

Born that We No More May Die: What does this baby change?

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Preacher: Joe Hall

[0 : 00] Well, a really good evening to you, and a really warm welcome to our Carols by Candlelight service this evening. It's so good to welcome you. My name is Joe, if we've not met yet, I'm the minister here.

And if this is your first time here with us, maybe you dropped in, you saw something happening, you wanted to know what it was, maybe you got an invitation in the community around us.

Perhaps you were invited here by somebody tonight. If that's you, we want to welcome you especially warmly here. We're delighted that people can come to celebrate with us and be with us as we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're able to, we invite you to stay for hot drinks and snacks after our service. They'll be served from the hatch there at the back and the table down at the front. And there's another table over at the side.

So feel free to disperse, find a table that's free, and treat yourself to a hot drink and a snack. And it'd be great, especially if you've not been in before, to get a chance to speak with you, get to know you, and for you to get to know us as well.

[1 : 14] I'm going to read some words to begin our service that come from a book written long before Jesus was ever born, but that speak of the wonderful good news that he is for us as we begin.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This is the one who we celebrate the light of the world, who came to bring his light into our lives in his everlasting and wonderful rule. So let's stand and sing his praise as we sing our first carol, O Come All Ye Faithful.

Please do stand, if you're able, as we sing these words together. Thank you. Oh Come All Ye Joy.

[2 : 51] But how many of advances in your life have been wyddo■■■? Yes, Lord, King of desc,. And this is the one who gives the light of the world to■■p■■■■■■■.

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ of all.

Son of God, Christ of all, glory of God come for everything.

Where we go, because it was created, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ of all.

Faith, words of angels, faith in exaltation, save all these citizens of heaven.

[4 : 33] Glory to God, glory of God, glory of God come for everything. O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ of all.

Glory to God, glory of God, glory of God, glory of God, glory of God. God, glory of God, glory of God, glory of God, glory of God.

He is glory. Word of the Father, Thou in flesh of healing.

O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him.

O come let us adore Him. Do you have a seat? We're going to take a chance to come to God in prayer together.

[6 : 01] So let's pray together now. God our Father, we thank you this evening for this opportunity that we have to come together and to celebrate and to reflect on the precious gift of your Son,

Jesus Christ.

We thank you for bringing us together to sing and read and hear of the story of His birth. And we praise you for who He is.

God of God, light of light, very God, begotten, not created. But come down from heaven.

Become a man. We thank you that we can know you because He came. We thank you, Father, for the reminder at what can be a difficult time of year for many of us, that you have not left us.

For Jesus came to be God with us. We thank you that He is able to sympathize with us in our suffering, help us when we are tempted, and forgive all our sins.

[7 : 18] all because He came from heaven to live and die and rise again. Father, we thank you most of all because Jesus is a rescuer for us.

We thank you that He was born to bring us back to you and give us peace with you. We confess, our Father, how much we need that peace.

how much we need this gift of Jesus Christ. And we thank you that we can now come near to you without shame or guilt or fear because of Him.

And so we pray, be with us now and give us joy to celebrate His coming. Help our unbelief, we pray, and give us peace.

For we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to hear at the beginning, now of the Christmas story from the Bible.

[8 : 19] Rob is going to come to read to us from Luke's Gospel, after which we will sing O Little Town of Bethlehem. So please do stand to sing after the reading has been read. Thanks, Rob.

The first reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 to 38. The birth of Jesus foretold.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you.

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary.

[9 : 37] You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great, and we will be called the Son of the Most High.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom will never end.

How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin? The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age.

And she, who was said to be unable to conceive, is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered.

[10 : 49] May your word to me be fulfilled. Then the angel left her. Amen. This is the word of God. The angel's son of Bethlehem, until we see divine, above the earth, the angel's son of Bethlehem, until we see divine, above the earth, above thy deep and free mercy, the silent stars of God.

Yet in the dark's green shine, the everlasting light, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in need to die.

O Christ is born of Mary, and the earth all above.

and the God, and the King The organisms of Bethlehem, are empty, and bar and earth all above. Greatest sin to God the King, and peace to all the earth. How silently, how silently, the wondrous faith is here.

[12 : 51] To God invites in human hearts the blessings of His hand. No ear may hear His calling, but in His word of sin.

Where He told, till His defense will, the King Christ has been saved.

For He's unawful and evil, He said to us, we pray. As God's our sin and enter in, He bore me not today.

We hear that Christmas angels, the great that I may stand. O come to us, come high with us, our Lord, we can be there.

Please do take a seat. We're now going to hear the second part of the Christmas story from the Bible. Margaret's going to come to read to us.

[14 : 16] And once again, we'll stand to sing afterwards, O come, O come, Emmanuel. Luke chapter 1, verses 39 to 55.

Mary visits Elizabeth. At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.

But why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy.

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her. And Mary said, My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

[15 : 33] From now on, all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[17 : 27] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. And give them victory, O Lord, and pray.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Thou days, bring love and cheer
Our spirits by Thine adventeer
Dispersed the blue count of night
And threats of shadows to fight
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel
O come, Thou day of heaven's love
And open wide our heavy hope
May take the way that leads on time
And forth the path to misery

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel
Let's all pray together.

[20 : 17] Our Father in heaven, we come to worship and thank you
For giving us your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
Lord, we thank you so much that you were willing to give
The greatest gift that has been or could ever be given
That you gave us your one and only Son
Whom you loved from all eternity
To be our Saviour
A Saviour for sinners like us
Lord, we thank you that You were willing to come
To be born in a humble condition
To be helpless
To grow
And to be fully and truly human
And to experience all of the difficulties
And the hardships
And the pains of this world
Lord, we thank you that You were willing even to
Face an unjust trial
Unjust and unfair accusations of wrongdoing
To be wrongly condemned
And even to be sentenced to death
Lord, we thank you that you were willing
To carry the sins of all your people
And we thank you too, Lord
For your glorious resurrection from the dead

We thank you that Now you live in the power of an endless life
We thank you that It secures our hope,
Lord
That we can put our hope in you
For here and now
And as we face even our own deaths
And beyond,
Lord
Lord, we pray that you would give us
The joy that is announced
At Christmas
And that hope that is announced
With the coming of Jesus
The coming of a saviour into the world
We pray, Lord
That you would come and comfort us now
As we face difficulties and sadnesses
Of different kinds
We pray for those who suffer
Illness, Lord
Perhaps physical
Or illness even of the mind
And a sadness and difficulties
Of one kind or another
Father, we pray for those who suffer
Because of broken relationships
Or difficulties in families
And estrangement
Lord, we pray for those who suffer bereavement
And the sad loss of a loved one
That was with them
And now has been taken away
And still they grieve

And Lord, we pray that you would come
And comfort people like that
Each one of us,
Lord
Lord, we pray as well tonight
For the nations of the world
And we especially commit to you places
Where there is trouble and strife and suffering
We pray for the nation of Ukraine
So ravaged by war
And pray that you would remember
Those who suffer there
We ask that you would hold back
And

restrain evil That you would bring peace Where there is war That you would comfort and encourage And even in these terrible events, Lord That somehow you would change them To work together for good That even against the backdrop of human evil The message of the Lord Jesus And his power to save from sin Would be heard all the more Lord, we thank you for our time here And pray that you would meet with us That we would learn about Jesus And that we would know about him And also that we would know him ourselves That we would come to trust in him To believe in him and follow him And we ask that we would know what it is To be saved by him And we pray these things in his name Amen Please do sound as we sing How God 206 John Can N legize your name If we act as we include Let us find our rest in thee.

Is thou strength and consolation? Hope of all the earth of art.

[24 : 21] Dear desire of every nation. Joy of every holy heart.

Born thy people to deliver. Born a child and yet again.
Born to live in us forever. Now thy gracious kingdom came.
By thy glory eternal spirit. Who in all our hearts adore.
By thy hope of vision there. Bring us to thy glorious home.

[25 : 24] Do you have a seat? We're going to hear the next section of the Christmas story now. Read to us by Rhiannon from the Bible. Amen. This reading is taken from Matthew chapter 1 starting at verse 18.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace. He had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said.

Joseph son of David do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. Because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. Because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And they will call him Emmanuel.

[26 : 36] Which means God with us. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him. And took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son.

And he gave him the name Jesus. Amen. Wonderful. Thank you Rhiannon.

And thank you all of you who have read for us the Christmas story. Those who have led us in singing as well. And thank you all again for coming.

It really is wonderful to get to gather like this as a church family. But also with our friends and our families and neighbors and people from the community as well. To celebrate this really special time for us as Christians.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. And as I say especially if this is your first time with us. Just how delighted we are about that.

[27 : 36] It really is wonderful that you are here. And since it is now only seven sleeps to go. I feel like I can finally say happy Christmas.

I hope that's not too early. And wish you a really wonderful, wonderful day when it comes. It's not an easy end I guess to the year.

Between gas bills, the cost of living Christmas looks a wee bit different. Perhaps for a lot of us. Perhaps for you this year. And so I want to take a bit of time this evening to reflect on this question. What gives you hope this Christmas? I read an article this week where the writers put this question to different well-known figures.

The answers were as wide-ranging as you might imagine. What gives you hope this Christmas? The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said that it was the character of his fellow Ukrainians over the past year that gives him hope.

[28 : 44] This nation delights and inspires me, he says, and gives me confidence. Professor Mary Beard said that it was her three preschool grandchildren.

Just watching them, she said, gives me hope and confidence in the future. And our own Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said what gives him hope is the people who support him.

So no matter how big the challenge is, he said, I'm pretty confident. Personally, I thought confident was a bold choice of words for our third Prime Minister this year.

But I wonder what it is that gives you confidence at the end of this year, going into a new year.

Perhaps something that those guys shared, perhaps something totally different.

Or perhaps you're really not sure when you think about it, what it is that gives you hope. There was one response in this article that was really actually quite left field. It was from the journalist Peter Hitchens.

[29 : 48] If you've never heard of him, perhaps you've heard of his late brother Christopher Hitchens, the well-known atheist writer. But Peter Hitchens' response was this.

What gives you hope? These words, he said, about the passing of this world that are traditionally read on Christmas Day. In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens of the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you remain. They will all well out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe. Like a garment, they will be changed. But you remain the same.

And your years will never end. Quite different to the others, isn't it? Imagine Christmas in the Hitchens household would have been interesting some years.

Because Peter Hitchens says his hope is in something, or rather someone, who is above and beyond the kind of hopes and fears that grip our hearts.

[30 : 51] Someone who instead holds our whole world in his hands. Now, perhaps you're thinking, now that just sounds a bit too woolly for me.

How can you hope in something that you can't see? I mean, God maybe is okay for when things are going really well. But really, is God that good when real life kicks in?

Where is God when horrific and seemingly endless wars are being fought in this world? Where is God when forces way outside our control push tens of thousands of people into the terrible choice between food or fuel?

Or where is God when we get the news that we never want to hear? We, our friends, our families get ill and perhaps don't get better.

In a world like that, what hope do we have? And why, of all things, would we find hope in God? Well, this year, nearly two and a half billion people in this world will put their hope in God as we celebrate the coming of his son Jesus into our world.

[32 : 07] Because this baby, this birth, is the reason why any of us can have hope in God. The birth of Jesus is what changes everything for us and for our world.

And so this evening, as we think about that question, what gives you hope? I want to just get us to think briefly about that passage that Rhiannon read for us from Matthew's Gospel, where we see three reasons that God gives us for hope this Christmas.

To hope in him, whoever we are today. And the first reason for hope is that God is personally involved in our world.

I wonder if you noticed that in our readings this evening. The story starts in a really weird way, doesn't it? It's the perfect couple planning the fairy tale wedding.

Mary is marrying Joseph, perhaps a guy from the village, perhaps a family friend. Perhaps he went one day to pick up something from his workshop and the sparks started flying.

[33 : 14] We're not told how they got together. But it's clear by now that they are committed.

Because they're not only engaged, they are betrothed. What's the difference? Well, today getting engaged is kind of a guess, just an agreement between a couple.

It can really easily be broken. But back then, getting betrothed was basically as good as getting married. To break it off, you actually had to get a divorce. So this is not just committed, okay?

This is M&S; committed. They have signed the papers. And they've made their vows. And there's only one thing left to do to finalize the marriage.

But it's the one thing that they haven't yet done. And so imagine the shock when Mary finds that she is pregnant. Put yourself, if you can, in Joseph's shoes.

The woman he's promised to marry is suddenly expecting a baby. He knows that he's not the dad. And naturally, he'd be thinking the worst.

[34 : 23] Add to that the fact that back then, it would be a huge disgrace for both of them to be found with a baby out of wedlock. And so we read really sadly that while he was a really devoted guy, Joseph no longer wanted to go through with the wedding.

Picture those late night conversations with her father. Look, I don't want to put your daughter to shame. But what do you expect me to do? You know, I'm a fair guy, but I can't possibly marry her now.

Here is proof, if any of us need it, this evening, that people back then were not any more easily convinced than we are today by the idea that a woman could miraculously get pregnant out with the normal methods.

Perhaps like you, Joseph had no time for a virgin birth. But because he was a decent guy, we read Joseph decided to divorce her quietly.

And if we just pause there, we have to recognize, don't we, that in that situation, if that was any of us, that would surely be the best possible outcome of this, wouldn't it?

[35 : 37] In fact, if we're honest, who of us would be that gracious with a fiancé who we were sure had been unfaithful to us and had the bump to prove it?

Who wouldn't, in fact, be angry about that or want some kind of revenge? But not Joseph. Joseph wants none of that. He's as good as they come.

And yet, even then, he still can't bring himself to go through with the wedding. Which really makes what happens next quite incredible. Because what would it take for you now to marry Mary?

Surely nothing short of a miracle. Well, watch this space. Joseph shuts his eyes after the most stressful day of his life and has a dream as he sleeps.

And in that dream, an angel comes and tells him this. Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[36 : 45] Now, if we're feeling like, okay, virgin conception, but now an angel. Okay, this is getting too far to take really seriously. Well, surely the proof that this really did happen is that Joseph actually does what the angel says.

At the very opposite of what he had planned in his own head to do. He had planned to divorce her. He didn't go through with the divorce.

Incredibly, instead, he took Mary home to be his wife. Why? Why? Why? Why would he do it?

A complete about turn and marry this girl, unless he himself was utterly convinced that this was no human mess, but a miracle from God.

That the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. That God was telling him to marry this woman he was carrying his son. Strange as it seems, the most reasonable explanation for this turn of events is actually the explanation given in the Bible, that God was personally involved in this pregnancy and in this relationship.

[38 : 05] As hard as that might be for us to believe, surely it's even harder to imagine how Joseph could have gone through with that without some kind of divine intervention. See, the truth at the heart of the Christmas story is that God is personally involved in our world, carrying out his plans, his purposes.

That he personally sent his son to be carried in Mary's womb. That he personally hitched Mary and Joseph together, despite the huge pressure on them to cancel the wedding.

That he is still personally involved in this, our world. In our very lives, still bringing about his good purposes, even through the really messy and really painful situations that we go through.

This couple's big day wasn't the fairy tale wedding that they dreamed of. The birth wasn't a dream in human terms, it was more of a nightmare.

But in those difficult circumstances, God was still working, even in the darkest, seemingly most hopeless times. I don't know what's going on in your life right now.

[39 : 27] I don't know what this past year has held for you. And none of us know, in fact, what this coming year will hold. But wouldn't it give you hope to know that in every situation in this world, in every circumstance of your life, God himself was personally involved to bring about his wonderful plans for both you and for the world around us.

Well, that is the promise Jesus gives us when we rest our hope in him. But the second reason for hope takes us further on than that, okay, that God is not only involved, but that he personally came into our world.

Now, I don't know if any of you have a nickname. Perhaps we'll get to learn them after the service over hot squash. If you do have a nickname, I hope it's one that you like.

We have a little cockapoo, a little dog at home. And he has a few nicknames, and he doesn't get a choice. So he gets called Doggo or Duddles.

And increasingly, actually, Dido, as our one-year-old, likes to call him as he figures out how to say his name. Nicknames can be funny, can't they? They can be mean.

[40 : 52] But the best nicknames are ones that are given to us by people who love us and tell us something special about us. And Jesus got a nickname like that, given by someone who loved him, to tell us something really special about him.

But the surprise is that it was actually given to him about 700 years before he was born. Matthew tells us that the angel's message to Joseph fulfilled what the Lord said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means God with us. Now, obviously, they called the baby Jesus.

That was what God told them to do. But a long time before, God promised a son who would be known as Immanuel or God with us. And Matthew wants us to know that promise came true on the night when Jesus came.

God gave Jesus a nickname that tells us something incredibly special about him. That this one promised so long ago is not only God with us in name, but God with us in nature.

[42 : 06] Some of you perhaps have asked for books for Christmas. I always get one or two. I begin reading them on Boxing Day and then run out of time, and they sit on the shelf half-read until the following year.

Well, I thought in our first point we could have compared God to an author of a book. He was writing the script. He was directing the plot, all to his desired ending.

Well, in our second point, we could think that God, the author of history, he wrote himself into the story as a character in his own world.

So that this God, who is personally involved in our world, himself came down into our world. That is the claim at the heart of Christmas that Jesus is nothing less than God with us.

And that really does change everything for us. We thought a wee bit before about how costly it would have been for Joseph to take on Mary, a pregnant woman, as his wife.

[43 : 12] Well, then just imagine how costly it was for God, the creator, the sustainer and lord of everything, to take on the weakness of human nature, to be born a helpless baby in a hostile world.

Amazingly, the Bible tells us he didn't think twice about it. Here's how another writer, Paul, puts it later in the Bible. That though he was in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Perhaps you're here tonight and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, or maybe you're not sure at all.

Let me ask you, if God chose to come down and live a life like yours, with all the pressures and the pains that you face, but lived it perfectly, because none of us have lived.

Well, wouldn't that change the way that you thought about life and the universe and everything and God? Wouldn't that give you the hope that you are known more fully than you could ever imagine?

[44 : 34] That you are fundamentally understood by the one who created you. The hope that God cares enough for you that he would let go of his eternal glory and become like you in order to be with you personally.

Perhaps you imagine God, if he's out there anywhere, as a God way out there who just doesn't care. But Christmas tells us that that God doesn't exist. Because the real God who is there isn't a distant deity with his head up in the clouds.

The real God came down to be with us. And amazingly, he did it by being born as a baby who grew up to be a man. Whose name was Jesus, with the nickname Emmanuel.

Because he was, in fact, God with us. So that wonderful hope that you imagined, well, that hope can really be yours if you put your hope in Jesus Christ, God with us.

There are four accounts of his life in the Bible. Why not take some time over the break to read one of them? Perhaps if somebody invited you along today, you could ask them to meet up with you, to talk about what you've read.

[45 : 59] I'm sure that they would say yes. Or come back along to be with us here at church. Or speak to me after the service. I'd love to speak more with you about this wonderful hope.

And if you don't have a Bible and you'd like to read one, please do take one. We would love you to have one of ours. Because the life of Jesus shows us what God is really like.

He is God with us. And he gives us great, great hope in this world. And that brings us to the very final reason God gives us to hope this evening.

And it's this, that God personally came so that he could personally save us. Because it would be fair for us to say at this point, you know, that's great.

That's great for you. Okay. That God is involved in our world. It's great he came to be with us. But a God so powerful and so close. Well, he isn't really much good, is he?

[47 : 00] If he can't save me, rescue me from the things that really threaten me. Okay. The big things like uncertainty. The unknown.

Or suffering. Pain. Death. Even from myself. From my own past failures. From the parts of me that I just know are not right.

If God can't save me from those things, well, that's all well and good. But Jesus doesn't really give me much hope at all, does he? He's good to know. But if my life and my death go on the same way with or without him, then what does his birth really change?

Well, this is where his name is all important. The name Jesus. I have no idea where Jesus ranked on the list of baby names in the first century.

I did have a look at the UK list today. It is actually 4,789th out of 4,789.

[48 : 06] It is bottom of the list of baby names. And no doubt Mary and Joseph would have had ideas of their own. But however they felt about it, this baby needed to be called Jesus because Jesus was not just a name.

It was a job description. The angel said you were to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

The name Jesus means the Lord saves. And that is exactly what he came to do. This was not God's big fact-finding mission.

It was his rescue mission. It was not just God coming to know us personally, but to save us permanently. Because all those big, huge things that threaten us, well, they all ultimately come down to that one little word.

Sin. We thought earlier, didn't we, about being in Joseph's shoes. How we might have responded to the news about the pregnancy.

[49 : 12] Now Joseph's response is called righteous because his grace towards somebody who he was sure had wronged him, showed a goodness in him that doesn't really come naturally to us, does it?

What does come naturally to us? A situation like that, pointing out blame, lashing out harsh words, holding grudges, seeking revenge.

We struggle to forgive, don't we? And we certainly don't go out of our way to do good to those who wrong us. In fact, our instinct throughout life is to put ourselves first and others last.

And that is what the Bible calls sin. We see it on our screens, in the news. We see it in the lives of others. If we're honest, we see it in ourselves.

I certainly see it in me. I don't know about ye. But the big problem with our sin is this, that if we put ourselves first and others last, then at the very bottom is God.

[50 : 19] He left to ourselves. We ignore his involvement in our world. We ignore his presence in our lives. And it is that separation from God that has brought about all the uncertainty, pain, loss, heartbreak in our world, even death itself, the ultimate penalty.

So the big problem with our world is the big problem with each of us. It is sin, our sin. So what wonderful news, then, that this baby came to save us from our sin.

That he was willing to put himself last so he could put us first. That he not only experienced our sufferings in life, but also carried away the guilt and the sin of everyone who would put their trust in him to his death on the cross.

In a minute, we're going to sing another carol with these well-known words.

As 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. Hark, the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.

[52 : 04] And it is that hope, that great hope of forgiveness and eternal life that God holds out to ye this evening. So that simply by taking hold of this baby, Jesus by faith, resting your hope in him, you will be saved forever from your sins.

And that hope can be yours tonight, whoever you are, wherever you come from. As I say, if you are here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, let me say again how glad we are that you've

chosen to be here with us.

And I really do hope that you have a wonderful, wonderful Christmas. And that you can go into the next year full of this hope that God gives.

So if you want to talk more about that, please do come and find me at the end. I would love that.

Anyone who welcomed you tonight, maybe somebody who invited you along.

Perhaps you just need to go away and have some time to think about it. To read in the Bible for yourself about Jesus. But the one thing please not to do is forget about it.

[53 : 14] C.S. Lewis, the author, famously said, If Christianity is false, it is of no importance. If it is true, it is of infinite importance.

The one thing it cannot be is moderately important. So please do not leave this great gift from God at the door when you go.

Take Jesus with you. Get to know him. Rest your hope in him. God with us. Who came to us to die for us.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Let me thank you once again for coming tonight. We are going to stand and we are going to sing those wonderful words from that hymn together.

Hark! The herald angels sing in response to what we have heard. Let me invite you to stand if you are able and raise your voices as we sing. Thank you. Thank you.

[54 : 20] 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.

[56 : 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. 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.

p.m. You're most welcome to join us then to celebrate again the coming of the Lord Jesus. New Year's Day, likewise, is a Sunday. We'll be back here at 11 and 6 once again. And one thing to take with you tonight is this flyer, if you would, about Christianity Explored. Now, this is a course for you. If you have come tonight, you want to know more about Jesus, about the Christian faith, what it is we believe. This is a chance for you to learn more and to have a chance to talk about it with other Christians here in the church, with others who want to learn more about Jesus along with you. So it's a seven-week course. It will run from the last week of January. So if you're interested, please do take a flyer with you. There's also a wee booklet with some information. And if you'd like to, please do get in touch with us by email, on social media, and let us know that you're interested. And it would be great to organize that with you and invite you along. If you want to find out more, we do send out a weekly email. So please leave your email address if you'd like to with anyone who welcomed you here today. And it would be great to be in touch with you into the new year. We're going to stand once more to sing our final hymn this evening. And it is joy to the world. So let us sing, Al, with great joy as I cough and splutter. You can sing. Okay, I will cough.

Please do stand as we sing together. Thank you.

[59 : 24] Let earth be keep our day, let every heart be fair and blue.

Now let the nature sing, now let the nature sing, now let the heaven and nature sing. Glory to the earth, my Savior, my heaven and song defies, for fields and love, for fields and things, we keep our sound in love, we keep our sound in love, we keep, we keep our sound in love.

Amen. God ■■■■ed by the Lord, my highest bands, It will dwell with ■■■■ationalbahn Spinning!

Amen. Everyone is given the same, Father, my Anybody come, from Pardless ■■■■■■■■cha, we keep our sauditas bowing through! our Emmanuel, your ■■■'srine, And the waters of his love, and the waters of his love, and the waters of his love.

So now may the God of hope fill ye with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit ye may abound in hope. Amen.

[61 : 53] Please take a seat. Please do, as I say, stay if you can for hot drinks and snacks. It would be great to get to know you better. Thank you all once again for coming to be with us.