

2. What Child is this? He'll be the Present Leader - The Wonderful Counsellor (+ carols & lessons)

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Date: 16 December 2007

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Well, welcome everybody to our Carols by Candlelight service tonight here in St. George's Tron. Special welcome if you're here for the first time. Perhaps you heard some of our carol singers singing in Buchanan Galleries this afternoon and decided to come along and join us.

And if so, we're delighted that you're able to share with us in the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. We begin tonight by singing one of the oldest and most beautiful of the carols.

It's 1600 years old and it speaks of the story of Christmas beginning before even the very beginning of time, before creation in the love of God himself.

And that's where we begin our service tonight. Of the Father's love begotten, ere the world began to be, Hail to thee, Child, the Word of God Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[2 : 47] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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

Amen. Amen. Amen. 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?

[4 : 56] 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 whom you gave to be with me, she gave me 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, cursed are 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.

[6 : 05] 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 from 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 cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

The wonder of Christmas is that it tells us how that terrible estrangement from God, that separation that's signified by the fierce angels with their flaming sword barring man from God's presence.

How that separation is overcome. Not by us, we haven't the power to do it. But by God himself in sending Jesus Christ his son into this world. So that now the angels have a new role.

No longer barring the way, but rather proclaiming the great good news that there can be at last peace and good will from God towards men and women.

[7 : 17] It came upon the midnight clear that glorious song of old from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. His start, with a hundred wordsraction, from Guessworth, Prayers come from God to guide them.

He aspirations to show for grace and good will move on to the Trinity Elm consomm. There is no more■ than... Then can it therefore live, when he stops the mountain with photos and pictures heitelmy of gods in the grand totally new from the■■■■ and KäHoded far. He has watched ouracie the years to reveal that■■■ it is that ■ pict-up lets the fires be apart.

He feels like... For a ridepu as a unravel ■■■■■■ Thai temple. The End The End

The End The End The End

The End The End The End The End The End The End

[10 : 54] 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 The End The End The End The End The End despite all their waywardness and all their rejection of him.

And telling of the wonderful promise of a coming one who would be Emmanuel, which means God himself with us. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[16 : 02] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Above the 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. Amen.

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

[19 : 13] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[22 : 04] 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.

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.

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.

[23 : 28] 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. Born to glorify the children of our children.

For his antirmodel is drawn to his love and the Lord be with us. For the bé shelters, all my trust is provided. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[26 : 22] 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.

[28 : 56] 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.

[31 : 12] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Now proclaim Messiah's birth. We sing this lovely carol now, and we sing the Latin chorus, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

because as my Latin teacher would have told you in the old days every self-respecting angel would have sung the chorus in Latin. Thank you.

[34 : 00] 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.

[35 : 42] 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. Hello. Diana big... Yes, I will be sorry. tropical Michael Sucific, Chevrolet Grand And at the end of eight days when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angels before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for the purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.

And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

[37 : 09] And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And 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 he came in the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

That reading tells of the joy of the faithful who had been waiting and longing for the fulfillment of all that the prophets had spoken. Because God's covenant promise had glimmered down all through the ages, right through the darkness of human history.

But the message of Christmas is that in the birth of Jesus Christ, all that was promised is now come. And that's why the Christmas message was and is one of rejoicing and great joy.

[38 : 26] Good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul and voice. Now you need not fear the grave. Jesus Christ was born to save. Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting whole.

Christ was born to save. Christ was born to save.

Forgive me for my predation. Amen. Fall to death. The student who's born and alive. They're not afraid of me. Now you should have been like your espíritu. Have you experienced before it? Have you ever killed week? pizzasetically?

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 12] Thank you.

Thank you.

The multitude of these lovely carols that we sing were written by people who understood what that story means. What the birth of this child really is about. And our last reading takes us back again some 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ to the words of Isaiah the prophet.

So listen as he tells people what to expect of this miraculous child that was to come. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

And there will be no longer than the birth of Jesus Christ before you as with joy at the harvest as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

[42 : 21] And the Lord of hosts will be the kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice, with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Well, before I talk to you a little bit about what this message of the child that Isaiah was prophesying is really all about and has to say to us here in 2007, We're going to sing again one of the simplest but perhaps best loved carols of them all.

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.

Son of God, oh how bright, love is smiling from thy face, saviour, since thou art born.

Son of God, oh how bright, love is smiling from thy face, saviour, since thou art born.

[44 : 33] Son of God, oh how probable, sah profesyUSA TORNES Son of God, oh how clear, love is smiling from thy face, saviour, since thou art born. Son of God, oh how bright, with tam être, saviour, since thou art born. Son of God, oh how bright, say for us today, saviour, since thou art born. Son of God, oh I am■, saviour, that you are true, for us tomorrow, son of your name and are even forever.

Son of God, all you are sowie to my mother, how bright, for us, our st Wheels haveasts of you, your name and Month, Son of God,■-Eis-Seman tour wherever you are as well. Son of God, as to let me out among you for us today, I am the host ofluyear■us. The light, earth is outing clear and long, far and near the angels song.

Christ the leader is here, Christ the leader is here.

The light, earth is outing clear and long, far and near the angels song.

The light, earth is outing clear and long, far and near the angels song.

[46 : 26] The light, earth is outing clear and long, far and near the angels song. The light, earth is outing clear and long, far and near the angels song. It may seem a strange question, but clearly it's not an unnecessary question when a poll just the other week found that in Britain today, 36% of those under the age of 24 don't know where Jesus was born.

And only 12%, 12% of the whole of our population could answer four questions correctly about the Christmas story. Well, I'm not going to bemoan the results of secularism and multiculturalism.

I'll leave that to the Daily Mail. It does it very well. But I do want to ask one question. What child is this? What child is this that we're talking about in the Christian church?

Our second last reading there spoke of Simeon, one of those characters in the first Christmas story. He was waiting, we're told, for the consolation of Israel, for the Lord's Christ.

But what was he waiting for? And who? Well, our last reading told us. He was waiting for the child to be born that Isaiah the prophet had spoken of some 700 years before.

[47 : 45] Those had been dark days in the world at that time. Very dark days indeed for the nation of Judah. No doubt, was facing a crisis surrounded by enemies, greatly threatened by the nation of Syria in the north.

And all her allies determined to wipe Israel off the map. The nation lived in fear and trembling. No doubt, if they had newspapers, they'd have been full of reports of diplomacy and frenzied attempts to find a peace process.

It's rather remarkable, isn't it? Sounds very contemporary. The world seems to have changed so very little, really, in 27 centuries. And not just in the Middle East.

Our news everywhere is so full today of crises of one kind or another, isn't it? Climate change, or world poverty, or trade, or the latest thing, the credit crunch.

And interestingly, it's when things get really bad, and sometimes only then, that people start to get quite religious. Have you noticed that? Maybe you've done that yourself. Some real crisis comes in your life, and you think to yourself, well, maybe I will try praying to God.

[48 : 56] Perhaps you'd never given God a thought otherwise, and yet things have become so bleak that you really can't see how else you can get help. So, well, maybe prayer is worth a shot. Strange, isn't it?

I wonder what you'd think about that if you were God, by the way. Probably not very much to be treated like that. But at any rate, that was the situation in Israel all those centuries before, and people were desperate for God to do something.

But God's answer to their prayers really rather wrong-footed them. He didn't say, well, okay, I'll step in and sort out this current political problem.

I'll stop the war. I'll bring peace in your time. No. He said something far, far more extraordinary than that. He said, I will step in, but I'll do it in an ultimate way.

I will act to save you, but when I do, it'll be to do far, far more than just sort out a few national issues here and there. It'll be to sort out the entire earth, the entire universe indeed.

[50 : 06] And it'll be to do so forever. Because I promise that I will send to you a child who will do exactly that. He will save the whole world.

And that's the child that Simeon was waiting for. Isaiah had said he'll be born of a virgin, and his name will be Emmanuel, which means God with us.

And as we saw last Sunday night, when we looked at this verse for the first time, we are told that this child will be the ultimate king of the universe.

He shall reign, says Isaiah, on the throne of David forever, forever and ever. A child who would be the promised Lord, God himself, come in human flesh, born in David's line as a man to redeem the world from its sin, from its curse.

And so to rule forever, a universe, a cosmos, renewed and restored to perfect peace forever. And when old Simeon in the temple saw this child, he said, now my eyes have seen your salvation.

[51 : 22] What you promise has now at last come. But what does all that really mean? What would this child be? What would he do to achieve all this?

Well, in the Bible, names given to characters are very, very important. They speak of the bearer's identity. They speak, indeed, of their destiny.

It's a little bit like the significance of nicknames to us. If you tell me your name's John, well, it probably doesn't tell me a very great deal about you. But if you tell me, well, all my friends call me Chancer, then that tells me a very great deal about your character.

And the first name that we're given in Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6, is this. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor. Well, what does that mean?

And how does that tell us how this child will be a saviour of the world and its people? Now, immediately, I know what some of you might be thinking. Aha! It's all about psychological wholeness.

[52 : 29] He'll help us to understand ourselves properly and discover ourselves and learn inner harmony and peace. That's what counselling does. Well, certainly, counselling is a growth industry today in the West, isn't it?

I was reading an article that says that whereas in the 1960s, about 14% of Americans had received some kind of psychological counselling today. It's about 80%.

That's obviously why they're in a nation of such well-adjusted people. But in Britain, it's not so different, is it? Apparently, there are 140,000 individuals who work in counselling today.

And every month, apparently, a million and a half counselling sessions take place. And certainly, it seems people love it. The choice is extraordinary. You can have any kind of counselling approach under the sun, it seems.

Everyone promising to be the way of wonderful counselling, the way of true healing and wholeness. Now, maybe you're a fan of that sort of thing. But on the other hand, maybe you're not.

[53 : 34] And maybe you're saying to yourself, right now, well, exactly, that's what I thought. All this Christianity stuff, it's just feeble nonsense. It's a crutch for wounded and feeble people. A lot of nonsense.

Just like this counselling culture that we have today. We've got ourselves brainwashed by. If it's just another form of counselling, well, it has absolutely nothing to offer a sane individual like me.

Well, if that is what Jesus is really all about, then, of course, you might very well be right. I read another article by a senior consultant psychiatrist at London's Maudsley Hospital.

The title of his article was this. Looking for a counsellor? You need your head examined. And in it, he exposes counselling and expresses great scepticism about the whole counselling movement.

He quotes a survey of 22,000 therapist interventions and found that the more interventions the therapist made, the worse the patient's got. Then he quotes dozens and dozens of controlled studies and comes to this conclusion.

[54 : 39] All this welter, he says, of scientific evidence points to the fact that much of the benefit you can get from therapy is practically indistinguishable from what you might obtain from confiding in a reliable, understanding and intelligent friend.

I suppose many of you might think that's just common sense. Unless, of course, you're a counsellor, in which case you're probably getting up to leave. But I'm not going to get into the debate about the benefits or not of that kind of counselling.

That's up to you to decide for yourself. But I do want to say, very plainly, that that has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with this text and this child.

To say that he will be called wonderful counsellor is absolutely nothing to do with that kind of counselling in our minds at all. In fact, it's the exact opposite. Because that idea of counselling is all about looking inside ourselves to find our true selves, to find healing within.

Now, at best, with proper medical supervision, it may very well bring some real help to some areas of our lives that we struggle with. Although, at worst, as we've said, it might indeed be quite ineffective and even harmful.

[55 : 51] But what we have here is the exact opposite. It's about turning us away from ourselves and our feeble psyches and turning us towards God and to stand in awe of his marvellous acts.

For he is the God who really can and does perform and purpose wonders for his people. Let's think for a few moments then about what this name really means.

Wonderful counsellor really means a wonder counsellor or one who counsels wonders. Wonder is the noun, not the adjective. And what this phrase says about the child to come is that he both performs wonders and purposes wonders for his people.

Let's take that first thing. He performs wonders. That word wonderful or wonder is the word used in the Bible for the wonders that God performs for his people. Glorious wonders, saving wonders, God performs wonders to rescue and save his people.

So right back in Exodus chapter 3 Moses is told by God I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders I will do in it and after that Pharaoh will let you go.

[57 : 13] And that's exactly what happened. On the other side of the Red Sea the people sang Who is like you, O Lord, awesome and glorious deeds, doing wonders?

When you read the Psalms you'll find that they're full of praise and proclamation of the saving wonders of God. Psalm 89 says Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

Or Psalm 78 We will not hide them but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord and the wonders that he has done. You see, all through history God has been a powerful leader to his people one that they can trust and follow not because he helps them to find strength inside themselves but because he gives real help from outside themselves from him and from the wonders that he performs.

He leads his people into the wonders of his salvation. And this child will be a wonder and he will perform wonders the wonders of God himself.

That's what the prophet's saying. So that he will truly be a present and a permanent leader for all who trust him and follow him. And that's what it means that his name shall be called Wonderful.

[58 : 38] His wonders indeed will fill us with wonder. Wonders that will truly transform our lives but not that only. this whole world.

But what about this second word counselor? Well the point here is that these wonders of God are not just from the past they're for the future. He purposes wonders for his people.

That word counsel is the same word often translated to plan or to purpose. And again it's the very opposite of that idea of non-directive counseling that only helps and facilitates somebody to help themselves.

No. Isaiah is very clear on that. This idea of God's counsel God's plan and purpose for history pervades his whole prophecy his whole book and what he purposes what he counsels can never ever fail.

So listen to Isaiah 14 as the Lord of hosts has sworn as I have planned so shall it be as I have counseled so shall it stand.

[59 : 52] This is the purpose that is purpose the counsel that is counseled literally concerning the whole earth. For the Lord of hosts has counseled and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back? You see what God counsels what he purposes must stand. And all the way through Isaiah we find that God does plan and purpose and what he counsels what he plans for his people are wonders.

Isaiah 25 You are my God I will praise your name for you have done wonderful things plans formed from of old faithful and sure. Isaiah 29 and the Lord said behold I will do again wonderful things with this people wonder upon wonder in that day the deaf will hear the words of a book and out of their gloom and darkness the blind shall see the meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

And this child says Isaiah is the one that you are to wait for and hope in He will be the one who does all this He is the wonder counselor One dictionary says that in the light of all that Isaiah means by these words wonderful counselor could perhaps best be translated like this He who is planning something wonderful something filled with wonders for the whole world and something that will fill people with wonder at the marvelous plan and purpose of God that He fulfills and that wonder is of course as Isaiah makes so clear in his prophecy the recreation of this whole universe yes your world and my world but much much more all of creation all of this soiled and suffering and tragic world full of heartbreak and despair and overshadowed for every one of us by the dark shadow of death and isn't isn't Christmas isn't Christmas one of those times when the shadow of death does hang over us so tangibly we can't help remembering can we and grieving for the ones that are no longer at the table of feasting with us but this child says Isaiah he comes to plan something wonderful for this broken world for this sin sick world for this shadow of death for he will be

God's servant king he will be the one who comes full of the spirit of God himself who is a manual who is anointed by God to bring good news as he says in the end of his prophecy to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour to grant to those who mourn a crown of beauty for ashes the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of the spirit of despair his name shall be called a wonder counsellor he who is planning something wonderful for this world and when Jesus Christ was born that plan came to its glorious fulfilment and one day he himself stood in a synagogue in Galilee and quoted those words from Isaiah and he said today these words are fulfilled in your very presence the people walking in darkness had seen a great light and now

[63 : 52] God's wonder counsellor who purposed wonders of salvation for his people he was come to be a present leader and a permanent leader to tend his flock like a shepherd as Isaiah had promised to gather his lost sheep and to lead them into the wonders of his salvation and that's what old Simeon recognised when he saw the infant Jesus and he said now Lord you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you prepared the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the gentile nations and for glory to your people Israel Simeon recognised that now at last he had seen in the flesh God's present leader the one who alone could lead him through death with no fear into the glorious salvation of his promised kingdom what child is this he is the counsellor the purposer of the wonders of God's salvation salvation for the world and for you

I don't know what you're looking for in life whether you can find it as you think in counselling or philosophy or in anything else or whether you just pour scorn and all that sort of thing but I do know this he who is planning something wonderful God's wonderful counsellor his son the Lord Jesus Christ has a plan and a purpose for you and for your life and that plan and purpose is very simple it's this that you should submit to him as your present leader and as your permanent leader and Lord for he alone does wonders he alone does the wonders that you need whether you recognize it or not the forgiveness of your sins and the liberation from your past that God alone can free you from and will free you from forever if you will bow the knee to him as Lord that's

God's wonderful counsel his wonderful purpose for you but it's not a foregone conclusion you know the tragedy of history is that even those who knew God's wonders so often still rejected him despite his wonders they did not believe says Psalm 78 and it was no difference was it in Jesus' day Luke tells us the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose rejected God's counsel for themselves often it was those who thought themselves very decent very religious very devoted who rejected Jesus Christ the wonderful counselor of God Matthew puts it even more shockingly when they saw the wonders he did and the children crying Hosanna they were indignant they scorned his wonders so in the end we read

Jesus departed from them he departed from them forever seems astonishing doesn't it yet it's still the same today isn't it people scorn his wonders but why well Jesus himself tells us plainly the light has come into the world but people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil and yes that in the end is what keeps people from the wonders of God's salvation the true light in Jesus Christ there are things in our lives that seem so precious to us that we will not yield them to the permanent leadership and lordship of Jesus Christ and so we keep them tight to our chest and we say I will not let go but what a price to remain walking in darkness to remain apart from the wonders of God's salvation and not just in this world forever friends don't let that be true of you this Christmas don't despise the wonderful purpose the wonderful counsel of

God for you in Jesus Christ he is the wonder counselor his present leadership calls you and whoever follows him let me promise you will never ever walk in darkness not now not ever the wonderful counselor our lord Jesus Christ will lead you in the path of light if only you'll follow him let's pray his name shall be called wonderful counselor he who is planning something wonderful God himself present to lead us into his wonderful future so come all you faithful joyful and triumphant come ye to Bethlehem come and behold him born the king of angels come let us adore him

[70 : 07] Christ the Lord gracious God grant this to be the response of all of our hearts this Christmas Amen God amen soon to be Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Just three things before we close. First, do stay behind for mince pies and coffee.

[73 : 53] We serve downstairs in room five and there's plenty for everyone, so we'd love you to stay. Second, there are a number of cards about our other services. You'll find them in baskets outside the doors tonight.

On the back of the card, there are details of all our services still to come. We have a lunchtime carol service on Wednesday. Next Sunday, we have services in the morning and in the evening.

We have an open air outside our church. We'll be back here for a similar, there's a slightly shorter service to tonight on Christmas Eve at 6.30. And then on Christmas Day at 11 a.m., we'll be praising the birth of Jesus.

So do come and join us and bring your friends and take cards as you leave. And then finally, in the new year, we start again another course called Christianity Explored. It begins on the 17th of January at 7 o'clock here in this building with a meal.

It's an opportunity for you to ask questions and to look and to study more about who Jesus Christ really claimed to be. You can do it in a non-threatening atmosphere.

[74 : 58] Nobody will ask you to pray aloud or give talks or anything like that. You'll just get a lovely meal and you'll hear some discussion and take part in that. We'd love you to join that if you'd like to.

Alex Bedford, one of our staff, will be downstairs with these cards in his hand. And he'd be happy to give you further details if you'd like to tonight. But we're so glad you could join us. Thank you for being here.

As we stand and close now, shall we just pray? The government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called.

One who is planning something wonderful for his people. We thank you, our Lord and our God, that you yourself came in the person of your Son to be our Savior.

To purpose wonders for our future. And to lead us in the way that conquers death itself. And so we ask that the light of your grace and mercy and truth would shine brightly in our hearts.

[76 : 06] That we might see and understand and come to bow the knee to your majesty this Christmas. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The love of God the Father and the fellowship of his Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever. Amen.