20.12.20 Christmas Family Service

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Date: 20 December 2020

[0:00] well good afternoon and a warm welcome to this family service this afternoon we're not in the church sadly today because all the boys and girls and mums and dads can't all fit in the church so we're having the service online and we're having the service at home but you'll understand why we're doing that as the service goes on as well so we're going to begin this time of worship and we're going to sing to god's praise and we're singing that familiar carol o little town of bethlehem how still we see you lie above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by yet in your dark streets shining as everlasting light the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight for christ is born of mary and we'll sing the whole of this hymn and cammy's going to lead us in this carol oh little town of bethlehem how still we see you lie above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by yet in your dark streets shining as everlasting light the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you in your dark streets shining as everlasting light the hope and dreams are met in you tonight for christ is born of mary and gathered all above while mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wandering love oh morning stars together proclaim the holy birth and praise the holy birth and praise the sing to god the king and peace to men on earth how silently how silently how silently the wondrous gift is given so god impart to human hearts the blessing of his heaven no ear may hear his coming but in this world of sin where meek souls will receive him still the dear christ and tergian

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. Okay, let's close our eyes and let's speak to God as we pray.

Lord God, we thank you for this day. We thank you that we're able to come together in this way and worship you. We thank you for the carol that we were able to sing in our own homes.

[4:16] We thank you that it reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas, that Christ came into this world. We thank you that he came from heaven to earth and he was laid in a manger, but he was headed for a cross.

We thank you that so much did God love the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, would not die, but have everlasting life.

Help us, Lord, we pray, in all the busyness of Christmas to be able to see and hear and know the presence of Jesus. His name was Jesus because he would be the saviour of our sin.

His name was Emmanuel because he was and is God with us. And we thank you, Lord, that you've promised that even today you are with us, that when two or three of us meet together, in the name of Jesus, you are here.

So we pray that we would know that you're close to us in our homes. And we pray that you would help us in this service to be able to meet with you in a new way. We pray for those who are struggling at this time of year.

[5:30] It's a happy time for many people, but some people find it very difficult. And for those who are sad because they miss loved ones who have either gone from this world into eternity, or for those who miss loved ones who can't get home because they're working in hospitals or other places, we ask that you would comfort them and that you would strengthen them.

We thank you that you promise that you are the God who comes close to us and helps us when we need that comfort. And for any who are sick, we pray, Lord, that you would lay your hands of healing upon them.

For those who are worried about anything, we thank you that the message of Christmas is a message where we hear the angels say, Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy.

The Saviour has come into this world. So thank you, Lord, for the message of Jesus. Help us to hear and understand and to believe that message.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, I expect that you are very excited by now because if my sums are right, there are only five sleeps till Christmas.

So you've probably bought all your presents, yes? You have probably got the decorations up in your house. You might have a silly jumper on, a Christmas jumper like mine. That makes me feel a bit daft.

You will probably, almost certainly, have one of these things in the house. The Christmas tree. And that's what I want to do this afternoon.

I want to show you some of the things that are on the Christmas tree that help us to think through the Christmas story as we find it in the Bible.

So we start at the beginning and the first thing I want us to see this afternoon, actually, it's just the whole of the tree. We see the tree. And where do we see a tree in the Bible?

Well, you know the answer to that question, don't you? Because you've been studying the same passages that we've been looking at in the big church and we find the answer in Genesis.

[7:45] Remember God in the beginning, he created the world and he made Adam and Eve and he put them in this garden and he said to them, you can enjoy this garden. It was a beautiful garden.

It was full of trees and these trees were full of lots of good fruit. And God said to them, you can enjoy any of that stuff. There's just one tree that I don't want you to eat from.

And in Genesis 2 verse 17, this is what God said to Adam. He said, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it, you will surely die.

It's very serious, but it was a very clear message, wasn't it? So what happened next? Well, you know the answer, don't you? Adam and Eve, they didn't listen to God.

They listened to the slithering serpent. They listened to the devil. And he tempted them to take the fruit from the tree that they shouldn't have taken the fruit from and they ate it.

[8:47] And when they ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, sin came into the world. And God was looking and he saw all of that happening.

And he saw that Adam and Eve did the only thing that he told them not to do. They went against God. So what did God do? Did he go against them?

Did he say, well, that's it. I'm finished with Adam and Eve. I'm done with them. I'll just leave them in the sin that they've brought into this world.

Well, that's not what God said at all, is it? No, God said, I'm going to save them. Yes, they've sinned. Yes, they've gone against me.

But I'm going to save them. And so God, he said to the devil who had tricked Adam and Eve. He said to the devil, I'm going to send someone into this world and he will crush your head, devil.

[9:47] And you will strike his heel. That was God's promise in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. So who was God speaking about? Who is it that would come to this world and who would crush the devil?

Who is it that would come to this world that would be the saviour? Well, you know the answer to that question, don't you? You'd be shouting it out if you were in church. The answer is Jesus. So the first thing that we see this afternoon is the tree.

And the tree reminds us of our sin. But it also reminds us of God's promise to send Jesus to be our saviour. Now what's the second thing I want us to see?

Well, the second thing I want us to see is on the tree and it's all the lights. At Christmas time we see lots and lots of lights. We see them around Tarbert when we look out the window.

And we see them on the Christmas tree. Lots and lots of lights. Now when we think about what Adam and Eve did when sin came into the world, what does sin bring into this world?

[10:51] Well, the Bible tells us in lots of places that sin brings darkness into this world. And darkness is not something that we like being in, is it? When we're out and it starts to get dark, and we're out on our own in the middle of the night, it can feel very scary when we're in the dark.

Even when we're in our own rooms, if everything's really dark, sometimes we can feel a bit scared in the dark. And darkness, it doesn't just make us feel a bit scared, but it makes us lost

Because when we're in the darkness, we can't see the right way to go. And when we try to move forward, we bump into things, and we fall over, and we can get hurt.

And that's what sin did. It made everything dark. But God's promise, when he saw that darkness, that was coming into the world through what Adam and Eve did, God's promise was to send a saviour.

That was his promise to Adam and Eve. It was his promise all the way through the Bible, all the way through the Old Testament. We could go to lots of different places, but I just want to go to one place in the Old Testament.

[11:59] And it's to Isaiah, in chapter 9. Now Isaiah was living about 600 years before Jesus was born. And Isaiah is given a promise from God that he passes on to the people.

And Katrina is now going to read that passage from Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 9, verses 2, 6, and 7. Now let's feel a hooligan, yeah?

Isaiah 9, verse 2 and 6. Verse 2. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light on those living in the land of the shadow of death.

A light has dawned. Verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Merry Christmas everyone. Thank you Katrina. So, when we think about the words that Katrina read, the people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

[13:21] Who was this great light that God was pointing to? Well, the answer is Jesus. He was the light that was promised.

And how do we know that he was the light that Isaiah was pointing us to? Well, we know because Jesus told us himself that he was the light. And he said that in Luke chapter 8 and verse 12.

And Lily is going to read that verse for us now, please. When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk into darkness, but will have the light of life.

Thank you, Lily. Luke chapter 8 verse 12, we hear Jesus saying so clearly, I am the light of the world. So when we see all the lights that are on the Christmas tree, and when we see all the lights that are around us at Christmas time, they remind us of Jesus, the light of the world, who would come into this world to overcome darkness and save us from our sins.

[14:41] And we're going to sing about that now in the Columby Cannon song, Jesus Saves. The world belongs to God.

He spoke and there it was. Though it was very good, it all went bad because the man that God had made and the woman there with him turned their back on God to get a deadly taste of sin.

But Jesus saves, Jesus saves, Jesus is the way. Jesus is the Savior. You can come to him today. Jesus saves, Jesus saves people from their sin.

You will find forgiveness when you put your trust in him. Go. Well, if you look around, you'll see how sin has spread.

Turning light to dark and living things to dead. But God still rules the world. He always had a plan to send his Son to save us in the likeness of a man.

[15:59] Jesus saves, Jesus saves, Jesus is the way. Jesus is the Savior. You can come to him today. Hey! Jesus saves, Jesus saves people from their sin.

You will find forgiveness when you put your trust in him. All right, shoes on the other foot now, will he? He'll find forgiveness when you put your trust in him. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, if you come to God, you still have time, you know.

He'll wash your sinful heart and make it white as snow. Come taste eternal life and death will have no sting. All who trust in Jesus are the children of the King.

So sing! Jesus saves, Jesus saves, Jesus is the way. Jesus is the Savior. You can come to him today. Hey! Jesus saves, Jesus saves people from their sin.

[17:11] You will find forgiveness when you put your trust in him. I said, you will find forgiveness when you put your trust in him.

Okay, what's next to see on the Christmas tree? Well, the next thing I want to show you from the Christmas tree, there's quite a few of them on this Christmas tree. There's one.

There's another. There is another. And I see a few more that I won't pull off the tree. I can't even pull that one off the tree. But what are these things there?

You see them? Well, they are angels. And on every Christmas tree, I think there's one at the very top of this Christmas tree as well, every Christmas tree has angels on them.

So why is that? Why do we have angels on our Christmas tree? What does the angel remind us of? Well, you've guessed it. It's not very hard to guess.

[18:19] The angel in the Christmas tree reminds us of the angel in the Christmas story. And Bella's now going to read from Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 to 25.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to the public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet.

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. They will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son, and they gave him the name Jesus. Thank you, Bella. It would be an amazing thing, wouldn't it, to see an angel.

Even if it was in a dream, like Joseph had, it would still be an amazing thing to be able to see and meet and speak and listen to an angel.

But you notice, in the dream that Joseph has, where he meets with this angel, the angel doesn't say to Joseph, I can see you're amazed, Joseph, and I am kind of amazing, so let me tell you all about me.

No, that the angel, that wasn't the angel's job. The angel was a messenger from heaven. And the angel came to tell Joseph that this promise of a saviour that they'd grown up hearing all about, this promise that had been given to generation after generation for hundreds of years, the angel came to Joseph to say, this promise, Joseph, is coming true.

The saviour is coming and his name will be Jesus. And he was God with us. So, the angel reminds us of the angel who pointed Joseph and us to Jesus.

[21:08] So, the angel, that's the next thing that we see on the Christmas tree. I'll put them back up in a second. And the next thing I want us to see on the Christmas tree, there's a few of them on this Christmas tree, stars.

So, we see stars on the Christmas tree. Usually, the stars at the very top of the Christmas tree, but not always. So, we have three stars here for Anna, Grace and Lois.

I better show you that one too. There's Grace's star. So, what does the star help us to remember when we're thinking about the Christmas story? Well, again, it's not hard to figure this one out, is it?

The star reminds us of the star that we're told of in the Christmas story. And, we're going to hear about that now from Matthew chapter 2 verses 1 to 12 and Luke is going to read that passage for us.

Matthew 2 verses 1 to 12 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?

[22:23] 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, teachers, 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 the least among the rulers of Judah.

For out of you will become a ruler who will be my shepherd of people in Israel. Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and make up 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.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. Coming to the house, they then bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

[23:35] And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Thank you, Luke. So, if you were listening, I'm sure you were, what was the job of the star?

Well, the job of the star was to guide the Magi, the wise men, to the place where Jesus was. And what I want us to see is that everything seems to be pointing to Jesus.

The star led the wise men to Jesus. The angels, the angel told Joseph about Jesus.

The promises in the Old Testament of a light shining in the darkness, of a saviour for sinners, were promises that spoke to us about Jesus.

So we're getting pointed over and over and over again to Jesus. And I think that's something that we need to remember and we need to act on. Because sometimes at Christmas time there's so much going on that we don't know where to look.

[24:47] There's so much in the way of noise and there's so many sights to see and there's so many things that we can do. It's so busy that we almost just don't know where to look and what to do.

And the message that we're getting through all these verses is that we are to keep on looking to Jesus. We're to keep on fixing our eyes on Jesus.

And we'll sing again now. Happy, happy day Sing the joy of Christmas Fill the air with gladness All the earth All the earth To us the Son is given He leaves His throne in heaven God with us Oh, happy, happy day Happy day Christ the Lord The light of man Born to die And rise again Break the curse of death And save us From our sin It's a happy, happy day Sing the joy of Christmas Fill the air with gladness

All the earth All the earth To us the Son is given He leaves His throne in heaven God with us Oh, happy, happy day Happy day Let angels sing And do not fear Christ the servant King is here Bringing peace to all On whom God's favor rests It's a happy, happy day Sing the joy of Christmas Fill the air with gladness All the earth All the earth All the earth To us the Son is given He leaves His throne in heaven God with us Oh, happy, happy day Happy day

It's a happy day Sinner come and find release The incarnate Prince of Peace Let the wonder of His glory Fill your heart On this happy, happy day On this happy, happy day Sing the joy of Christmas Fill the air with gladness All the earth All the earth To us the Son is given He leaves His throne in heaven God with us Oh, happy, happy Emmanuel Happy, happy Come and find us So, happy, happy day

Okay, what's the next thing that we're going to see on our Christmas tree? Well, the next thing is is this Do you know what that is?

Well, it is a candy cane I thought we had lots of candy canes and you can kind of see this once was a candy cane I think it's a candy cane that somebody's bit in the bottom of and this is a candy cane that somebody's bit in the top of so if you imagine it like that that's what a candy cane should look like I'm not going to criticise anybody for biting because it was probably me that ate both But what does the candy cane remind us of?

These candy canes that are hanging on our Christmas trees Well, they remind us of the shepherds don't they? Because the shepherds they had and they still have sticks that are shaped like that and they would carry them around and they would use them for supporting themselves as they walked on the hills they would use them sometimes for working with the sheep So this reminds us of the shepherds and how the shepherds were the first people to be told about Jesus when he was born and Livy's now going to read about that from Luke chapter 2 and verses 8 to 20 Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20 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 of great joy that will be for all the people Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you He is Christ 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 and on earth peace to men 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 to them about this child And all who heard it were amazed and what the shepherds had said to them

But Mary treasured up 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 from God Don't you think it's an amazing thing boys and girls thank you very much by the way Libby for reading that Don't you think it's an amazing thing that God chose to tell the shepherds first that Jesus was born because shepherds were not the kind of people who were usually the first to get important news shepherds in that day they were kind of rough tough men and they were the kind of people you wouldn't normally expect to see in church they could be quite smelly because they wouldn't be able to wash for weeks they sometimes could be quite scary to people but God decided that these rough tough shepherds were the first men who needed to be told about Jesus and then we have just read about the wise men they were quite posh they were from the upper class they were very very clever people and

God had used the star to bring them to the place where Jesus was so we have these rough and tough and not very posh shepherds and then we have these very sophisticated wise men and God decided that they both needed to hear the good news about Jesus and I think that's God's way of showing us that everybody needs to hear about Jesus the good news about Jesus the saviour it's good news for all people that's what we just heard being read it's good news for all people not some but for all people including you and me so the candy cane reminds us of the shepherds and how they heard the good news about Jesus and the next thing I want to show you it's not on the Christmas tree it's just below the Christmas tree and it's around the room as well cards this is something that we get at Christmas time don't we we get cards and we give cards to people and cards are a way of us sharing messages with each other telling us telling each other that we love them that we care for them that we want them to have a good year and what do the cards remind us of well I think the cards that we get at Christmas and that we send at Christmas they remind us of God's message to us and where do we find God's message well we find

God's message in the Bible this is his big card that he sent with our names on it and if you want to know the real meaning of Christmas boys and girls then this is where you'll find the real meaning of Christmas if we were to watch the television and try to understand what the real meaning of Christmas was we'd get confused if we were just to be looking on our phones trying to figure out what's Christmas all about we would get into a right muddle because we might think it's about eating turkeys or we might think it's about buying as much stuff as we possibly can we might think that it's just about having as many parties as we could possibly fit into a week but that's not the real meaning of Christmas the real meaning of Christmas we find when we open God's card to us God's message to us the Bible and we learn it's all about Jesus and now

Stuart and Joyce and Emily are going to lead us as they sing Away in a manger Away in a manger Looking for a bed The little Lord Jesus Lay down his sweet head The stars in the bright sky Looked and where he lay And a little Lord Jesus As the upon the hay The cattle are lowing Let baby away But little Lord Jesus No crying he may I love you Lord Jesus Now down from the sky And stay by my side

Until morning is nigh Be near me Lord Jesus I ask you to stay Close by me forever And love me I pray Bless all the dear children in your tender care And pray to us for heaven To live with you there What's next again this is not something that's actually on the Christmas tree but this like the cards is just around the Christmas tree and what do we have around the Christmas tree what do we have that we usually put just beneath the Christmas tree well you know the answer to that don't you it's gifts presents and so we have one or two presents there just now there's probably one or two more coming it's very tempting isn't it to go and just peek inside to see what the presents are but even this morning a present came it's not for me but it came from

Calam and what does it say it says to the Sunday school so I have to try not to open this box of celebrations you can ask me about them when you see me next Christmas is about presents as well isn't it and you know the best present that was ever given well you've guessed it haven't you the best present that was ever given was Jesus and Miriam is now going to read that message from John chapter 3 and verses 16 and 17 thank you Miriam for reading that so we learn

[38:30] God so loved the world that he gave he gifted his own son to us so that if we believe in him we don't die but we have everlasting life we're saved so the best gift that was ever given was Jesus and he was given to you see this present here is not for me so I have to make sure I don't open this and start eating it but the present of Jesus he was given for you he was given to you so that you and I can be saved from our sins and how could that happen we might ask how could our sins just disappear how could our sins be taken away when we know that we sin all the time well the answer to that question takes us back to the very beginning it takes us back to the tree we started by looking at the tree and

> I want to finish by looking at the tree and yes the tree reminds us of our sin but it also reminds us of our saviour doesn't it because he loved us so much he was willing to go to the cross and to be hung on a tree to save us from our sin and Peter told us of that in 1 Peter chapter 2 and at verse 24 and John is going to read that verse for this night please he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live righteousness by his wounds you have been healed thank you John so that's where we finish we started with the tree and we finish looking at the tree the cross where Jesus went to show how much he loved us and to make it possible for us to be saved forever and we're going to sing now about that we're singing about the child in the manger who saves us from all our demerits all our sins and

CJ and Anna will sing this one for us chapter you you Sonia tenaeth, fiescatu Child in a manger, infant of Mary Outcast and stranger, lord of us all Child who inherits all our transgressions

All our demands upon him fall Once the most holy child of salvation Gentle and lowly lived here below Now as our glorious mighty Redeemer See him victorious over each foe Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder Angels behold him on his throne Worthy our saviour

Of all our praises Happy forever Forever are his own Okay boys and girls Thank you very much for listening this afternoon And for tuning in And I know it doesn't say in the Bible anywhere That we're to put up a Christmas tree I know some people don't really like Christmas trees very much But it's just a reminder for us I think Of the fact That it's Christmas It's that special time of year So when you're looking at your Christmas tree Over the next few days As you get closer and closer to Christmas Think about all these things Think about the tree And how the tree tells us about our sin And our saviour Think about the lights

And about how these lights point us to Jesus Who is the light of the world Think about the candy cane That speaks to us about the shepherds Who were told the good news about Jesus Think about the stars That we see on the Christmas tree That led the wise men to see Jesus Think about the angels that told Joseph That Jesus, the saviour, was coming Think about the cards that we see around our houses And how these cards remind us of the message The gift that God gave to us That we find in his message to us The gift of Jesus Who was the word made flesh Think about all these things Think about how much God loves you Think about the real message of Christmas And we'll pray just as we finish Lord God, again we thank you

That you are with us We thank you for the message of Christmas And we ask that you would help us To remember Help us to think about these things And not just to think about these things But help us to believe So that we know for sure That we are those Who will not perish But who will be saved forever Because of your son Jesus Whom you loved So much and yet gave to us So that we could be safe forever So hear our prayers And help us we ask in Jesus name Amen And we're going to sing now To finish the carol that Ian A Will lead us in In the bleak midwinter And it's a carol that finishes by By asking us the question What will we give to Jesus?

What can we give to Jesus? And the answer to that question That we can sing of if we mean it Is we can give him our hearts In the bleak midwinter Frosty wind played moan The earth stood hard as high In the water like a stone Snow had fallen Snow on snow In the bleak midwinter Long ago Our God

Our God Him cannot hold him Nor earth sustain Heaven Earth shall flee away When he comes to reign In the bleak midwinter A stable place of fire The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ Angels and angels Archangels may have gathered there Chet have been man set a friend from the air

But his mother only in her maiden way Worship the beloved With a king The King The King What can I give Him, as crude as I am?

[48:27] What can I give Him, as crude as I am? As I am If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb If I were a wise man I would do my part If what I can I give him Give my all Give my all Give my all 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 at this Christmas time and forevermore. Amen. One last thing just to wish you all a very Merry Christmas. Every blessing. Amen.

Bye-bye. Let's do it. We'll see you next week. Let's do it. Let's do it.