

Christingle

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Date: 14 December 2025

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[0:00] For all the people. Earlier this year, as most of you know, we welcomed a baby into the world.

! And when you welcome a baby into the world, it's good news. You've got a little baby, a new life. And so what do you do? You share that good news with people around you. You tell them, you get out your phone and you tell them on WhatsApp and social media, we've got good news, there's a baby being born. But the way to let people know, I don't think, is to go to some random field in the middle of the night and tell a group of smelly, scruffy shepherds.

But that's the way this good news is shared with people on that first Christmas. And that got me thinking. Can you imagine the conversation between God and angels as this was God's plan, being told to the angels, you've got to go to some shepherds.

Now, this is completely made up, but this is how ridiculous I think it is. Okay, so God says, I want you to go and tell some shepherds in the fields at night about my coming.

An angel says, what? Shepherds? Of all the people in the world, you want us to tell shepherds? Yes, that's right. We must tell the shepherds.

[1:38] But they are just very ordinary. They look after sheep. They get muddy. They're very smelly. They're a bit scruffy. You've made this whole world.

You live in heaven. You are gloriously awesome. Shouldn't we tell the king? Some royalties? Some celebrities?

The newspapers? Anyone but the shepherds? And God says, no, this news is for everyone. Even those ordinary shepherds in the field.

This is good news for all people. So whether we are rich or poor, whether we go to school, go to work, can't work, we're retired, whether we're young or old or somewhere in between, this news is literally for all of us.

And it's news of great joy. Remember, our shepherd was terrified. But the angel said, do not be afraid.

[2:57] I bring you good news that's of great joy. The joy of Christmas Day is exciting. It's exciting to wake up and find out what presents we've got under the tree.

But the joy that God is bringing to the world is joy that not only lasts for a day or a morning. It's joy that will go on through the rest of our lives, no matter what's going on the outside.

A deep joy within. Knowing that God has come to be with us. God has come to show love for us. And that scene in the little baby that we'll think about in a moment.

But firstly, we're going to take a pause there and sing a song. See him lying on a bed of straw. And this hymn helps us to see the shepherds who leave their fields and go to Bethlehem to see the saviour of the world.

So we'll stand and sing when the music begins. Oh, now now we need to bend again. To see the Lord above again.

[4:13] Just as for us was disabled then. The drinks will glory again. Angels sing again, the song is signed.

Sing the glory of the gracious man. Sing the Bethlehem to bring the kind. Be the saviour of the Lord. Oh, now carry me to Bethlehem. To see the Lord above again. Just as for us was disabled then. The drinks will glory when you sing. Find our wishes from your poverty. From your innocence eternity.

Find forgiveness of your death for me. Shall we saw her for my glory? Oh, now carry me to Bethlehem.

[5:13] To see the Lord above again. Just as for us was disabled then. The drinks will glory when you sing.

Glory shining. And terrified shepherds. Surprise number two. Good news for all.

Saying to those shepherds, do not be afraid. I bring you good news for all. So let's see what our final surprise is.

It's this. God becomes small. God becomes small. Because this news that the angels say is about a baby being born.

So verse 10 says, But the angel said, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

[6:12] Because today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby, a little baby, wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger. This good news is about a baby.

And it's about a baby who we find is God. He is the Lord. He is God. In other words, God was becoming a baby.

The big, awesome, glorious God, whose glory shone all around the shepherds, is becoming tiny. You might think, How was God shining in the field with his glorious light and being born as a baby at the same time?

Well, the Bible shows us that God is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we know from the Bible that that baby born is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God, become a little baby.

[7:32] And this is a surprise. Though you might be thinking, It's not a surprise, Daniel. I've been to church lots of times at Christmas, and it's always the same. Jesus becomes a baby.

God becomes a baby. But let's think about it really carefully. It really is a surprise. Think about a baby. It's not hard for me at the moment to think about a baby.

We've got one at home. And I still remember that first night at the hospital. I didn't know what was going on. We had this little, tiny, helpless baby we'd just met, and he kept crying and sleeping and pooing.

And it's astonishing, isn't it, to think that God became one of them. A tiny, crying, helpless, sleepy, pooey little baby.

It's amazing. And that's what happens. Remember, the angel says, you will find a baby, a new baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

[8:45] The glorious God of light becomes this little baby. And we're told by the angel he becomes that so that he can be a savior.

Some of the adults here might get boring presents this Christmas. A bit like this. A nice wrapped set in a nice cardboard box of shower gel and deodorant.

And we think, thank you so much for thinking of me, for buying that. But do you think that I smell? Do you think I need a wash?

Is that why you've given me such a present? And when we hear at Christmas time that God becomes small to be a savior, we can think, wow, amazing.

But also, we should be thinking, hang on a minute. Why do I need a savior? Does that mean I've done something wrong? Does that mean I'm in some sort of trouble?

[9:53] What does it mean that Jesus is born to be a savior? Yeah. Well, let's think about it in this way. In films, there's often good people and bad people.

Often it's very obvious who the goodies and who the baddies are. Let me tell you about one of my favorite Christmas films. It's this one, Nativity. The first one, I think, is the best.

You can change my mind later if you want, but Nativity. And I think there's very clearly a good side and a bad side, although none of them are perfect.

The good side, Mr. Madden's at St. Bernadette's school, a little struggling small school trying to put on a nativity. And bad, Oakmore School with Mr. Shakespeare who is really rather mean and he wants to disrupt this nativity, especially when he hears that Hollywood are coming to town.

That makes him really angry and jealous and he wants the best nativity still so he decides to go out of the box and do a nativity about King Herod killing all the baby boys.

[11:09] Good versus bad. And in the Bible, we can clearly see there is also good versus bad.

God's. The good is God's. He is perfectly good. He has made such a wonderful, good world full of good people, full of lots of good things.

And when we ourselves find that we are doing good things, when we say kind words to others, when we give good presents at Christmas time, when we say our thank yous and pleases, we can think, wow, God is at work.

He is good and there is good in me. But also, the world has gone bad. And it's gone bad because we ourselves have turned away from God who is good.

And that also means that within us, there is things that aren't good. There are things like lies and bad words that we say to people.

[12:20] We get jealous of what someone else has at Christmas. We think, why can't I have that? We cheat at games. We refuse to share things with our brothers and sisters.

There is bad within us. And the Bible calls that bad sin. And the Bible says that sin, if we sin, which we all do, it deserves death.

It deserves to be punished. But the good news of Christmas is that the angel says, do not be afraid. Today, a saviour has been born.

And we see that saviour in the helpless little baby born in the manger who then grows up to go and die on a cross for us in our place for all those bad things that we do, for all those sins.

Jesus is born to be a saviour. That's the message that the shepherds on that field that night get to hear.

[13:37] And so it's no surprise, and we didn't quite get to it in our reading, that those shepherds, they hurry off to Bethlehem to see God who becomes small.

God who's come to be their saviour. And I think we can learn from them in that. I think that's the one that we also need to hurry off to.

And he's no longer a little baby in Bethlehem. He's now in heaven and is ready to listen to any of us wherever we are. We can literally talk to him and say, please forgive me for my sin.

Please become my saviour and help me to live for you. this really is good news of joy which is for all the people even for us here today.

Let me say a prayer and then we'll talk about Christingles. And Father God, thank you for this good news that you gave to those shepherds.

[14:49] thank you so much that Jesus was born. Jesus who is God, a helpless little crying even pooing baby for us so that we can be saved.

Help us to think about these things carefully and to find him as our saviour we pray and we ask this in Jesus name.

Amen. So, Christingle. Some of us know what Christingles are. We've done this for a few years now.

Others of us have no idea what's to come. So, Christingle. Let me tell you just a little bit about how it started. There was a chap in Germany called Johannes.

250 years ago and he wanted to explain the Christmas story to people in his church very simply and so he invented the Christingle.

[15:57] Back then though the Christingle didn't begin with an orange it began with a cabbage. Can you imagine holding a cabbage in your hands this evening?

It would be quite heavy it would be quite tough to get a candle in a cabbage I reckon so thankfully we now have oranges and I think that was started by the children's society in this country so if you want to do your research on them please do at a later point.

So, parts of the Christingle you should have a bag a brown paper bag with the parts in it if you don't have one and you want one go and grab them off Julie who's just there on the way you came in and find in there your orange and when you've got it why didn't you hold up your orange I'm going to find mine as well here we go here's an orange excellent anyone let's make sure everyone's got one who

wants one great proudly waving our oranges anyone guess what does the orange mean what does the orange mean anyone want to guess oh it's hard actually because you're all holding your hands up anyway Mark what's the orange about it's about the world excellent there you go that's it if we had a cabbage in case you don't know what a cabbage is the Bible says about the world the world is the Lord's the earth is the Lord's and everything in it the world and all who live in it this world is the Lord's he has made it it's his it's his world excellent next up in your bag you should find some sticks and some sweets now instructions with your sticks there should be four and we with Chris Dingles put four in the four corners of the orange so I'll let you stick them on and then you want to get your sweets and the plan with the sweets you can rebel against the plan if you want to but the plan with the sweets is to get three sweets on your stick I've actually snuck on an extra one by the looks of things three sweets on each stick and then for very important health and safety reasons you should find a marshmallow and the marshmallow should go on the end of your stick let me find my marshmallow here we go your marshmallow should go on the end of your stick to help you to stop catching your finger on the end and causing an awful injury so we'll let you make your sticks and sweets my marshmallow happens to be incredibly sticky how's it going getting your sticks sweets on anyone got any tips shove it on put it on first put it on before you put it on your world someone says oh that that does make sense actually wise advice from Samuel Rayfield thank you Thank you.

[20:31] Thank you.

Thank you. Now, whilst you're doing this, you might want to be thinking, what do the sweets and the sticks represent?

Have a think. I need two more marshmallows. Huh? Shouldn't have done. Have you got...

Have you put more on your... There should be about three for each stick. Ah, you might run into problems.

Well done, Gracie. Good job. Our shepherd's got a Christingle.

[22:00] Nice of you to stay around. Good job. So it should look something like that, if you're not sure.

Something like that. Well done. I'm going to ask... Anyone guess what do the sweets and sticks mean?

Anyone got any guesses? Gracie. People. People. Not people. Nope. Isaac.

Who? Seasons. Yes, there's four seasons. Autumn, winter. I'm going to forget one. Spring and summer. And what do you think the sweets on the sticks represent?

Anyone think sweets are good? Elijah, do you think sweets are quite good? They're not bad, are they? They represent good things.

[23:12] Good things that God gives to us. He gives us much more good things than just sweets. And perhaps it's arguable that sweets are actually good. Good things in the world in each season of the year.

Okay. And here's a Bible verse for us. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Okay. We've got candles. Now, new for this year, they've got some sticks in the bottom. So you should be able to just, like, stab them in. If you're under four, we recommend a glow stick.

And if you haven't been given one, perhaps wave your hand, and we'll get one to you. But yes, that should go in the middle. So much simpler than the sticks. And it should look something like that.

Anyone want to guess what does the candle mean? I think I said it earlier. So we'll see if you've been listening. Samuel, go on.

[24:25] Light, definitely to do with light. God is the light of the world. Jesus is the light of the world. Is that what you were going to say? Yeah. Jesus is the light of the world.

And we read this about Jesus in John 1, verse 4. In him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. Amazing.

Now, this one has been done for you. I haven't asked, but yeah. What does the red line mean?

Blood. Whose blood? Blood of Jesus. Yeah. Quite a lot of us thought about that this morning, didn't we? In Jesus, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Because Jesus didn't stay a little helpless, cry, poeey baby. He grew up and he shed his blood for us. And the whole Christingle shows.

[25:27] For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So that's the Christingle. That's what we're remembering as we gather here today. So, comes the exciting bit.

We're going to get these Christingles lighted. So, it's a slightly scary but mainly exciting bit. And then, once they're all lit, we're going to sing a carol together, Silent Night.

Silent Night.

Holy night. Holy night. Holy night. Holy night. Holy night. Holy night. Holy night.

[26:32] Holy night. Round your blood. In our night. Child. Holy infant.

So tender and fine. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Glory streams from heaven afar. Let these hosts sing hallelujah.

Christ the Savior is born. Oh, Christ the Savior is born.

Silent night. Holy night. Holy night. Son of God.

[27:57] Love's filled high. Radiant beams. Family screams. Family screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams! screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams screams! survival in place with the glorious living grace Jesus Lord and my God Jesus Lord and my God I'll just take a moment to enjoy the Christingles before we blow them out I'm going to count down from five and then we can all blow Father God thank you so much for the world that you have made thank you for your incredible generous love to the world that we can see in our Christingles thank you for winter and the good gifts of Christmas and snow and hot chocolates and evergreen trees

Father thank you for winter time thank you for springtime and the new life that we see appearing all around us thank you that it brings Easter and a special memory of what the Lord Jesus has done in his death and resurrection and the beginnings of war thank you for summertime and the chances to go on holiday and enjoy the sun sand sea ice cream Father thank you for summer for the autumn time thank you for the oranges the red colours the falling leaves the harvest of food that you provide thank you for all these good things throughout the year and more and thank you that the Christingles reminds us of Jesus the light of the world who has come into this world to be the saviour we pray that you'd help us to keep remembering him and keep looking to him over this Christmas time as we see other

Christmas lights and other candles would it remind us of Jesus and the light and life that he brings thanks and Father we pray for those who are in our worlds particularly at this Christmas time who are struggling we pray for those who don't have homes to live in we pray that you would provide shelter and warmth and food for them we pray for those who are remembering and grieving loved ones dear to them that they particularly miss at this Christmas time Father please draw close to them and for any others that are on our minds who are struggling at the moment Lord we take a moment just to name them before you now and we ask all of these things in the name of Jesus the great saviour amen just a reminder there are other things going on at Calvary over the Christmas season this time next week some people will be here preparing for carols by candlelight more candles involved a slightly different service but another great service to be at and to invite people along to so carols by candlelight next Sunday at half past six and then if you're here on Christmas day 10.30 in the morning a great way to celebrate the Lord Jesus on the big day itself do come and join us then if you can but we're going to end with this song we sing it every time at the Christingle and I certainly don't get bored of it so hopefully you won't either and you'll go out with the chorus particularly in your minds this song goes to the tune that we all know Jingle Bells and Siouxs Thank you.

Thank you.

[33:19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.