

John's cosmic Christmas (part 1)

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning and a special welcome to those who are not so much visiting with us but back with us after having been away for a week while.

It's good to see everybody as we gather together to worship God. The evening service will be at 6 tonight and that will be conducted by Donnie McLeod of the Faith Mission.

And then in the course of the week various things as usual. Ladies Bible study at 8th and Monday, First Truth Fellowship on Tuesday, Christianity Explored on Thursday.

Both these change the venue to the McEllish House and details are on the sheets for those who are concerned with these meetings. Road to Recovery meets on Tuesday as usual, prayer meeting on Wednesday and that will be conducted by Duncan McFershin.

For those who are wondering why is he not here again, I will be away in Loch Carreman Wednesday and Thursday. This coming Wednesday there will be the funeral service of the Reverend Alan MacArthur.

[1 : 1 0] Alan will be known to many of you. Alan is the brother-in-law of Nanny. Alan passed away at the early part of last week and he asked that I would conduct his funeral in Loch Carreman Church of Scotland.

We would appreciate the affairs over these couple of days in particular. This coming Saturday we would like to have an open day. As I said before, we want the Mass to be an open house and you can come in any time.

Knock the door, you will be very welcome. But this Saturday in particular from 12 to 4 we'll have tea and coffee and things. And you're warmly welcome to come in and to visit maybe for the first time and enjoy a time of fellowship.

In the evening from 7 to half past 8 we'll have a time of fellowship where we read God's word, we sing his praises and we join together in prayer.

And that will be in the Mass from 7 to half past 8 this coming Saturday the 10th of December. So please, as many of you as can come, please do come.

[2 : 2 6] There won't be seats for everybody but that's a good thing. And so we'll just cram in and it will be to see as many as possible. The services next Sunday will be conducted, God willing, by myself, 11 and 6.

And there will be a deacons court meeting on the 12th of December at the Mass. That's a week on Monday at half past 7. And there will be a congregational meeting on Wednesday the 14th of December at half past 7 in the community centre here.

And really we just want to take an evening and look at the proposed plans for the inn. We are not at the stage yet where we have plans to secure the inn, procure the inn.

But just we continue to be prayerfully hopeful about that. And it would be good to start to crystallise the plans should we come to a position in the next few weeks to be able to start to affect that.

So my brother-in-law Andy, the architect, will draft some sketches and present them on that evening. And we welcome the feedback of as many as possible as we can begin to develop that plan.

[3 : 43] Three dates for your diary, just to note. 17th of December, join us on the school party. 18th of December, carol service at 8pm in the community centre here.

And on the 24th of December, there will be a holiday club outreach here in the community centre. And what time is that outreach? Looking for Mary. One o'clock, go half three on the 24th.

If you're able to help, please do speak to Mary. I think these are all the intimations. So let's begin and worship God, sing unto his praise. The words on the screen, the words of Mission Praise 1141.

1141. 1141. Mission Praise. You're the word of God the Father. From before the world began, every star and every planet has been fashioned by your hand.

All creation holds together by the power of your voice. Let the skies declare your glory. Let the land and sea rejoice. We stand to sing in a moment and we sing to God's praise.

[4 : 55] Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you once more this day for who you are.

And we thank you for the wonder of the fact that you have revealed yourself to us. And we are able to sing with our lips from our hearts.

Of all that you are and all that you have done. For sinners who are guilty. Sinners like us. We thank you for the wonder of the Holy Spirit.

We thank you that we bow this morning before the one true God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father who sent the Son. In love to a world that needed to be reconciled to him.

The Son. The Word of God who came to this world willingly. In accord with the will of the Father.

[6 : 00] And out of love for sinners that he came to seek and save. And the Holy Spirit.

Who is here. Even this morning. And who lives in the hearts of all who believe. We thank you, Lord God, that you have not hidden yourself from us.

But you have revealed yourself to us. And even as we see the wonder of creation. The beauty of all that we surveyed this morning as the sun rose.

We thank you that you are the one who is the author of creation. You're the one who is the sustainer of creation. You're the one who made us.

You're the one who loves us. And you're the one who calls us to know you. And we thank you for the wonder of that statement.

[7 : 07] That we can know the one true God. The majestic creator, sustainer. Triune God. Who is holy.

Who is holy. And who is perfect. And who is awesome. And yet we are able to say that we know you. Not that we know of you.

But that we know you. And we acknowledge once more this morning that that is all down to the finished work of Christ. Christ. We are those who are guilty.

We are those who are sinners. And yet we thank you. That as we sang. Jesus suffered so that the guilty may go free.

And so that those who are far away from God can be reconciled to God. Lord. We thank you that this is the essence of the season that we are moving into.

- [8 : 09] Not tinsel and not lights and not gifts that we give from one to another. But we thank you that Christmas is the season where we focus our minds and hearts upon Christ.
- And we ask Lord that you would enable us to do so. And enable us to take every opportunity that you give us to share the good news of Christ with those who are interested.
- Especially over these next few weeks. And so we pray that you would receive us this morning in Jesus. We pray that you would cleanse us from our sin.
- We pray that you would empty us of ourselves. We pray that you would fill us with your spirit. And we ask Lord that you would lead us into an hour that will truly and sincerely be worshiped and spirit-led.
- We pray Lord that you would be with those who are unable to be present today. Those who are sick. Those who are in great pain in their homes.
- [9 : 18] We bring them to you in prayer. And ask that you would lay your hand of healing upon them. And that you would minister to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we remember them in prayer.
- We pray on for those who are far from us. Some who are taking a time to enjoy holiday and refreshment. We pray that they would do so physically and spiritually.
- And as they worship in a different place. That they would know the same spirit. At work through the same word. As they look to the same Savior.
- We pray for others who are tied up in the responsibilities of work. Some who are far away. We think of Jeeps in particular. We are unaware of where he is.
- But we thank you that you are the God who knows all things. And we pray for him as we pray for others. You are a way at present. That they would know your presence. That they would know your sustaining hand.
- [10 : 21] And in all that they do. We pray that they would do it for your glory. And for your praise. We ask Lord for those who are grieving. This morning.
- And have been over past days. And we think especially of the family. And the friends of the Reverend Alan MacArthur. And we ask Lord that you would uphold them.
- That you would comfort them. With the comfort that you alone can give. And we pray that. That you would comfort them. These next few days. As your people gather.
- Around your word. That you would be present with them. We pray now that you would continue with us. That you would go before us. And lead us by your spirit.
- And all these things we ask. Are in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come forward please? How's everyone today?
- [11 : 17] Can you hear me at the back by the way? Is it loud enough yeah? Come and take a seat. You getting excited for Christmas? How many sleeps is it now? Oh. Bella? No.
- 20 sleeps? Is it 20 sleeps? No. Or maybe 21? Definitely not 3 John Roddy. No. Oh John I'm sorry. Definitely not 3.
24. 24. No it's definitely not that. Anyway that's not what I was going to speak to you about. I was wanting to tell you a story. And really show you a picture.
- Not quite yet though. The picture's ready is it? Good. We'll show you a picture in just a few minutes. But I wanted to tell you about a boy.
- [12 : 15] And we happen to know this boy. In fact this boy happens to be here. This morning. And the night. Oh the story I wanted to tell you about.
- Was fireworks night. What. Were you doing. On fireworks night. Girls can you remember.

Where were you on fireworks night? Boys can you remember. The dump. You were at the dump on fireworks night.

There was a bed fire on. Wasn't there? There was fireworks banging and popping. All over the place. And there was. Three boys. Who were having great fun.

But there was only one boy. That I got a photograph of. Having great fun. He was having a great time. Rolling around in the mud I think.

[13 : 14] But it was dark. And no one knew. But then when he came along. His mother looked at him.

And she said. What have you been doing? Are you dirty? No. No. No. And then she shone a torch on him.

And what did we see? Hang on a second. We'll put the lights off. He looked so funny. He said Jono. That's not what his mum said. He was covered in mud.

Covered in mud. Having a great time. And then when the torch went on him. And the camera flashed. Do you know what he said? He said.

Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Put the light away. Because he didn't want people to see. Just how messy.

[14 : 16] He'd got. Didn't want to get around. So the darkness was good at covering up all the mess. So he charged off. For another few minutes. Now boys and girls.

That reminds. Me. Of me. And. Everybody. Actually. Who's sinning. How many people in the room are sinners today?

So one or two? Or five? Ten? What do you think? Every single one of us.

The Bible tells us. That we're all sinners. And when we open the Bible. And when we listen to people preaching. And when we come to God.

It's like he takes a light. And he shines on our lives. And he shows us. That actually we're in. In our hearts. We're in a big mess.

[15 : 17] And you know what some people say? Some people. When God starts to speak to them. And starts to show them. Their sin. They say to him. Put the light away.

I don't want to know about it. I don't want to see about it. Do you think that's the right thing for us to do? What do we do? When God shows us.

Our sin. We don't run away from the light. Do we? We don't tell him. Switch the light off. Point on somebody else. Not me. What do we do?

What do you think? Ailey? Pardon? We let him shine the light. On us. And then we see our sin.

And when we see our sin. What do we do next? Caitlin? We ask him. To take away our sin. You know there's a prayer that I remember.

[16 : 17] And it was prayed by a tax collector. I think. And somebody who everybody looked at. And they thought. That man is so bad. And he's so sinful. And he came to God.

In prayer. And this was his prayer. He said. Lord. Be merciful to me. A sinner. Don't punish me please.

But take my sin away. And when we come to God like that. And when we pray like that. Then we're told.

That he will. Forgive us. Not some. But all of our sin. He'll give us. His cleanness.

It's a bit like. See how Alistair's got that very dirty jacket. When we come to God. And we tell him. About how sinful we are. He takes it off us.

[17 : 17] And he gives us. His perfect. Clean. Righteous. Jacket. And he covers us. From head to toe. And we look.

As clean. As Jesus. Because we're trusting. In Jesus. Not ourselves. So thank you Alistair. For giving us that lesson. And I know.

That. The lesson. In your heart. Is not the lesson. That we're seeing up there. That we know. That when God shows us. Our sin. We don't run away from the light.

We run to the light. And we say. Please forgive us. So let's do that now. We'll wait. Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father. We thank you.

That you love us enough. To shine the light. Of your love. Onto our hearts. And show us. Our sin. And show us. How much we need you. And we thank you.

[18 : 13] That when we pray. From our hearts. Meaning it. Saying Lord. Have mercy on me. Please forgive me. Because I'm a sinner. We thank you. That you forgive us.

And you give us. The perfect. Cleanness. Of Jesus. So whether we're young. Or whether we're old. We pray that today. As the light of your word. Shines into our lives.

That we wouldn't run away. From you. But that we would ask. To make us clean. That you would. Help us. To trust. In Jesus. And we pray these things.

In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing now. And the words. Are not in a book. But the words. Are on the screen. What can wash. Away my sin.

What can wash. Away my sin. Let's hear it. Nothing but the. What can wash. Away my sin. Nothing but the.

[19 : 12] Blood of Jesus. So we're going to stand. And sing that band. What can wash.

What can wash. Away my sin. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. What can make me. Hold again.

Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. O precious. O precious. Is the flow. That makes me.

White as snow. O other. But I know. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. O my heart.

And this I see. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. Or my. Friends. Take this. Might be.

[20 : 15] Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. O precious. Sister. Flow. That makes me.

White as snow. Other. But I know. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. Jesus.

They can. For sin. Atone. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. Lord. How good.

That I have. Blood. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. O precious. Sister. Flow.

That makes me. White as snow. Nothing but the. Blood. I know. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus.

[21 : 12] This is all. My hope. And peace. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. This is all.

My righteousness. Nothing but the. Blood of Jesus. O precious. O precious. Is the. Flow.

That makes me. White as snow. O. Other. How. I know. Nothing but the. God.

Of Jesus. If you could turn your Bibles please. To John. John's Gospel. Chapter 1. John's Gospel.

And. Getting from chapter 1. And. Verse 1. And we'll just look at the first. Three verses. Maybe into verse 4.

[22 : 05] This morning. But we'll read. From verses 1. To. Verse. 18. In the beginning. Was the word. And the word. Was with God.

And the word. Was God. He was with God. In the beginning. Through him all things were made. Made. Without him nothing was made.

That has been made. In him was life. And that life. Was the light. Of men. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not.

Understood. There came a man. Who was sent from God. His name was John. He came as a witness. To testify concerning that light.

So that through him. All men might believe. He himself was not the light. He came only as a witness. To the light. The true light. That gives light.

[23 : 01] To every man. Was coming into the world. He was in the world. And though the world. Was made through him. The world did not recognize him. He came to that.

Which was his own. But his own. Did not receive him. Yet to all who received him. To those who believed. In his name. He gave the right. To become children of God.

Children born not. Of natural descent. Nor of human decision. Or a husband's will. But born of God.

The word became flesh. And made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory. The glory. Of the one and only. Who came from the father.

Full of grace. And truth. John testifies. Concerning him. He cries out. Saying. This was he. Of whom I said.

[24 : 00] He who comes after me. Has surpassed me. Because he was before me. From the fullness of his grace. We have all received. One blessing. After another.

For the law was given. Through Moses. Grace. And truth. Came through. Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God.

But God. The one and only. Who is at the father's side. Has made. Him known. Amen. And may God bless. That reading. Of.

This word. To us. Father. Is now going to lead us. In prayer and gathering. God bless you. God bless you.

And cannot come on. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. What is the whole thing? Give yourself a little. It always doesn't matter. Like him. I'll continue.

[25 : 01] I'll call the host does not need it. A life lific. Husband press. DON'T Duper bash. My alzada. The spirit and the power burning. What's the ChristRELE-ANN auditing was written■ and ■■■■■■■■ system from the predicted What should we have written here?

What should we have daily to attach Jesus? What should we have taken care of? We never know how much to Professors ■■■■.

People like us, humans, humans, and humans Ask us, are committed to scratching our feet in our backs. As we are Dios trying to listen to godly. Chinis to anew the people that What I told you that my thoughts■■ twice make my eyes be able to change the world, the same way to the wellw en Romeo by all, but , in times of being, ways of telling and filling don't know the other one or the other one.

that only spouse should not lead, or the other hoje to treason on our face. I always work to turn our ears in it to come onward. So we are gathered from here.

And with our hearts and shelter we allowed to come into place. We didn't know what we are überhaupting.

[26 : 57] they would want to notdo. Just say.. Say it..

I wish I had the tea with all of you, my soul, I will shelter.

I see season■, I'll build some places next year.

Dr Esle enjoying myself in the Re■■■■. I am thinking I have teamed up to add something to my students I have a justice for my own that is something that is easy As Ab pé tehnebhs jobs can sq investing in the som REP.

Reinh Beware within yourself and whatever knowing pull from you, It is all we have to be able to do your knowledge with which we make possible.

[28 : 32] To me you have peace with life. Then world is a part that is alive. We have a lived home from Cancunh Mo■■■ah Johnút.

There is no mind at the time knowing how the animals come to shoot. I pound out of Femorr draws ing the land in the Neanderthal This is■ash in Ai Mar■■■an shteeaz pail spread as well At the same time, according to Ai Maram shteeaz kommt die How will that die the sound of the Randy Wee ultimana which takes usragicated

With everything, we bear to seal 8, and we proclaim in the holy holy word, We send our great wishing and pray vertebrating you, We begin to practice this prayer to remember our life, so we make peace, and love it.

OurART sky here to explore what we've seen,■■■ Jones when we are först■eti. .

.PERSONNERS, Thank you very much.

[31 : 18] where they, Billy, will tell you all as objects to you.ELIMI MICHAEL Sir, Bal■■■ Why did we call ourselves the Dímdesk as aple■■■?

Chaudelingerem In fact, the message of this ■■■■», ■■■■aring them on our hi we, um to have increased Now just take care of things Amen.

We sing now in Psalm 8 to God's praise. Psalm 8, verses 3 to 4 in Galilee. When I look up unto the heavens which thine own fingers framed, unto the moon and to the stars which whereby thee ordained, then say I, what is man that ye remembered is by thee?

Or what the son of man that thou so kind to him shouldst be? These two stanzas in Galilee, in God's praise. Thank you.

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

[34 : 30] 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.

[36 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 30] Thank you. And that's the way it's going to be over the next few weeks as we all anticipate Christmas.

And the story of Christmas is such a familiar story. And our minds expect all these accounts that we're so familiar with to be brought back to us.

Mary and Joseph and the shepherds and the wise men and so on.

And in due course we'll read these passages. But on Sunday mornings over the next few weeks, God willing, I don't want to approach the Christmas story through Matthew or Mark's gospel.

I want to think about the Christmas story through the lens, the perspective of John. And John doesn't so much focus on the earthly realities of the manger and the census and the star and the shepherds and all these accounts.

[40 : 32] John gives us more of a spiritual, more of a cosmic almost Christmas story. Because John goes back much farther than Matthew or Luke.

John goes way back before Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. And John takes us, as God the Spirit inspires John, back to the beginning of time.

You know, sometimes when you climb a hill or you climb a mountain, whether you're gathering sheep or you're intent on climbing a summit for the day, as you go up, your perspective begins to change.

And when you're on the pinnacle, when you're on the summit, you have this awesome perspective and vision of all that's below you.

And John kind of does that with the Christmas story. He does that from the very get-go of the gospel.

[41 : 37] He takes us to the high point of the Christmas story. John, in fact, takes us to the high point of history. And John lifts us from the transient to the eternal.

From the worldly to the spiritual. As John shows us who God is. And who we are in the light of who God is.

So with John, I'd like us over these few weeks to lift our eyes from this level heavenwards. Sometimes we approach the Bible and we're too quick to ask the question, What has this got to say about me?

What has this got to say to me? Now we'll come to all that. But the first question that we should ask as we come to Scripture, and the question that John addresses, is the question of who God is.

So that we will stand back and be in awe and come and worship. So three points this morning, hopefully. And the first point, John chapter 1 and verse 1 is God has no beginning.

[42 : 58] In the beginning, verse 1 was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

So the first point is to know that God has no beginning. God is eternal.

Now, that is immediately something that we can grasp. Because pretty much everything that we can think of with our finite minds, it has a beginning.

This service had a beginning. and you're hopeful that at some point soon it will have an end. You have a beginning. You can track it back to the date of your birth or nine months prior.

This church, fellowship, has a beginning. We can go back to a particular date. The relationships that we enjoy, our marriages, for example, they had a beginning.

[44 : 10] the day that we stood and said, I do, or the day that we first met, the one that we would mind. The things that we own, whether it's a phone that's in our pockets, or a watch that's on our wrists, or a car that we drive around the area, these things, they had a beginning, they had a date of manufacture.

This world has a beginning. Everything has a beginning, except God. And if you give some time to the atheists, if you, for example, read into Dawkins and the God delusion book that he made his mentor, he makes this argument against Christians that because we don't know who made God, or how God was made, he can't possibly exist.

That's his argument, that's his thesis, it's the question of who made the maker. But even if you think about that for just a moment, we can see that it makes no sense, because if God had a maker, the maker would be God.

The maker would be God, and God would be the created being. And so as much as we can't properly grapple with this, we have to in childlike faith, accept the fact that God, as he reveals himself to us, he has no beginning.

There was, verse 1, a beginning, the beginning of creation, the beginning of the world as we know it. There was our beginning, but before that was God, the world, who's identified as Jesus.

[46 : 06] In the beginning was the world. And he was with God, he was with the Father and the Spirit.

He was the one who willed the beginning. The word is the one who breathed life into the universe, and who caused the beginning.

There was a beginning, but before the beginning, as we know it, there was God. two quotes that I find helpful as I was thinking this one through.

The first one's from a modern commentator called Johnston. He says this, this is a statement, John 1, 1, this is a statement that defies human logic and understanding.

I think we can agree on that. But then again, he says, is it such a strange thing to be confronted with the fact that God is above us and beyond us?

[47 : 17] Can we expect to be able to squeeze him into the confines of our mind? If we could, he wouldn't be God.

Second quotes from J.C. Ryan. And he says this, when the world was called into being, however long ago that may be, when matter was first formed, however many millions of ages ago that may be, at that period, the Lord Jesus was existing.

He had no beginning. He was before all things. There never was the time when he was not. In short, the Lord Jesus is an eternal being.

So the point that we note first is God has no beginning. God is eternal. And it's an awesome thought.

It's more than we can comprehend. end. And yet it's revealed to us. So we'll meditate upon it.

[48 : 38] And here's another awesome thought. As we go from standing in awe of God, considering how does this impact us. Another awesome thought to chew on is the fact that you are eternal.

you and I have bodies that over time deteriorate and they decay, but we have souls that are eternal.

Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 11 says, he has set eternity in the hearts of men. Now today, you and I are living in time.

It's all we can totally grasp with our minds, but there is coming a day when we will step out of time to meet God and we will be in the realm of eternity.

And I want to ask the question, are we ready for that day? And are we ready for that realm of eternity?

[50 : 03] You know, we have prepared in our lives for almost any given eventuality. We have insurance that covers so many situations that we can see ahead of us, but we often never actually realize and it's good to be prepared for what may be ahead, but it's better to be prepared for what is definitely ahead.

It is hugely more important that we are ready for what lies beyond this world and that's eternity.

and the Christmas story is in essence about how Jesus the world came from eternity into time so that we who are in time through trusting in him could be made ready for eternity.

That's Christmas. God is eternal. He has no beginning. The second point here is God is triune.

He is trinity. In the beginning was the word. Then there's a second section that we deal with here. And the word, Jesus, was with God.

[51 : 44] The Greek word that's used there is towards. The word was towards God. One of the translations, the more modern translation says the word was face to face with God.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. God is God now.

Today, as we think about our culture and the age that we live in, it's not uncommon for us to hear people saying, well, I like to think of God as this and I like to think of God as that.

I like to think of God as a very, very gracious Father Christmas in the sky. Hugely irreverent, but that's what we hear. I like to think of God as a strict but fair disciplinarian.

I like to think of God as a force for good, a strong positive energy, some people say. I like to think that God is everything. He's that tree and he's these birds and he's the air and the clouds.

[52 : 53] We live in an age that is so arrogant that we think we get to decide who God is and what he is like. We live in an age that is so intent on ourselves that we seek to fashion a God that will reflect our image and will fit and meet our expectations.

But the truth is we can have all the debates we want. We can imagine all we want in our heads but we don't get to decide who God is.

We don't get to decide and ponder over what God is like. Who is God? He has told us.

He has revealed himself to us and he is trinity. He is triune. He is three persons, one God.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one God. And we start to see that in John's gospel. In the beginning was the word.

[54 : 12] The word is Jesus. We see that in verse 14. Jesus is the one who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. the word is Jesus and the word was with God the Father and the Spirit and the word was God.

Underline that. the word Jesus was God and he is God and he ever will be God.

He is not some spiritual guru. He is not just another deity. He is not a life coach. He is not somebody we can consult when we are in difficulty and then park up when we are not.

He is God. So God eternally has been Trinity. And as we in as much as we can look into the Trinity what we see there is perfect community.

We see a perfect relationship. We see the Father who loves the Son and who is well pleased with the Son and who wants anyone to know that he is well pleased with the Son.

[55 : 44] And we see the Son who delights to do the will of the Father even when that will is so costly and so painful and so traumatic. And we see the Spirit who in love draws us to the Father and draws us to the Son.

We see perfect community. We see perfect relationship. And because we are made in the image of God we long for that.

We long for that depth of relationship. We long for that pure true love. We long for that perfect utopia community.

community. And generation after generation has tried to create it. Think about the 60s, the swinging 60s. Peace and love and free this and free that.

That was an attempt to build a perfect community with a backdrop of the darkness of war. Did it work? Did it ever? Think about communism.

[56 : 57] communism was another attempt to design and build a perfect community where everyone is equal and God is absent.

Did it work? Far from. You know even closer to home so many people move to these islands for the reason that they believe that there is some perfect harmonious community in the island context as opposed to the city context and they see it and they want it and they hear stories about the peaks and people helping this one and people helping that one and doors are open and teas are always served and everyone loves everyone.

They come in with that expectation. They want it and I suppose we aspire to it. We want it too but we can't have it and we know that's not reality because our sin gets in the way of it and our sin that affects every one of us is the children reminding us.

Our sin sets us against God and our sin sets us against each other. Our sin severs relationships. It causes relationships to break down both with each other and with God.

That's the bad news. That's fallen spiritual reality. But the good news, the gospel, the Christmas story is about God, the world, the coming flesh.

[58 : 46] Why? to fix what was broken, to repair what was severed, to reconcile man with God.

We'll sing it soon enough. Hark the herald angel sin, glory to the newborn king, peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconcile.

how can that be? Simply through trusting in Christ. And when we trust in Jesus, immediately we are accepted in love into the family of God and we are assured that because of all that Jesus has done, when we step from time into eternity, we will step into that perfect community that God has created.

And sin is not present and Satan is not present and there is no pain and there is no dysfunctionality and there are no broken relationships. But God is at the centre and we are united to him and each other in him.

Binding together with cords of love that can never be broken. You know, we're all starting to scratch our heads now.

[60 : 13] as we grapple with the question, what do I want for those that I love this Christmas? We get out the catalogs, we flick through the internet, what is it that I want to be able to give?

What do I want the person I love to get this Christmas? Well, how about the assurance that they will be safe and secure and content and loved and alive forever?

in heaven? How about the prospect of knowing that we will eternally be with them?

Bound up in the love of Christ that no one and nothing can ever break. that's the assurance that is given to all who believe.

so what about this Christmas? thinking thinking less about case catalog and thinking more about sharing the good news of the gospel with those that we love in our families in our community because it's only in the gospel that there will be that reconciliation that assurance that community that love that we all crave will only Christ can deliver.

[62 : 05] Who is God? He is eternal. Who is God? He is Trinity. He's triune.

and who is God finally he is creator. Now how exactly God created everything is a point that can be divisive.

The timescales and the days and the order and the specifics of it. Christians can get very dogmatic on their own particular view and the nuts and bolts that go with that particular view.

Some devote their whole lives to trying to prove that their view is the view of how creation and everything came into being. They go into huge detail on these things.

What I love about John chapter 1 verse 1 is John doesn't tie himself in knots over any of that. He doesn't use 5,000 words to expound the mechanics of the created order because God the Spirit didn't ask him to and because we can't understand it.

[63 : 23] John, as the Spirit leads him, just says in verse 3, through him all things were made.

Without him nothing was made that has been made. staggeringly simple and yet breathtakingly profound.

Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. It's not a presentation of a thesis of proof.

It's a faith statement. And you are invited to, you are urged to believe it. not understand it, but believe it and accept it.

And some love to dismiss it, some love to say God didn't create, we all evolved from some dead dollop of mud so many million eons ago. That too is a faith statement.

[64 : 30] And don't mistake it for anything else. That is not a presentation of proof because there's no proof behind it. it's a faith statement which those who present it cannot prove.

And if you ask any scientist, how did a dead dollop of mud suddenly become alive? They scratch their heads and as much as they've laboured over this point for year after year after year still they have no answer.

And yet it's in our children's textbooks. These are the facts they say. It's simply a statement that children are asked to believe without facts, without proof.

John makes this simple statement. Where did everything that was made come from? God knew. God created God breathed his life into the world and into us.

Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. And so the crunch of this is you and I must make our choice.

[65 : 54] We're taken to the point of decision by John. And we can put our faith, we have to put our faith somewhere. And you can put your faith with the atheists and reduce humanity to a lump of mud that has no inherent value and no design behind it and no point and no purpose and no hope in time or for eternity.

or we can believe John and believe that the majesty of the creation and what majesty we saw this morning.

That majesty says John speaks to us of a majestic God behind it all. We can believe that the intricacy of the animal kingdom is not accidental the product of various chaotic explosions but it has a master designer behind everything.

We can believe that humanity is made in the image of God with a soul that thirsts to be reconciled to the one who loves them and who sustains them and who went all the way to the cross and back to save them.

We must make our choice. Conclude with a story. Mary's dad is just retired.

[67 : 40] Just a few weeks into retirement he realised he couldn't really cope with retirement so he had to do something. So he got himself a taxi and he started doing taxi runs here, there and everywhere.

I was thinking about that this week as he was speaking to me. I was reminded of a story that Innocent told us about a taxi driver. A taxi driver who was also a very vocal atheist.

He loved to get Christians in his cab. And one day he discovered there was a Christian in his cab going some distance. And so he got over the initial chit-chat and then he just went for him and he challenged him.

He says tell me what you believe. And he got a bit of a summary of some of the things he believed. And he says what if it's all a lie? Tell us what if it's all a lie? What if everything you believe is nonsense?

What then? He said scornfully and with a smile on his face. And the Christian stopped and he thought for a moment. And then he answered well if it's a lie and if there's no God and no heaven then when I get to the end of my life I will know nothing and I will lose nothing.

[69 : 01] And the life I am living the life I will have lived will have been a happy contented one. Then he turned the question around in the taxi driver.

He says what about you? What if everything you believe is a lie? What if there is a God? As I believe there is a God.

And what if he is waiting for you on the day that you step from time into eternity? And what if you are someone who has persistently rebutted the advances of the eternal almighty God?

What if you have lived a life that over the years has consistently said to him I don't want you, I don't want to know you, I don't care about your son Jesus? and all of a sudden you are standing before him.

What then? What will you say? And for once in his life the taxi driver was silent. Christmas is the time where we remember that God the almighty the eternal the triune creator God came close to us in Christ so that we would be enabled sinners as we are so that we would be enabled to come close to him through Christ and all Christ and all Christ would do to take our sin away.

[70 : 48] Christmas is the time where families and friends travel over land and sea to be close to each other. the question is will you this Christmas come close to God?

Jesus has opened up the way. Jesus is the way. And so as the spirit opens our eyes come to the father through Jesus the son in him was and in him is life and that life is the light of men.

we'll continue that next week. That's great. Our heavenly father we do thank you once more that you have revealed yourself to us.

We thank you that we can come to you as our father in prayer through the work and through the name of Jesus the son. And we thank you that we are drawn and guided by the Holy Spirit who comes to live in us the moment that we believe.

And we pray Lord that you would give us faith. That there wouldn't be a soul that walks out through this door this morning that would not believe. You've shown us in your word that although our bodies have a fallen inevitability about our decay, name, we know that our souls are eternal, as you are eternal, and you've made us thirst for what is beyond this world, and so we pray that as we go from here to stay, that we would make our calling and our election sure, by not only hearing, but by believing in Jesus, and coming into fellowship with you as our one true

[73 : 33] God. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing from the Red Hymn book, the words on the screen also, hymn number 168.

168. Paraphrase of these words of prophecy from Isaiah chapter 9.

The race that long in darkness pine, I've seen a glorious light, the people dwell in day, who dwelt in death surrounding night. To us a child of hope is born, to us a son is given, him shall the tribes of earth obey, him all the hosts of heaven, and so on.

We sing the whole hymn to God's face. The race that long in darkness pine, and see die glories Arthur sing to him all hew away, ape, up, in ought the life to which has become

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS 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 both now and forevermore. Amen.

[76 : 42]