

Family Carol Service - The Greatest Gift -- Jesus the Light

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Date: 19 December 2021

Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[6 : 02] Thank you.

It should be 45 minutes or so. But before we go any further, we're going to hear from God's Word. And I'm going to ask Shing to come and read to us from Matthew chapter 1 and verses 18 to 25.

So Shing, thank you very much. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[7 : 52] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

And he called his name Jesus. Jesus. Well done.

Excellent. Come on out. Come on, Benji. Brilliant. Good, good, good. Well, boys and girls, it's great to see you. And I think, how many sleeps are there before Christmas?

How many sleeps? Do you know, Ollie? Six. Six. That's right. Excellent. Well, I think in our household there's going to be five, because on Christmas Eve, not a lot of sleep will be had. And that's just me. That's just me.

But good, boys and girls, good to see you. And we're going to do a little bit of thinking about what the Bible says. But before we do that, those of you, I think most of you know my name. My name is Phil. But actually, my real name is Philip.

- [9 : 11] But everyone calls me Phil. And my wife calls me Philip when I'm in trouble. She calls me Philip. But most people call me Phil. But we're going to play a game. And the game is, what does my name mean?
- Because all of our names have a meaning. So what does the name Philip mean? Here's a chance. Let me give you two options, right? Does my name mean he who loves horses?
- Someone who loves horses? Can you see that in the camera up there? Look at that lovely horse. I might be giving away the answer there. Is it he who loves horses? Or he who loves cake?
- He who loves cake. What do you think? Right, hands up. Hands up. Have a guess. Does Philip mean he who loves horses? Or he who loves cake. What do you think? Cake.
- Yeah. Well, I know what you're thinking. I look like a man who loves cake. But actually, the name Philip means he who loves horses. He who loves horses.
- [10 : 09] Let's throw another one. The name Paul. This is Paul. Paul, come stand up. Paul. What does the name Paul mean? Does the name Paul mean big or small?
- Does it mean big or small? Okay, have a go. James, what do you think? Small. Do you think it means small? Do you know what, James? You're absolutely right. Excellent. Anyway, good. So the name Phil means he who loves horses.
- And the name Paul means he who is small. But do you know what? Looking at us, our names don't actually match up with who we are. Because I don't particularly, I don't really love horses.
- I've never had the opportunity to be on a horse. And Paul is clearly not small. He's really tall, isn't he? So our names don't match up with who we are.
- But boys and girls, what about the name Jesus? Because remember in the story that we heard there, the angel came to Mary. And what did she say? What did she say? Can you remember? What did the angel say to Mary?
- [11 : 09] What did you think? Jesse? His name is Savior. Why is it? Yeah, that's right. Hey, Jesse, you're two steps ahead of me here. That's right. That is what his name means. But back up. She said to Mary, you're going to have a very, very, very, very, very, very, very special baby boy.
- And this boy is going to be so special. He's not going to have a human daddy. He's going to come about by the Holy Spirit. He'll be in his mummy's tummy by the Holy Spirit. And you're to give him, you write the name Jesus.
- Which means, what does it mean, Jesse? Savior. That means, what it means, God saves. God saves. And that name matches up perfectly with who Jesus is. Because Jesus is God.
- You read on in the Bible. You can do that maybe with your mums and dads at some point. You will see that Jesus only did the things that God could do on the earth as a man. And also, Jesus came, are you listening?
- Jesus came to save us, to rescue us. Now, here's another question. Put up your hands, because I know some of you will know the answer to this. Not yet. I'm not asking you. No, you're too sharp, No.
- [12 : 11] You're too sharp. What did Jesus come to save us from? Do you know? You answered that without opening your mouth. Yeah, he came to save us from sin.
- That's right. Now, what does sin mean? Well, sin stands for, shove off God, I'm in charge, no to your rules. That's really what sin basically means, to not treat God the way he deserves to be treated.

It's not just doing bad things. It's actually doing things against God. And that's what sin means. Sin means, let's do it together. Shove off God. You do the action, shove off God. I'm in charge, no to your rules.

That's what it means. And the Bible says we need to be saved, because there's nothing we can do about this. Look, picture this. Hopefully I don't drop this and we baptize you all. Hopefully not.

But this is what we should be. Look at this. This is water. It's clear. It's pure. There's nothing bad in it at all. And in this jug here, I've got yellow. And in this yellow, this represents sin.

[13 : 16] Okay? And this is our hearts. This is what we should be. Pleasing to God. Loving him all the time. Living for God. Saying, no God, you're in charge. And I want to love you and live for you.

But the Bible says when we're born, we actually are born like this. We have sinful hearts because of the first human beings in the Bible. They said, shove off God. I'm in charge.

No to your rules. And our hearts are born not as they should be. And the Bible says as we grow older, as you get older, you do this more and more. And more and more times that you say no to God.

And so actually, your heart is not what it should be. My heart's not what it should be. All the grown-ups here as well. It's a really humbling truth, this. But the Bible tells us the truth. That all of us, our hearts aren't what they should be.

And do you know what? There's nothing we can do to get the yellow out to get it back to what it was. I've got a big Paul. Come on, big Paul. Notice I said big. He's not small. Big Paul. Big Paul, you're a competent man.

[14 : 13] Good guy. I'm going to give you 10 seconds. Try and get the yellow out and get it back to what it was. Okay? Right. Okay, let's go. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Thank you. Hard lines, Paul. Boys and girls, this is a serious point. You cannot get the yellow out and we cannot get sin out of our hearts. So what we need is someone to come and rescue us and give us a clean heart.

A new heart that's pleasing to God and that will live for God and love God. And that's where Jesus comes in. This is why Jesus is so amazing. This is why we love him as a church.

Here's Jesus. He has lived the life that we should have, that we could never live. And it's perfect and pleasing to God the Father. And Jesus lived that perfect life.

And when you become a Christian, boys and girls, what happens is this. Wonderfully, Jesus gives us his perfect life and gives us a new heart that's forgiven.

[15 : 16] Our sin's been taken away, Benjamin. And we have a new heart that's able to please God and live for God. And do you know what happens? What about all our sin? What happened to our sin? Well, Jesus paid for it on the cross.

He died for our sin on the cross so that we could be saved. So, boys and girls, this is why all of us must be friends with Jesus. Whether we're your age or whether we're grown-ups.

Because if not, we're left with hearts like this that aren't pleasing to God. And our lives that aren't pleasing to God. And we actually face God as an enemy. But God has given us this wonderful, greatest gift in Jesus.

That if we trust in him, this happens. And we are renewed. We are forgiven. And we're made clean. And we're friends with God forever and ever and ever. That's why Jesus is the greatest gift ever.

So, maybe tonight when you go home, maybe you could look up your name. And you could say, what does my name mean? And then think to yourself, what does Jesus' name mean? It means God saves.

[16 : 19] And I must be friends with him. And all of us grown-ups as well. All of us must be friends with Jesus. Because he is the only one who can save us from sin. Well done.

Let me pray quickly. And then you can head back to your mum's dad's. Let me pray. Loving Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you love us, even though we don't deserve it. We thank you so much that you sent Jesus into the world on that very first Christmas to save us.

We thank you that he died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. So that we could be right with you if we trust in him. And more than that, we thank you that if we trust in Jesus, we get his perfect goodness.

We have his life. We thank you that when you look at Christians today, you don't see sinful messes. Rather, you see someone who is clothed in Jesus' perfect goodness.

So thank you for that wonderful gift. And I pray you'd help us to all take Jesus seriously this Christmas. And we pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Right, well done.

[17 : 23] Up you get. And you can head back to your mum's dad's. Well done. That was really good listening. And I'm really glad I didn't drop any jugs there because they were getting quite heavy. They were getting quite heavy.

And we are going to sing again our next carol on the screens. Oh, little town of Bethlehem. All about what we've been learning about, about Jesus and his birth. Oh, little town of Bethlehem.

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

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

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[18 : 45] Thank you.

Thank you.

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Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[21 : 17] Thank you.

Thank you.

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

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. tells the story of all of history really, and how the Lord sent Jesus as the best gift that we could ever have, and the joy that that brings to us if we know him as our saviour.

So this is Joy Has Dawned. Joy has dawned upon the world's promise from creation.

[23 : 33] God's salvation now unfathed, a hope for every nation.

God's promise from the Father, not what it seems of glory, and the gift of love of Jesus, born of Mary.

Sounds of undefeated sky Where the sons of angels Is the mighty Prince of Life Shadows in a stable Hands that set its star in place Shades the earth in darkness Bring us to the wisecrash Lord, the world's promise Shepherds go before them Gazing at the glory It's a firm and distant lands

From a silent story Older King is born today Him since God is with us Born his death, we'll make our way And by His blood, by His blood He'll bring us Son of Adam, Son of Man, give them as a ransom Reconciling God and Lamb, Christ the mighty champion What a Savior, what a grant, what a glorious ministry

What a faith in Bethlehem, now the Lord of history Joy has come Thank you very much to Matt and the quartet.

[27 : 03] Phil omitted that in his announcements. Phil does not mean a reader of Order of Services, I don't think. There we go. Good. Well, I'm just going to speak to the grown-ups for about seven minutes.

So this is the time to deploy the worksheets you were given on the way in. If you've got little kids, now's the time to give them a little coloring sheet or something like that. Just occupy them for a few moments. But let me just speak to those who are a bit older and have a few minutes thinking about the gift of Jesus Christ and particularly Jesus, the gift of life.

Now, I don't know if you enjoy watching the sun rise. And to be honest, I'm sure that the sun has really risen in Glasgow for about a month.

It's been quite a dreary few weeks, hasn't it? But I believe there is a sun up there somewhere and it does rise. And maybe we'll see that again come the spring. However, there are times we do see, even in Glasgow, the sun rising.

And as a father of a gaggle of young children, I'm often up before the dawn, more often than I'd like to be. But sometimes when I think about it and I look at it and I appreciate it, it is a wonderful thing to see the sun rising after a long, dark night.

[28 : 17] And as it rises, it casts its light, doesn't it? And it's that picture of light and the sun rising that we have in these words that were read for us by Duncan.

This is one of the many songs that you have at the start of Luke's gospel. It's a gospel full of song. And Duncan was reading one of those songs for us.

Songs about the child Jesus born to Mary. And the song that Duncan just read, let me just remind us of it. It said, Lord, now you are letting a servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation. That's what Phil was talking about with the children there. They've seen your salvation that you're prepared in the presence of all peoples.

A light for revelation to the nations and for glory to your people Israel. In another song that Luke wrote or recorded in these early chapters, another song finishes with these words.

[29 : 35] It talks about the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

See, Jesus coming into the world, which is what we remember every Christmas, his coming is pictured as the sunrise, bringing light into all the world.

But why? Why does this world, why do you and I need light? Well, the song tells us, you see, without the light that Jesus brings, the light that only he can bring, we sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

And the shadow of death, it looms large over us. As a culture, we tend to suppress it. We push it away, don't we? We distance ourselves from death as much as possible.

But it comes crashing into our consciousness, doesn't it, from time to time, and especially over these last two years. The constant death tolls on our new screens. You see, death casts its shadow, and none of us can escape it.

[30 : 56] It is the one certainty in life. And so what is our answer? In the face of death, what is our hope? What is your hope?

In the shadow of death. But it's not only hope in the face of death that's talked about here, but hope for life. The words from the song suggest that we need light, not only because of what is coming with death, but Jesus brings light because we live in darkness.

That's what the song mentioned. We sit in darkness. We stumble around, trying to find meaning and hope and purpose in life.

But perhaps for you, that seems like a futile quest. Is there really any meaning? Is there really a greater purpose to my life? Nothing really seems to solve that inconsolable longing that we all have buried deep in our hearts.

We strive after our goals, but they never seem to scratch that eternal itch. Rick Rubin, the famous music producer, said that it's hard to get really depressed until your dreams come true.

[32 : 15] Once the dreams we've worked so hard for become a reality, we find actually it's not the answer. The dreams we put so much hope in don't actually deliver.

What's the answer? Well, the passage we've read from the Bible tonight tell us that the answer to life has been given to us.

God sends Jesus as a light of revelation, we heard read. He sends revelation because we need the truth to be revealed to us. On our own, left to ourselves, we can't find it.

On our own, we cannot find the ultimate meaning to life. And in Jesus Christ, God himself stepped into the dark world that we live in.

He was the light of revelation. And in him, and in him alone, we see God. That's the claim every Christmas time.

[33 : 19] In Jesus, we see the playwright himself stepping onto the stage. We see the God of the universe coming down to our planet so that we can become his children.

In Jesus, we can find peace, eternal peace. He brings light to the darkness and hope through death. And that is wonderful news, isn't it?

It brings us hope and purpose. You see, we're not just random bits of DNA floating through the universe which is utterly meaningless. No, we matter.

And Jesus brings peace because later on, as you were to read through the rest of Luke's gospel which we've been reading from tonight, if you read on, you'll see that he would, in the end, endure the greatest suffering unimaginable in his death on the cross.

A death necessary because of the darkness of this world. Not just the darkness out there with other people, but actually the darkness that is found in every human heart, including mine and yours.

[34 : 29] He came to deal with that darkness. And Jesus is the one person in history who's lived a perfect life and he willingly took the punishment for us.

He took the punishment for every inch of darkness in mine and your hearts as we were thinking about earlier with Phil. But his death was not the end of the story.

Three days later, he would rise again. He faced death and he defeated it. He paid for our sins so that we wouldn't have to. And so he truly is the one who brings light and banishes darkness and death for all who will trust in him.

One of the carols we tend to sing at this time of year finishes with these words. And just listen to this. It says that the king of glory comes in peace and hope is ours again as life and love and joy increase and faith and freedom reign.

The child of all our Christmas songs, his cross and passion past will right the sum of human wrongs and bring us home at last.

[35 : 45] See, Jesus has come to right the sum of human wrongs. Think about all the wrongs through history of our own lives. He's come to put that all right and bring us home at last.

That is what the gift of Jesus Christ brings this Christmas to all who will accept peace and love and life and home.

He is the light of revelation for all nations, for people in all places at all time so that we can know with certainty the salvation that we all need.

And so, will you grasp hold of that gift this Christmas? or will you leave it under the tree unwrapped, unopened?

Well, let me pray and then we'll sing our final carol. Father God, we do thank you so much for this time of year, time of joy and light and festivities and joy and thank you that that points us to the very source of that joy and light and life.

[36 : 59] And so, we ask that you, O holy child of Bethlehem, would descend to us, cast out our sin, enter in, be born in us today.

So, come to us and abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, well done, kids, for listening so well. Before we sing our final carol, let me just mention a few things that are coming up that we'd love you to come along to. We have our Christmas Eve service here at 5 o'clock on Christmas Eve and then our Christmas morning service at 11 a.m.

and that's at our Bath Street location and you'd be very welcome to come and join us as we remember and celebrate Christmas. And then looking on to the new year, you'll see on your seat there's a little flyer which is inviting you to something we call the Life Course which is designed for folk to think a bit more about the Christian faith, to examine for themselves as some of the evidence for the life of Jesus to think about bigger questions.

Maybe this is all new to you or perhaps you'll come out to church after a few years. We'd love to invite you to come and find out a bit more. So these flyers detail the website. It starts in mid-January and we'd love you to come along.

[38 : 11] So do have a look at that and we'd love you to join us then. But let's close our time and our service by singing our final carol, Hark the Herald, Angels Sing. Let's sing together.

Hark the Herald, Angels Sing. Hark the Herald, Angels Sing.

Hark the Herald, Angels Sing. Hark the Herald, Angels Sing. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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