

Christmas Carol Service

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Date: 12 December 2021

Preacher: Joe Hall

[0 : 01] Well, good evening everyone. It's a delight to be able to welcome you to our Christmas carol service here at Bon Accord. So long since we've been able to come together in this way to celebrate and sing and pray about the coming and birth of the Lord Jesus. My name's Joe. I'm the minister here. And if we've not had a chance to meet, it's lovely to see you. If this is your first time along, it's great that you can be here. And we really hope that you enjoy this time and we pray it would be a great blessing to you. There are a couple of things to mention before we begin. The first is that in churches, we're still being asked to keep face coverings on as we're seated. So unless you're exempt, please do follow that guidance. But secondly, and more encouragingly, straight after our service, there'll be hot drinks and mince pies served from the back there and from the table at the front. And at that point, do feel free to move freely around the room, remove your face coverings and enjoy a hot drink and a snack. It'll be lovely to see you properly and to get to meet you. Finally, if you have any questions about what goes on here, any questions about anything that you hear this evening, please do feel free to come and speak to me after the service. There are also folk who welcomed you in by the door who will be able to help you. So please don't hesitate if there's anything that troubles you or anything that you wonder about to come and ask. We'd be delighted to chat with you. Well, during our service, we're going to have some verses read to us that help to tell the Christmas story. And the first of these verses comes from the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 9. And Hannah is going to come and read to us. And after Hannah has read to us, please do stand for our opening carol,

O come, all ye faithful. Hope you enjoy the service. The people who walked in darkness have seen great light, and those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 2. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9, verse 6.

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.

Come and behold him, Lord the King of angels. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him.

Now for more on to his run. O come, let us salted him, not in sin. Let us ska but pave her place.

[4 : 09] And follow God the place. Please note, O come, let us baptize him, and fulfill our hearts, Christ above him.

He got it, not created. O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.

O come, let us adore Him. Christ the Lord. In choirs of angels, sing in exultation.

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above. Glory to God in the highest.

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

[5 : 25] Christ the Lord. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee. Born His happy morning.

Jesus, to Thee be glory gave. Word of the Father.

Now in flesh appearing. O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.

O come, let us adore Him. In Christ the Lord. Do you take a seat?

And I'm going to lead us in a short prayer together. Let's pray. God, our Father, we thank You this evening for this opportunity to celebrate and to reflect on the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

[6 : 40] We thank You, our God, for bringing us together to sing and read and hear the story of His birth. We look back with sadness on the difficult years that are behind us, full of loss and loneliness, fear and worry, separation and sickness.

We thank You, our Father, for the reminder at Christmas that You have not left us, for You gave Jesus to be God with us.

We thank You that He knows us perfectly, that He sympathizes with us in our suffering, that He came from heaven to live and die and rise again.

We thank You for the hope that Christmas gives us. And Father, we thank You most of all because Jesus is a rescuer for us. We thank You that He was born to save us from our sins, to bring us back to You, to give us peace with You.

We confess how much we need Your peace. We thank You that we can now come near to You without shame or guilt or fear because of Jesus.

[7 : 55] And so we pray, be with us now, we ask. Give us joy to celebrate His coming. Help our unbelief and give us peace.

For all these things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I have already got it wrong this evening because Angela is coming to deliver our second verse to us just now.

Thank you, Angela. Thank you, Angela. Thank you, Angela.

Thank you, Angela.

Want toenab your voice in Jesus? 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.

[9 : 36] But the angels said to her, Do not be afraid. Mary, 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 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 given to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive in her sixth month.

For no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May your word to me be fulfilled. Then the angel left her.

[10 : 46] Thanks, Jaden. We are going to stand and sing once again another carol that reminds us of the joy of Jesus coming to a little town of Bethlehem.

And afterwards, we'll hear our third verse from Lily. So do stand and let's sing together. Amen. Amen. Episode 1 O little town of Bethlehem, while still we see Thee lie, above our deep and repressing, the silent stars collide.

Yet in the dark sea shined, the everlasting light, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in the delight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all along, and what asleep the angels meet, their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars to heaven, proclaim the holy earth, and praises sing to God, their King, and peace to all the earth.

[12 : 41] But silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is here. So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His hand.

No ear may hear His coming, but in this world I'll sing. Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters day.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray, cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.

We hear the praise-less angels, their great-class dining stand. O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

And there will come in among us, which means God with us. Amen. Wonderful.

[14 : 27] Well, I'm going to invite now one of our elders, Stephen, to come and lead us in another prayer, thinking of our needs and the needs of our world.

And after that, we will stand to sing our third carol, O come, O come, Emmanuel, which expresses our great hope in the coming again of Jesus Christ.

Thanks, Steve. Thank you. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we praise you as the one true and living God who created the world and everything in it and who sees everything, who knows everything and for whom nothing is impossible.

We thank you again for this opportunity to meet together this evening to remember and celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that we can come to you in prayer in Jesus' name at any time, in any place, knowing that you will hear us and answer our prayers according to your love and faithfulness and wisdom.

[15 : 53] We pray just now for those for whom this time of year can be a time of particular sadness or loneliness, that you would comfort and sustain them and help us to support one another.

We pray for those experiencing ill health or frailty or worries about their health, that you would grant them good health, strength and healing.

We pray for those awaiting the birth of children, that all would go well and according to your plan. We thank you for our doctors and nurses, other medical staff, other emergency services and their skill, their hard work and their dedication.

And we ask that you would help them to be able to cope with the extra pressure and demands that are placed upon them at this time of year. Grant wisdom to our governments and to all those in authority that they would act with integrity and know how to respond to the difficult situations they have to face.

Help them to make the right decisions. We thank you also for the peace and stability which we enjoy in this country. And we pray for the parts of the world where there is conflict and suffering on a scale which is beyond our experience for Afghanistan and for other places.

[17 : 22] And we ask that you would bring peace to these places. Put an end to oppression and persecution. And give these places rulers who will serve their people instead of just serving themselves.

We acknowledge that we do not have the answers and often do not know what to pray for. But we know that you know all things and we ask that your will will be done. All these things we ask now in Jesus' name.

Amen. Jesus' name is Jesus. Not the Lord. I thank you. And you too. I thank you. Come on. Satsang with Mooji O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom-captain Israel, and mourns in glory exiled here, until the sun on God appear.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O come, O Lord of mine, here to light thy time, on Sinai's light, in ancient times did give the Lord, in blood and majesty and all.

[19 : 35] Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O Lord of mine, here to light thy time, thy hope from Satan's tyranny.

From death, O come, O my people, say, and give them victory, O oil and rain.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O day-spring, come and cheer, O beacon, O heaven, O Jerusalem, wherein us who have lived in the unlimitedionen Gonna hip, O Jesus.

[20 : 41] Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Baltimore, in Christian socket. O holy music, O Lord, work from the world, O secretly ode the Lord, dear to ■■■ and Dr. Thomas has done the■■■■ as well as its Integrand ■■■■ tienesdeus anything to host. O Imagine it's Library, O Lord of mine, here to the toogle, someone Cubase the ProREY of another Daily Sword ■■■ura upon the National Boyle.

like shadows through to blind. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, let me a vivid love and open wide our heavenly door.

Make safe the way that leads on high and close the path to misery.

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

[21 : 51] Be a vivid love, O Israel. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news, O Israel, shall come to you, O Israel.

O Israel, shall come to you, O Israel. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Luke chapter 2 verse 10 to 11.

Wonderful, thank you Luke. And now let me invite GD to come and bring us our second reading from the Christmas story this evening.

Thanks GD. In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

[23 : 15] This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David.

Because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you.

[24 : 25] He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Wonderful. Thank you, GD.

[25 : 47] Well, it's wonderful to be together again at Christmastime, isn't it? This time last year, of course, we couldn't have done this. We couldn't have held a service like this.

So let me say again how thrilled I am that we can be here this evening. And again, especially if this is your first time here with us, perhaps a friend invited you or maybe you just saw something happening and thought you would pop in.

It's great that you're here. Thank you for choosing to be with us this evening. Because even though we can celebrate Christmas together this year, we know, don't we, that the hard stuff is still not sorted yet.

The big news has not stopped breaking. I don't know about you, but I for one find it hard not to be overwhelmed at times by what is going on in our world right now.

Which big news story, I wonder, can you not help following? It could be the devastating story of what's happening in Afghanistan, or the sad stories of refugees crossing the channel, or the fearful story, perhaps, of the Omicron variant, or the heartbreaking story of we six-year-old Arthur.

[27 : 12] We live in a big news world, and if we're honest, not much of it is good news. The constant stream of news stories seems to only flow in one direction, downhill.

But this evening, I want to suggest to you that none of the bad news stories in our world are the biggest story. None of them grab the front page headline.

Because tonight, I want to spend a bit of time with you looking at that passage that Judy read to us, because there we see God's great headline in a big news world.

Luke, who wrote this bio of the life of Jesus, says at the beginning, he set out to write an orderly account of what happened, so that we could be certain of what we had been told.

Luke's gospel is what we would call today a piece of investigative journalism. And I don't know if you noticed, but it begins with breaking news.

[28 : 16] Caesar calls a census, and the world is turned upside down. Millions of families suddenly upend their lives because one man gives the word. The world has changed so much, and yet this is so familiar.

And yet, that's not the story that makes the headline. Because further down, a bigger, better news story is about to break.

As the angel says, good news, that will cause great joy for all the people. See, at Christmas, we are reminded that at the top of the page, in great, big, bold letters, God has printed a good news story over the whole history of our world.

And that headline, that good news story is this, a rescuer has been born. He was Christ the Lord. That was God's headline, the day that Jesus was born.

And it has been good news every day since. Because this baby was born to change our lives and change our world. And so tonight, I briefly want us to see three reasons why the message of Christmas is such good news for us, whoever we are.

[29 : 33] And the first is that we see in the Christmas story who is really in control. Now, who's the king in this story? Okay, the obvious answer perhaps is Caesar.

Caesar Augustus, if you don't know, was probably the most powerful man on earth. At this time. Okay, to put it this way, you could visit the pyramids in Egypt and the Parthenon in Greece and the Costa Brava in Spain and never have left his empire.

So when it says that this guy, Caesar Augustus, issued a decree that a census should be taken of the whole Roman world, we're talking about tens of millions of people.

Now, remember back, if you can, to the old nativity plays, the drafty school hall, kids in tea towels, perhaps you were once one of them. Mary and Joseph walk many miles, turn up in Bethlehem to find the inns are all full.

But now imagine that scene being played out in every city and town and village across three continents. It sounds crazy, but that's what happened. Luke is clear that this was the first census that took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

[30 : 52] And Luke's got his facts straight. Other sources from the time back up what he's telling us here. At 2021 years ago, this was the big thing that was happening.

This was the big news. This is history. So in one sense, then, Jesus' family, we're a family of nobodies from the fringes of the empire coming just with everyone else to be counted that night.

But in another sense, of course, this family was standing front and center of the world stage. Because who's really writing this story?

Who's really in control? Who's really king? Well, we see it's not Caesar. Rather, it is God. Luke zooms right out to show us the world and its rulers.

And then he zooms in to a little town. And then further into one little family and further in, verse seven, to one tiny boy.

[31 : 57] Because while they were there, the time came for the baby to be born. And Mary gave birth to her firstborn, and her son, she wrapped him in cloths and placed him in the manger because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke shows us a picture of the earth from space and then a close-up of this newborn baby's sleeping face. Because he wants us to see that the birth of this baby boy is right at the heart of world history because God is the one writing the story.

This little family found themselves in Bethlehem that night, not by chance, not by a king's order, but because it was the city of King David. And they came from the family of King David.

They were coming to a royal city for a royal birth. See, it turns out that Caesar was only ever playing a two-part line in a far bigger story of a far better king.

A story that goes way back to God's promise to a king called David that after he was long gone, God would raise up a child from his family and put him on the throne.

[33 : 11] And this promised child would be God's forever king. He would never leave the throne. And now Luke says, here he is. See, the story of our world, it isn't written by the strong and powerful, the high and mighty, the big players.

The story of our world is written by God himself. Caesar could turn the world on its head with a word, but God used the words of that one man to carry out his great plan, his great promise, to raise up a perfect king who would rule rightly and forever.

There's a saying, isn't there, history is written by the winners? Well, he would have guessed that between the emperor and the baby, it would be the baby he would rewrite the history of the world.

You need to find out about Caesar Augustus today, you need to read a history book or go to a museum. But this baby grew up to be the man, Jesus Christ, who is still followed and celebrated and worshipped around the world today, 2,000 plus years after he was born.

In fact, in a few short weeks, we're going to be seeing in the year 2022. That is 2,022 years since this baby was born.

[34 : 35] We all still live our lives in the light of his birth because God is writing the story of our world and it's a story about his son, Jesus.

There's so much going on in our world, isn't there, and so much going wrong for all of us. It's been a hard year or years perhaps, but the hope that Christmas gives us is that God has not lost control, that we don't live in a meaningless world of chance events.

There is a king who is writing the story because God's plan was to raise up a righteous king and put him on the throne and that is just what he's done.

For 2,000 years since this baby was born into a feeding trough, he has been followed and celebrated and worshipped around the world every single day by ordinary people like me, like ye.

Today, roughly a third of the people who live on earth would call themselves followers of Jesus or Christians. Many of us in this room are among them. We're surrounded, aren't we, by big news, but none of it is the biggest news because God's plan to put his king on the throne of the universe, on the throne of our lives is still the plan that turns the world.

[36 : 04] It was then and it is now. He is still in control. But what is it that makes God's plan such good news?

Well, the second reason we see is that this is good news for all the world because the first people that this good news reaches are an unlikely bunch of shepherds.

Now, the story again, the tea towels, the cotton wool sheep. It's so well known, isn't it, that we forget that shepherds back then were not the sort of people that ye invited to a party.

Okay, they lived out over there on the hills. They were thought of as rough and rude. They had a reputation for borrowing without permission, so to speak. They were not the kind of people that ye wanted hanging around the maternity ward.

No one would have cared if they had been left right out of this story. But that's what makes what happens next so surprising. An angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds.

[37 : 09] The glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. See, of all the people for God to include in his story, it's the shepherds, the outsiders.

And that tells us something really important. Listen to God's message. The angel said to them, do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

God sends his good news for all the people. The fact that it came to shepherds first is proof positive of that. There's no one too rough for this good news.

No one too rude. No one too poor. No one too rich. No one too old. No one too young. No one too boring or strange.

No one too simple or difficult. No one has more of a right to hear or believe this news than anyone else because the first people to hear it were shepherds.

[38 : 13] And that means that whoever you are, this good news of great joy is for you. Even if you're hearing it for the very first time.

So the good news is that in a big news world which is very often a bad news world, God has sent good news, a great joy, to you.

I don't know about you but lots of the people I know just now are just getting through, struggling a bit, hoping that life gets better soon but it's pretty joyless sometimes.

Don't we all desperately need some good news that gives great joy? More than that, wouldn't we love to know that there was good news that was for all people?

Okay, not just a few over here, this party, this country here. Well, here it is. Here's God's good news for us all. Today, in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you.

[39 : 19] He is Messiah. The Lord. That is God's great headline. A saviour born to you, a rescuer for you because he was promised to you.

This is God's long-awaited, long-promised king, the Messiah. We live in a world of big news, breaking stories but here is the headline that God has printed over the top of it all for all time.

that King Jesus has come to rescue us. The angels describe him as a saviour, a rescuer because he came to rescue us from our deepest problem and the clue to what that problem is is in the song that the angels sing.

Glory to God in the highest heaven they sing on earth. Peace. Peace to those on whom his favour rests.

Jesus came to bring peace. Now we can all see that our world needs peace, can't we? Healing, bringing back together. the Bible says that the biggest division of all at the root of all the wars, the conflicts, the hurt in our world is actually the separation that exists between us and God.

[40 : 43] The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. In our hearts we have turned away from God. We act out against him.

That's what the Bible calls sin. And our sin puts us at war with God but Jesus our king came to give us peace with God. As another angel says to Joseph as we heard earlier in our service you will call him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

So do you trust him to do that for you? To give you peace with God? Our problems don't all go away when we trust King Jesus but having peace with God puts all our other problems in their proper place.

Our health isn't any longer the best thing in life. The Omicron variant can't steal our joy or even death gets the last word because we can have peace with God forever through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And what these shepherds tell us is that there is no one out of reach of that rescue. No one too far away. No one too far gone.

[42 : 05] No one too difficult for him to bring near to God again. He was born so that ordinary messy sinful people like me and you could be right with God.

So whoever you are this evening whatever your background Jesus is held out to you. There's a Christian blogger who puts a twist on the famous words from our first carol O come all ye faithless joyless and defeated come ye O come ye to Bethlehem.

That invitation is for you tonight. God says Jesus was born for you so however we come let us come to him this evening.

Come and find peace with God because the final reason why this baby is such good news is that he does change our lives and he changes our world.

The shepherds dazzled no doubt by what they'd seen and heard go and see the baby Jesus and they came back we read glorifying God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.

[43 : 24] They couldn't wait to go and see Jesus and after they had come face to face with him well their lives would never be the same because they found to their unending delight and joy that the good news that God had told them was true.

they found him just as they had been told they were it and so they go home glorifying and praising God. Now perhaps this evening you're not sure what that would even mean for you.

Perhaps you can't see yourself going home tonight and thanking God for giving you Jesus. But if these shepherds could have their lives turned upside down and find so much joy in meeting Jesus well he can do that for you too.

If you come to him and put your faith in him you won't be left the same. And this news doesn't only change us from the inside it changes our world outside too because the shepherds when they'd seen him they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

They wanted the world to know and it's our longing as Jesus followers today that this great good news would be heard by everyone taken to heart by everyone that we know.

[44 : 47] For all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. So the question this evening that I want to leave you with is have you taken this good news to heart?

We live in a world that hasn't stopped breaking big news since day one but God's great headline has not changed. The good news that a rescuer would come to bring us peace with God again and the good news of Christmas is that he has come.

His name is Jesus. He is a saviour born for you. He can give us peace with God. He can give us great joy and he can give it to all people.

And so our prayer is that you would come to him and know that the peace and the joy that only he could give this Christmas and for the rest of your life. Let me thank you once again for coming this evening and let me be the first to wish you a very happy Christmas and a wonderful new year when it comes.

We're going to sing once again a carol. Hark, the herald angels sing, and then ask you to remain standing for our final verse to be read to us for the evening and then we'll sing our final carol together, Joy to the World.

[46 : 11] Would you stand and let's sing together? Okay. Let herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled Joyful only nations rise Joyless triumph of the skies Wicked-willed in coastal way Christ is born in heavenly heaven I'm the head of angels sing Glory to the newborn King

Christ by highest heaven adored Christ the everlasting Lord Late in time behold him God All-spring of the virgin sin Build in flesh the God and seed Build in incarnate deity Jesus, man, is man to dwell Jesus, our Emmanuel Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Hail the heaven of the Prince of Peace Hail the Son of Righteousness Life and life to all he brings

Rift with healing in his wings And he lays his glory by Born that man no more may die Born to raise the sons of earth Born to give the second birth Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Jesus says, I am the first and the last I am the living one I was dead and now look I am alive forever and ever And I hold the keys of death and hate Revelation 1, 17 to 18 WHYres HeINE

Go habeno noches■■ heps – Yes. Yes.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[50 : 45] He comes to make His blessings flow, far as the curse is done, far as, far as the curse is done.

He rules the world in truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love.

And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love.

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

Do you take a seat? Let me thank you once again for coming this evening. Refreshments, hot drinks, mince pies will be found at the back hatch there, and the table here.

[52 : 08] Please do stay, enjoy being with us, feel free to remove your face covering, be freely around, we'd love to get to know you better. And as I said at the beginning, if you'd like to know any more, you can speak to me or anyone who you met at the door.

You can leave your details if you'd like, and someone will be in touch in the week to grab a wee coffee with you and have a chat. A very happy Christmas to you, and a wonderful new year.

A very happy Christmas to you, and a wonderful new year.