

Watchnight Service 2019

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Date: 24 December 2019

Preacher: Duncan McKellar

[0 : 00] Well, good evening. I can hear you. I can hardly see you. There's nobody here. A warm welcome to the service this evening. It's good to hear you. It's good to just about see you on this Christmas Eve night. And our prayer as we begin this service is just echoing what we read behind me on the wall here. We want to see Jesus. And all that's done this evening, and all that's done every time that we come here, and we open God's word, and we stand to sing, and we pray. Our desire is that we'll see Christ. And this evening especially, as we look forward to Christmas morning, and amongst the activities, and with families here, and friends here, our desire is that together we would see Jesus, and that once more we'd be touched by the wonder and the awe of all that God has done for us in Christ. So we're going to begin the service, and we're going to sing to God's praise. We sing of the child in the manger. So we'll have the first verse in Gaelic. We have the words on the screen. So we'll stand to sing to God's praise, child in the manger.

singing in the manger. O God, O God.

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Worthy our Saviour of all their praises. Happy forever are his own.

[4 : 01] Let's unite our hearts for a moment in prayer. Let's pray. Lord God, again, we thank you for the privilege of being able to come into your presence.

We thank you, Lord, for the praises that we have sung and that we look forward to singing in this short time of worship. And we pray that even though we know these carols so well, that they would come to us in a fresh way as we sing them.

We thank you, Lord God, once more for the fact that Jesus was the child in the manger. the one who spoke and all things that are came into being.

The one who is all-powerful, the one who is very God was the child in the manger. We thank you that God took on our flesh and made his dwelling amongst us.

And we thank you that Jesus is the one who lived for us that life that was sinless, the substitutionary life that we could not live.

[5 : 30] We thank you that what Adam could not do, Christ has done on our behalf. and we thank you that Jesus not only lived for us, but he died for us.

He willingly went to the cross to become the child who inherits all our transgressions. And Lord, we are grieved when we think about it, and yet our hearts rejoice when we think about it also, the fact that all our demerits on him fell.

and we know that that is what makes the cross such a gruesome place to look. And yet we also know that that is what makes the cross such a glorious place to look.

Because as we look at Jesus in his cry of forsakenness, we know that we, if we are trusting in him, we'll never be forsaken by God.

We thank you that Jesus as he cried out on the cross, it is finished, completed the work of salvation. He is the one who was promised Emmanuel, the one whose name would be called Jesus because he would save his people from their sin.

[6 : 53] And we thank you that on that cross Jesus died so that the work of salvation could be completed. And we thank you that not only did he die, but he rose from the grave, that he lives, that he reigns, that he still is God with us in the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus has promised that where two or three gather as we do this evening, in the name of Christ, he will be here amongst us.

And so we pray that as we sing and as we read, Lord, as we meditate upon your word, we pray that we would know the presence of Christ, that we would see the face of Christ, and that we would hear the voice of Jesus calling us to come unto him for rest.

So hear our prayers. We pray for anyone here tonight who has not yet received that rest in Christ. Christ, and we ask that even as we move towards Christmas morning, that they would receive the rest that there is in Christ for the first time.

And for any who may be wandering, Lord, at this time, we ask that you would draw them back. For those who are struggling, Lord, some who may be present with us and others who are absent, we bring them to you in prayer.

For those who struggle with grief, either comfort, for those who struggle with addictions and who are falling and who are in despair even this evening, we ask, Lord, that you would touch them with the power that they cannot find within themselves, but the power that is found in Christ.

[8 : 45] And for those, Lord, who are in this world and who do not yet know their need even of Jesus, we ask that you would awaken them. And that you would draw them to Jesus.

So hear our prayers. We pray for Duncan, especially tonight, as he prepares to open your word and preach for the first time. And we ask that you would speak powerfully through him and that he would know your help and your presence.

So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Lead us and guide us. In worship, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We sing again to God's praise and we sing to little town of Bethlehem.

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Amen. In Mam Dark and to the name saad, if you have to holy met SHAAD, And still we see it lie Upon your theme and dreamlessly The silent stars oblige Yet in the dark streets shining This everlasting light The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in you tonight Your rises, born of many And gathered all above While mortal sleep the angels keep

[10 : 41] Their wash of wandering love O morning stars together Proclaim the holy birth And graceless sing to God the King And peace to men on earth How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is given So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His hand No ear may hear His coming But in this world of sin

Where meek souls will receive them still The dear Christ enters in 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 Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell O come to us, abide with us Our Lord Emmanuel A short reading now From Matthew chapter 2

Verses 1 to 9 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea During the time of King Herod Magi from the east came to Jerusalem And asked, where is the one Who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east And have come to worship him When King Herod heard this He was disturbed And all Jerusalem with him When he had called together All the people's chief priests And teachers of the law He asked them where the Christ Was to be born In Bethlehem in Judea They replied For this is what the prophet Has written But you Bethlehem In the land of Judah Are by no means least Among the rulers of Judah For out of you will come a ruler Who will be the shepherd of my people Israel Then Herod called the Magi secretly And found them And found out from them The exact time the star had appeared He sent them to Bethlehem And said, go and make a careful search For the child As soon as you find him Report to me So that I too may go and worship him After they had heard the king They went on their way And the star they had seen in the east Went ahead of them Until it stopped

Over the place Where the child was Amen And may God bless that reading Of his word to us We're going to sing Another carol now In We Three Kings We'll stand to sing We Three Kings All glory and star There in gifts We travel afar Fields and thousand Moor and mountain Crawling yonder star Oh, star of wonder Star of night Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading Still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light

[15 : 06] Lord, a king of belly and plain Hold thy brain to crown him again King forever King forever Ceasing never Over us all to reign Oh, star of wonder Star of night Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading Still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light I can text for Jesus God on earth Yet priest on high Prayer and praising All men praising Worship and faith in light Oh, star of wonder

Star of night Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading Still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light Where is light Its bitter perfume Tell of whose death And Calvary's bloom Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying Sealed in the stone-culture O star of wonder O star of wonder Star of night Star of night Star with royal beauty bright Western leading Still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light Guide us to thy perfect light Guide us to thy perfect light For if thou behold him arise

King of golden sacrifice And the gentle light Alleluia All in the earth Christmas Buddhists Duncan will now come forward so thank you Duncan for taking the rest of the service so we'll start with a reading from Isaiah 49 and it's verses 1 to 6 starting at verse 1 listen to me O coastlands and give attention you peoples from afar the Lord called me from the womb from the body of my mother he named my name he made my mouth like a sharp sword in the shadow of his hand he hid me he made me a polished arrow in the quiver in his quiver he hid me away and he said to me you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified but I said I have labored in vain

I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity yet surely my right is with the Lord and my recompense with my God and now the Lord says he who formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and that Israel might be gathered to him for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has become my strength he says is it to light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribe of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth let's pray Father thank you for these wonderful words that we have the privilege of looking at tonight thank you for Jesus and the wonderful gift we have and that we remember at this time of year I pray that you'd help us now you'd help us to understand the message that we've read and you'd help to change us because of it that our minds and our attitudes and our actions would flow out of your beautiful word that we've read this evening so the opening question

I think it would be great to think about tonight is how should we respond to baby Jesus so there's Jesus is presented in the Bible to us in lots of different ways he's presented to us as king he's presented as ruler over all and he's presented to us as a judge of mankind as the king of kings but in the reading from Matthew we've just read we see Jesus presented as a baby in Matthew's gospel we read he was a child with Mary his mother so at Christmas we're faced with the question of how do we respond to this picture of Jesus as a helpless baby dependent on his mother there are lots of possible answers we could give to this question we could observe Jesus came as a dependent child to poor parents and use this as a basis for suggesting that Jesus came for the poor and the dependent which is true though he also came for the rich and the independent he came for everyone to offer salvation we could also use it the words of the hymn of this son or another hymn sorry once in royal David's city to suggest a possible application this hymn reads and through all his wondrous childhood he would honour and obey love and watch the lowly maiden in whose gentle arms he lay

[21 : 22] Christian children we know the line all must be mild, obedient, good as he a favourite application of parents at Christmas time that their children should be mild, obedient and good as he but thankfully this is not the application of Isaiah which I would emphasise to my mum Christy McKellar sitting in the second row but I hope that these verses from Isaiah help us to respond in worship of God of Jesus because Jesus reveals God's glory our response is to worship God because we love Jesus and before looking at these verses it's helpful to note that these words of the servant are words of Jesus we know this from the New Testament in which the words of the servant are applied to him and it's also helpful to know that this was written 700 years before the birth of Jesus by the prophet of Isaiah bearing this in mind let's look at verses 1 to 3 in these verses we see that God's servant reveals God's glory we see that God's servant reveals God's glory these messages contain the powerful message of the servant it's the servant who starts off in verse 1 but the Lord says in verse 3 you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified and in verse 5 and now the Lord says he who formed me from the womb to be his servant so it's clear in this section 1 to 6 it is the servant who is speaking it's also clear that though the servant is speaking it's the whole world that is the audience verse 1 says listen to me

O coastlands and give attention you peoples from afar this shows that all people even to the ends of the earth should listen up to what the servant has to say bearing in mind that Isaiah was a prophet to Judah the southern kingdom it's a surprise that this message is to the whole world and not just to this small-ish group of Jews that he normally prophesies to we also see in the second part of verse 1 that God has called one person right from the start it's clear as the verse says the Lord called me from the womb from the body of my mother he named my name so this servant is one person and this servant is from the body of his mother it's a human rather than only an angel or a heavenly being we also see in verse 2 that the servant's words are powerful the language of verse 2 shows us the power of the servant's words it says he made my mouth like a sharp sword and the corresponding verse he made me like a polished arrow which also seems to refer to his

words the servant's words are universal to the coastlands to people from afar but they also come with power they penetrate right to the heart of the hearer this shows both the universal application and the power of the servant's message on the one hand to the whole world on the other hand coming like a sword or polished arrow it's an unusual combination most communications are either broad such as a chain email or powerful like a personalised letter so I was trying to think of what a good example of a very personal communication and the best

I could think of was my friend Brendan who likes to write very long letters which are very personal and directive because he's a great friend and lives still like in the 19th century but despite this it's unambiguous that Brendan's letters are very personal they're addressed to me to Duncan and it's all relevant to me and chain emails of course aren't the same they're addressed to everyone and maybe the only thing that's personalised is the name that start and yet this servant's message both cuts to the heart of every person and is universal in its nature the servant we can see is unique he speaks powerfully to each person it's like 7 billion of Brendan's letters that go out throughout the world the second thing we should see about the servant is the intimate relationship the servant has with God so the language of verse 2 also points this paints this picture of intimacy it says in the shadow of his hand he hid me the servant also says he made me a polished arrow in his quiver he hid me away it's in broad daylight the shadow of your hand it's right in the centre it shows the care and protection that God has for his servant similarly a polished arrow but in his quiver he hid me away shows God's care and protection for the servant he looks after and cares for the servant his chosen revelation and I think at this point we should ask how do these two come together how do these two aspects the servant's powerful words and the intimate relationship that the servant has with God how do these two work together in this passage

I think verse 3 helps us to understand this in verse 3 it says you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified and I have a footnote that says in whom I will display my beauty God chooses to proclaim his powerful message to all creation through a servant who knows him intimately and this shows the world God's beauty it's a message we will continue to think about within the next few minutes but it's worth noting now verses 4 to 6 show that through the servant's trust in God he brings salvation to the nations verse 4 builds up this picture of intimacy the servant says I've laboured in vain I've spent my strength for nothing and vanity from the servant's view the servant it looks like things have failed but they've not worked out for good and yet the servant's response is my right is with the Lord and my recompense with my God despite the seeming failure of the task at hand the servant trusts completely in God and knows that his recompense is with the Lord and in verse 5 we see the servant pleases God and will be used to redeem Israel

God says here that he will use his servant to bring Jacob back to him but more than this in verse 6 he says that it's through the servant he will make you as a light for the nations the Lord says that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth it's through the servant's trust in God that God is in control that God's salvation will reach right to the ends of the earth to everyone we should take a moment at this point to reflect a number of important truths come together we already have seen in Isaiah that God will comfort his people we've seen in we could see previously to this in Isaiah that God will send a servant we'll see that God would send a servant and that Jacob would be redeemed and we have hints that this redemption this salvation will go out to the coastlands out to everyone but why do these trees come together in this passage what is Isaiah trying to show us and I think it is again because in verse 3 it is this type of service which glorifies God it is this example of humble servanthood through which God reveals his beauty this one servant who humbly trusts in God even when the odds are stacked against him is used to bring about

[29 : 19] God's global salvation plan because it displays God's beauty this would be surprising to original readers they were presumably concerned they would be put into exile under foreign powers they had already seen the northern kingdom being conquered and were paled in comparison to the strength of the Assyrian army yet here God doesn't say he will work out his promises through someone who is powerful in the world's eyes he says he will work out his promises through this one trusting servant there is a clear difference between what we expect of God and what we get for us it is clear that this servant is Jesus Philippians 2 verses 6 to 11 uses words about the servant in Isaiah to describe Jesus this shows us the wonder of Jesus' descent to earth and of his humble service to the Lord I think the first and main application of this passage is a question of how we respond to this servant we know that from verse 7 that this very servant is the one to which kings shall see and arise princes and they shall prostrate themselves because of the Lord who is faithful the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you the question we have is not whether we will bow to this

servant but the question is whether we will bow to the servant now accepting his offer of salvation or whether we'll bow to this servant as he is king over all and facing his judgment it's something worth reflecting on at Christmas that this servant has now been and will be exalted over all because of faithful God but for all of us

I think it helps us to change our thinking about Jesus it helps us to see the beauty of Christ as a servant this is the person in whom God displays his glory who is perfectly humble and obedient in service to the Lord the message of Christmas is a message of this perfect servant who gave up a relationship with God to come down to earth in the form of a baby it's the message of a servant with such a close relationship with the Lord who trusts in him completely it causes us to love God more as we see the example of this servant and all he did his trust in God and willingness to endure hardships so I don't think it's a coincidence that the servant came as a baby without power or flair I think it's to underline one of the things that really matters about Jesus his humble service to the Lord so do we think of Jesus as coming to earth as a beautiful moment in our minds is the coming of Jesus as a baby only a rescue mission we know that Jesus has come on a rescue mission he's come as someone on a lifeboat to save people that are drowning in the sea he's come to offer us salvation and life but I think this passage also helps us to see that this coming of salvation is almost like a beautiful piece of music it's played by someone to help us appreciate the music which goes right to our heart and right to the inner core of our being this is something that coming of Jesus is a picture of God's glory and of God's beauty not only of God's rescue but also a revelation of his glory it's worth saying that there's a whole load of practical applications we could think about we could think about

Jesus coming as a servant to redeem his followers that is Christians as servants and that would be a very helpful thing we could consider whether we have this identity as servants do we truly think we are servants of God or perhaps we think we're better than Jesus Christ himself and we may ask ourselves whether we look enough to Jesus' example of humility and obedience in our own relationships in life and these would all be good things to consider and maybe they will be helpful to think about over Christmas but I think from this passage in Isaiah we're helped to see only the beauty and glory of Christmas the wonder of the king of the universe coming as a humble servant in human form and we would do well to appreciate and think on that so to conclude we think back to the opening question how do we respond to baby Jesus in Matthew's gospel we saw the Magi the wise men who may well have been kings of a sort who bowed down at the feet of Jesus and worshipped we would struggle to find a better example for ourselves we should fall down and worship God because of this incredible revelation of his beauty and glory please allow me to lead us in a quick prayer

Father we praise you for this the coming of Jesus we thank you that you have extended your salvation to the ends of the earth through the person of Jesus Christ I pray that you would help us to consider this servant Jesus and we would obey his words Lord you would help us to take up his offer of salvation if we haven't already and the knowledge that he is enthroned above all but I pray also Lord you would help us lay on our hearts the wonder and glory of this message of the king of the universe coming in human form even as a baby and being obedient to you to death even death on a cross please may this inspire and transform us as we wonder on the beauty of Christ and I pray all these things in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen so it would be great if we could finish with a carol come all ye faithful joyful and triumphant O come ye O come ye O come ye to heaven come and behold him born the king of angels O come let us adore him O come let us adore him

[36 : 38] O come let us adore him Christ the Lord Lord who Wo's Father he who of 2001 he who of■■■ CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CELLO CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS and let's pray to conclude Heavenly Father again we thank you for your word to us your word through Duncan this evening and we pray Lord as we go from here tonight that we would go again to meditate upon the beauty and the glory of Christ the servant and enable us each one we pray to take hold of by faith and to cherish the gift of salvation so freely offered to us and yet bought at such great price so thank you Lord for the richness of your word and enable us we pray to

respond in our lives by giving you all the glory and all the praise and now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all this Christmas morning and forevermore

Amen and can I be the first to say to each one of you Happy Christmas and the Lord as well within us thank you we remind us the Lord of God and the Lord of God what did you counselors and we cannot give thee a vision of all this I drugiej world Iist I montan I was born