest football ever, Because they know, They're already there, In the finals, And that's what, Christmas means, For all, Who fear his name, Says America, Who love, And know the Lord, Jesus Christ, There is a, A certainty,

Of the future, Full, Of the leaping joy, Of ultimate fear, Now there's not yet, But even now, There's joy, In the knowledge, Of that liberation, To come, Because we're liberated, From the fear, Of death itself, And because we're liberated, From that, We can therefore, Be liberated, From every other, Sultifying tyranny, That we have, All of our lives, Here in this world, We're liberated, From the need, For others, Approval, And praise, What a bondage, That is, To be liberated from, We're liberated, From the burden, Of self-judgment, Of self-esteem, We're liberated, From the tyranny, Of a need, To achieve, A need, To possess, A need, To perform, A need, To be, Something, Or somebody, So we're free, Free to rejoice,

[29 : 17] In being, What God, Has so wonderfully, Made us to be, And called us to be, In Jesus Christ, Friends, It's that truth, In its entirety, The hard, Uncallitable truth, About sins, And slaving power, And, The glorious truth, About the same view, As the liberating power, It's that truth, That will set you, Leaping for joy, This Christmas time, The altar, If you'll accept it, If you'll receive it, In the lips, Of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, If you haven't, Done that yet, Won't you make it, Yours this Christmas Eve, If you do, You will know, The truth, And the truth, Will set you free, For leaping joy, Of ultimate freedom, That Jesus longs, To give you, Longs to give you,

To want to be present, Now and forever, If you will say, Amen, Lord, So let it be, My prayer is, If you will, This very Christmas time, Amen, Let's pray, Lord Jesus Christ, Risen and reigning, Forever, Grant us, We pray, To receive, This year, Your, Living, And liberating, Gospel way, So that you might, Also rejoice, In the true freedom, That you and you, Alone, Can give, For which you, Promise to give, To all who know, To all who ask, To all who seek, From you, To come to be our spirit, Hear us, We pray, In Jesus name, Amen, With you, We pray,