

He is With You to Deliver You

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you that we can meet. Viruses come and go. Worry and anxiety comes and goes.

Being popular or unpopular, fitting in with the culture or not, all of these things come and go. And we give you thanks and praise that this morning we can gather together to be in your presence, to hear your word, to receive grace from you.

And we ask, Lord, that you help us to be in your presence, to be open and receptive to your grace that you desire to give us this morning, and help us to respond in a way which is worthy, that is good for us and worthy of you.

And we ask this in the precious name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Do we have both mics on, or is it just my hearing or something?

Everything's fine? Okay, it's just my hearing. You guys watching it online, you always get this little bit of extra commentary from me. So I don't have my hearing aid in either, so that might be part of it.

[1 : 10] So one of the things which, I don't know if I'm very different than other people, I seem to be different than a lot of people in my family, and that is that I have very few memories of my childhood.

In fact, I don't know if I have any memories, other than maybe one, of before I was six. And even, I think, you know, the couple of years after that, it's hard for me to have really that many specific memories of them.

And I know, at least in the case of my family, that I seem to be an outlier. A lot of, you know, my wife and my kids have a lot more memories of their childhood. So what I can say, you know, spoiler alert, if you're watching this or something like that, I don't know when I stop believing in Santa, like I probably did.

But I have no memory of believing in Santa, and I have no memory of stopping believing in Santa. But then again, that's not surprising, since I have no memories of my childhood, or my early childhood.

So it doesn't surprise me, that it shouldn't surprise me that I don't have memories of it. The point of this is that the Santa story is actually better if it's not true.

[2 : 19] Like, it's a better story if you know that it's not true. Like, if you think about it for a second, if Santa's story is true, it would be a bit creepy. Like, he knows if you're being naughty and nice.

Like, really? He's looking at you all the time? Like, that's a bit creepy. I mean, we'd actually call that stalking, and there's laws against it in Canada. And the second thing about it, if you think about it is, and maybe I'm the only one, but I've never got a gift from Santa.

I mean, it would actually be sort of interesting if one day they discovered that Santa's true, the whole Santa story is correct, and what's actually happened is that all of North America and Europe are naughty, and that's why we haven't gotten any gifts.

And that would actually make us all pretty mad to discover that we're so bad in Santa's eyes that we haven't gotten any gifts. So the Santa story is actually better if it's not true, and it's, you know, a fine enough story.

The thing is, though, that for real Christians, the Christmas story has to be true. You know, I think for a lot of my secular friends, I mean, they'd almost think, I mean, they'd know that, obviously, Jesus probably really lived, but they'd probably not make much of a distinction between the Jesus birth story and the Santa story and the other types of things.

[3 : 35] They're all just sort of close to each other, but most of them would acknowledge that Jesus probably really lived in history, just like the Buddha really lived in history. But they don't, it doesn't really, well, for my secular friends, if you happen to be watching, for Christians, it's absolutely

essential that the Christians, that the birth story of Jesus is true.

And so we're going to look at it, and we're going to look a little bit about why it is that we would be so odd to think that it matters, that it's true. Today we're looking at the, in fact, actually what we're doing is because Daniel Avitan and his church plant is his first time preaching through Christmas, I decided we would use the three classic Christmas texts for this Sunday, Christmas Eve, and Christmas morning.

So Matthew 1, Luke 2, and John 1. And so today we're looking at Matthew 1. And if you turn to your Bible, that would be a great help as we look at it. But I have to warn you that we're going to not begin where I read the text.

We're going to begin with the really boring bit that goes before it, which is the genealogy. So we're going to start at Matthew 1, verse 1. I was thinking about that this week, that the way the Bible is usually used in Hollywood, you actually hear it a lot.

It depends, I guess, on the type of movie you watch. But you often hear them say, it's going to be biblical. And that means the slaughter and explosions are going to be massive. It's going to be biblical.

[4 : 57] But probably there'd be another word. If you said it's going to be biblical, it would also mean boring. It's going to be very boring. It's going to be biblical. Because that's how a lot of Christians and non-Christians view bits of the Bible, especially ones like this.

And here's how it goes. But it's actually really significant. Look at how it begins. Matthew 1, verse 1. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. And we'll just pause there for a second. Now, here's the thing.

This story doesn't begin with once upon a time. It doesn't begin with any of the type of language of mythology or metaphor or symbolism.

It begins with a genealogy. It begins as if we're going to be talking about real people who really lived. And I've just paused there, but when we go through it in a bit, we're going to see that they mention in it like people who, it doesn't matter if you're an atheist or the world's biggest skeptic, there's no denying that some of the people who are mentioned in this genealogy are clear historical people of whom there is archaeological evidence of their existence and their existence having been reported in other types of cultures.

[6 : 19] So the thing is, in fact, if you could put up the first point, the first point is that Jesus is really real and true. And he's really human. He really did live.

And the whole, the beginning of the rest of the story, even if it's going to talk about these remarkable miracles, it's going to be talking about his claims to being God. It's going to talk about the things he did to offend people and all of this.

But it begins by Matthew saying in as concrete and specific a way as possible, Jesus really existed. Like, it's true that he existed. These things actually happened.

Now, you might disagree with him. You might think they're lying. But you have to understand that's at least the claim. And the claim that they happened is also going to be connected in a moment to the significance of the events, not just the fact that they happened.

And so that's, you know, that's how it begins right off the bat. But then it takes this really weird turn in verse 3. Actually, we'll just read verse 3 and then I'll tell you what the big weird turn is.

[7 : 19] And Judah, the father of Perez, and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez, the father of Hezron, and Hezron, the father of Ram. Now, just pause here.

And I don't know if we're going to read all of the verses in the genealogy, but we're going to read most of them. Now, this is a very, very weird turn that's just been taken here. And most of us, and I'm just like you, by the way, when I come to genealogies in the Bible, I don't read them minutely. I sort of let my eyes pass over them and then at some point in time I realize I've actually sort of finished reading the whole genealogy and not much stuck. So in the ancient world, and still in lots of parts of the world today, genealogies are, in a sense, almost like a CV.

It's trying to communicate to you why this individual is important, why they're significant, why they're a person of substance. And for lots of our, our culture has different ways to present this.

For instance, quite a few years ago now, I was in a place that I had a regular coffee shop at. There was a, the owner was Muslim, really, really fine guy. We had lots of good talks, but his father-in-law, who also worked in the restaurant, would never look at me.

[8 : 32] He'd see me there with the Bible. He would never talk to me, never smile to me. If I tried to talk to him at all, he would ignore me. And then I'd heard a talk, and I discovered that from that part of the world where the man was, because I knew the part of the world he was from, that sons were a marker of significance and substance.

And so I started to pray about this, and about a week or two after I was praying about it, the owner was there, and his father-in-law was right behind him. And the owner said, you have lots of kids, don't you?

And the father-in-law looked, and I said, yeah, I have five sons. And the man looked at me. He looked at me for the first time.

And from that time on, he talked to me. In his culture, I was a man of substance, of significance. Didn't matter if I was rich or poor, I had five sons.

And so in the ancient world, often genealogies are helping to communicate to people, your significance and your specialness. But here's what's, there's several things about this, which should just happen, which is really, really, really weird, and very, very revolutionary, and starts to set the stage that this story, historical, true, real story of Jesus, is going to be radically different than people would expect.

[9 : 53] First of all, it mentions a woman, which isn't unusual in our culture, but in the ancient world, you wouldn't have them mentioned. But here's the other thing which is significant about it, and you have to know what the relationship of Judah and Tamar is.

Now, in the world at that time, I know this sounds really weird to us, but we can't be ethnocentric. We can't see the world just through our eyes. We have to understand that cultures are different. In the ancient world, the land was very significant, and passing on the land, and your name was very significant. So there was a law that, like, you know, in my case, because I have a sister and a brother, if I had died, I married Louise, and if I died before Louise and I were able to have a child, then it would be my brother Stephen's obligation to sleep with Louise so she could have a child that would carry on my line.

It wouldn't carry on his line, it would carry on my line. And so that was the law at that particular time of Judah. And what happened is Judah's son, he had three sons.

The first son is given in marriage to Tamar, but the son dies before Tamar is able to have a child. So Judah follows the law and the custom of the day and gives his second son, but the second son dies before a baby is able to be produced.

[11 : 14] So now Judah is getting very superstitious, and he worries that if he gives his last son, to this woman to produce the heir, that that son will die.

But the son's young, so he puts off the woman. But he does more than that if you read the story. I guess nowadays we call it, he ghosts her. Is that the right word? He ghosts her. And not only does he ghost her, he doesn't even provide for her.

She has to go way off. He doesn't provide for her. He forgets about her. He just hopes she goes away, maybe dies of some virus or something like that. But the woman keeps track, and she sees that the son is now old enough to get married, but Judah's not doing anything about it.

So Tamar hears through the grapevine that Judah's going to be in the area for some events. So she dresses like a prostitute, and she goes to where the prostitutes hang out, and Judah's not a good guy.

Judah feels like having sex with a prostitute. So he goes to where the prostitutes hang out, and he picks up Tamar, and he sleeps with her. That's called incest.

[12 : 22] And he produces Perez and Zerah, twins. So, okay.

Like, you know, sometimes, like my kids all know, because, you know, I have an older kid and younger kid. My kids now know, don't go to dad for advice about CVs, because dad hasn't had to write a CV. Like, I mean, the wheel had just been invented, and back when I last had to do something, so I don't know how to get it.

But I think I know enough about, you don't put that type of stuff in your CV to impress. Like, you leave that stuff out. Like, you put the heroes, the successful people, you do all of that, but you leave this out.

His lineage goes back to a guy who goes to prostitutes, has incest, and that's part of Jesus' lineage. Like, for devout Jewish people who would have read that in the days when Matthew first wrote this, they would have gone, like, hmm. You didn't have to put that in. You know?

[13 : 35] But this isn't just like a little bit of an accident, as if, you know, it's just like for one of us, you know, we're doing our emails, and we're doing our emails, and then you press send, and then afterwards you're going, oops, I shouldn't have, well, sure, I forgot to edit that out.

No, no, no. You see that it's not a bug, it's a feature of the genealogy. Because look what continues happening in verse 4. And Ram, the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab, the father of Nishan, and Nishan, the father of Salmon, and Sammon, the father of Boaz, by Rahab, and Boaz, the father of Obed, by Ruth, and Obed, the father of Jesse, and now just stop there for a second, Rahab. Now, why is that sort of all of a sudden? First of all, it's another woman. So obviously, it's not just that he forgot to do the editing when he pressed send, but it's also very interesting for another reason.

You see, who's Rahab? Well, Rahab was a prostitute. Now, she also ends up being the hero of the faith, but she's a prostitute. And in a culture which is concerned with having, in a sense, the biological line being pure, and by the way, as soon as I say that, most, I don't know who, I don't care who'd be watching this, most Canadians would say, like, that's a creepy idea.

But you know one of the reasons why you think it's a creepy idea of pure lineage? It's because it's a Christian reason. Like, even if you don't remember that it ultimately comes from Christianity, that's actually where it comes from.

[15 : 07] It comes from the gospel and Christianity that we start to challenge this whole idea of racial purity.

It's like, in fact, you see, when, I just watch a really, really, really, really good movie. I don't, you know, a lot of times I watch movies I'm not necessarily recommending you watch it, but I'm watching a really, really good movie, just watch a good movie on Netflix called Just Mercy. True story. And if you watch that movie, one of the things that's just so offensive is that it doesn't say that all of the white people in Alabama are Christians, but you know they probably are. And their racial concerns is so abhorrent to the Bible. It is so deeply abhorrent to the Bible. And if nothing else, they just know to have it look at right here that Jesus' lineage includes a pagan who was a prostitute.

And that's part of his lineage. Now, Ruth is also a pagan, but is a heroine, so to speak, within the story. But then notice this, and then I'm going to do two more in this lineage, and then we'll move on.

[16 : 15] But you're getting the idea. Look at verse 6. And Jesse, the father of David the king, and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

Now, that's a better-known story. But what is that story about? Well, David's up one day, and he sees Bathsheba, and he thinks she's really sexy-looking. So he wines and dines her and sleeps with her.

And he makes her pregnant. And this is a big scandal. So he wants to cover it up. So he brings Bathsheba's wife, Bathsheba's husband Uriah, back from battle in the hope that Uriah will sleep with his wife and then mistakenly get the dates all mixed up and think that he's the father of the child.

But if you read the story, the first night Uriah doesn't do it because he's, dang, he's so honorable. How can I go to see my wife when the king's army is out there sleeping in tents without those creature comforts?

And David's probably saying, dang, I have to have a moral man when I've done something deeply immoral. And so the next night, David gets Uriah drunk. And even when Uriah's drunk, he's still an honorable, courageous, upstanding guy.

[17 : 42] And so David does, of course, the next best thing, which he has Uriah murdered. And Matthew puts this in here when he's doing his lineage.

The child of that, of the adultery, dies. And the next child that's born is Solomon, who ends up becoming the king. If you just skip down a little bit to verse 10, we'll just give you one more thing about this whole lineage.

Look at verse 10. And Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh, the father of Amos, and Amos, the father of Joseph. Well, Josiah. Well, first of all, you could go through this whole thing and if you looked up the different biblical references to them, you'd be a bit shocked.

I mean, they're not all just really terrible people. But Amos was such a bad king that the officials killed him. But Manasseh, Manasseh brought fertility religions back in.

And now what is fertility religions? Well, fertility religions mean if let's say the Morides or some other family or the Sinclairs, I was really happy. You know, we were really, money was really tight for decades with us.

[18 : 55] So one way out of it is I could have sold some of my daughters to the temple and got money. And if I sold my daughters to the temple for money, I'd get money, I'd be helped, I'd have two less mouths.

Let's say I sold two of my daughters. I'd have two less mouths to feed and I'd have a good chunk of money and my daughter would become a prostitute for the temple because there's a, Manasseh brought back into Israel this idea that a guy could go into a temple and have sex with a woman as an act of worship.

Like this is horrific and that's what Manasseh brought back and he even brought back in another practice that if I wasn't having enough favor from God, well, I have five sons, I can kill one of the sons because I believe that there's this, like, how do you want to get the most powerful God is going to ask you to do the most horrific things.

Like that's how the ancient mind thinks. The most powerful God asks you to do the most horrific things. And so what could be more horrific than going and having my own son murdered so that I could earn favor with God and be prosperous.

And that's what Manasseh did himself. He not only introduced it, that's what he did. And he's in the lineage. Sorry, I just love this.

[20 : 20] You know, they talk about the Christian radio, they want to say the word Christian for the Christian radio station so they call it family and it's family friendly. This isn't family friendly. Like, they wouldn't be able to tell the story on a family friendly radio station.

Like, this isn't what you're expecting. And I can just imagine my non-Christian friends saying, whoa, I didn't realize there's a lot more drama in the Bible than I thought there was in this boring thing. But here's the thing.

Here's the thing. If you could put up the point. Jesus' lineage is a train wreck. Jesus' lineage is a train wreck. That's the point.

And there's a whole lot of other things you could talk about just with this one, you know, boring linea. You know, boring if you just started reading it like I am. But if you think about it, there's something that Matthew does which is so cool is he begins with this train wreck where, you know, he has a prostitute, there's incest, there's terrible kings, there's murdering of your kids, like there's selling of your daughters into prostitution, like it begins with all of this and partly what it's doing that, Tim Keller has this wonderful line.

You know how on, it used to be, I don't know if they do it anymore, it used to be that on the day after Christmas like there'd be certain stores, big box stores where they're gonna have such special deals that people would get there like at two o'clock in the morning and camp out because they wanted to get in the second they could.

[21 : 45] Tim Keller has this wonderful line, even if you're camping out at the gate of hell, you are not so bad that Jesus didn't die to save you. Isn't that a great line?

Even if you're camping out at the gate of hell, you're not too bad. You can look at it in this lineage and the thing that Matthew does which is so cool is he begins with this and how does the book, how does Matthew end?

It ends, go to all the people groups and make disciples and you can see that in a sense the people groups and the bad people are all included in Jesus' lineage and because you see Jesus' lineage is a train wreck, you know that only God has to do something.

This isn't natural. It isn't as if the lineage is, whoa, Abraham is really great and then the next guy is like really even better and then the next guy and then the next guy and then the next guy and then the next guy and boy, by the time you get to Jesus it's like, I don't know, it's like, you know, 40 generations of superheroes marrying superheroes and they're like the super, super, like they're just, you can't have enough supers before them, they can do everything.

No. God has to do something in the person of Jesus because his lineage is a train wreck and given that he comes to be the savior when it says in a moment that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us which means that he comes to live amongst our mess, Matthew is communicating this is real, look at his genealogy, it's a mess and that's Jesus.

[23 : 23] Now, verse 17, if you just want to flip through it, it's just a little, tiny little thing here, so all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 and from David to the deportation to Babylon, 14

and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations.

Just a simple little, it's a little number thing there for people who are motivated by numbers is that if you go through the entire Tanakh, the Torah, the Old Testament, you'll see that the number seven is very special, world is created in six days, seventh day at rest, two sevens, two sevens, two sevens, two sevens, Jesus, the seventh seven.

That's why it's the 14, 14, 14, 14. It's, this is something, a new series of generations are going to come from this, the perfect one, the rest of God, which the writer of Hebrews takes up.

Now verse 18, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way and sort of before we go any further, we can also already see that part of the misconception about the Bible and about Christianity, you know, that it's, you know, all white or it's, you know, like all of that type of thing, you see that, yeah, there's been lots of Christians who live in complete and utter defiance of the Bible, complete and utter defiance of the Bible, but the Bible is actually remarkable and you can see how that time and time and time again, whether it's Wilberforce with slavery, you know, wherever it is, is that when Christians actually, it isn't that we need to hear post-modern theorists or theory to try to wake us up, we just have to all of a sudden be woken up by the Bible and we realize that racism is wrong or this is wrong or some other great, or slavery is wrong, it just is all of a sudden the Bible wakes us up and we go, oh my, hey, I have to change my life, but the problem we have with the rest of the story, even though we say, well, okay, there's more to that story than I thought, it still has a problem of a weird miracle and there's still this offensive little thing, you know, one of the big problems that I think most Canadians have and Canadian Christians have is at the heart of hearts, what is it that our culture teaches us time and time and time again?

you've got to be the hero of your own story, you've got to be the hero of your own story, weaklings, I mean, that's the whole problem with all those movies made before recent days where the woman is rescued by the man, no, we have to understand, women have to learn that they have to be the hero of their own story and men have to be the hero of their own story and that's so deeply ingrained within us that when we come to a story of the birth of a hero, we go, yeah, let's look, verse 18, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly, just in those days, the way it worked is in a sense when you were engaged, you could use the title husband and wife, even though, even though, by our way of using words, it's not the way it works, but in those days that's how it would work, you,

[26 : 47] Joseph in a sense could be called the husband of Mary as soon as he was engaged, so they're engaged still, the biblical pattern then was that you would have sexual knowing after you, after you were married, became husband and wife, so they're engaged, but they can use this language, she's pregnant and it says from the Holy Spirit, which is going to be explained in a moment, verse 19 again, and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly, but as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit, she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins, and just sort of pause, one of the things I do with coffee people or people in Loblaws or something who are serving me after I've been there a couple of times and they obviously come from another part of the world,

I'll often ask them what their name means, like my name means, my name technically means farmer, but my parents didn't name me because it meant farmer, but often if you come from many parts of the world, your name has a significance in your original language and culture, so I'll just ask them, what does your name mean, and they'll tell me usually, they might say sometimes it's hard to translate or get into English or whatever, but they'll tell me roughly what it means, so it was the same by the way then at the time that the Bible was written, so there's actually a bit of a pun here, she will bear a son and you shall name, call his name God saves, because that's what Jesus means, so I'll read it again verse 21, she will bear a son and you shall call his name God saves, for he will save his people from their sins, and this took place, verse 22, all this took place to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophet, behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, and then Matthew tells us what it means, which means God with us, when Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name

Jesus, God saves. Now, here's the thing to understand, if you could put up the first thing here is that Jesus' birth began with a profound miracle, Jesus' birth began with a profound miracle, what the Bible text is saying is this, if in a sense if you could go back in time with all of the modern scientific equipment, even more advanced than what we have right now, one moment, Mary just had a normal womb and she wasn't pregnant, and if you go back and look at Luke where there's the conversation about the angel asking Mary whether she was willing to take this big risk and bear the cost and the price of being the one by which God would enter into the world to save human beings, and she says she is, then one moment, it's just a normal womb, no pregnancy, the next moment, there's a zygote attached to the uterus, that's what happens, now, here's, it's very interesting, like many modern people believe the myth that Christianity is opposed to science or undermines science,

I'm trying to work up a bit of the courage to write a blog about the fact that actually in our culture it's only Christianity which is preserving science increasingly, which is under attack by irrationalism, like most woke progressive politics are inherently irrational and undermining science, but you see, just imagine for a moment, here's how miracles work, you see, miracles actually only work if there's regular order of cause and effect in scientific laws, otherwise miracles actually don't work, and that's why in a sense science emerged out of the Christian Jewish worldview as people, it dawned on people that the Bible, that God has a mind, that he's a creator, that he's a law giver, that they can go and look and see how he's ordered creation and it's all because there's ordered creation that there can be something like a miracle and the miracles don't involve suspending the laws of science very rarely or doing anything like that, it's an insertion into cause-effect, cause-effect, cause-effect, cause-effect, cause-effect, cause-effect, and it would be a little bit as if, you know,

I don't know, Louise and I, I'm walking out and a lottery ticket flutters down and I pick it up and a couple of days later I've won 40 million dollars, that's the only way I'll ever win with a lottery ticket, God will have to have it flutter into my hands or I'll find it on the ditch or something like that and I win all the money, and so we want to bless our kids when they go into university and we just say, you know, how about, you know, Bria, are you willing to have us sort of have entry into your bank account and she says yes because, you know, I love you Nana and Papa and I trust you and you know, we see the, you know, student loan money going in and this going in and that going out and she gets a part-time job and this is going in and out and in and out and in and out and it's all the law of mathematics, it's all the law of mathematics, it's never wrong, just the law of mathematics but one day we just decided to plunk in \$500 to her account.

[32 : 23] Now, we haven't done anything against the laws of mathematics, the law of mathematics just keep on going but all of a sudden, one second after we've plunked in \$500, her bank balance is \$500 more but then what happens?

All the other normal laws, it just, it, the mirror, in a sense, the miracle, just, the flow just continues. Mary's able to have babies like she is. She's old enough, she's healthy enough, there's this miracle of the zygote all, one moment in the twinkling of an eye there's a zygote attached to the womb of Mary and then all of the normal biological and scientific processes which were never suspended continue to happen and eventually she has a baby and that's at the very heart of the Christian story and it also helps us to understand how miracles work and why it actually, it's only if there's the laws of science that miracles can be happening if there is a God as described in the Bible.

But why does any of this matter? If you could put up the final point that would be very helpful.

Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus, the transcendent became human to really deliver you from your transcendent offense or offenses would probably be a better way to put it.

there's lots of good advice by people out there. We have Daniel Gilman visiting us and I don't know with his Ravi Zacharias training, I don't know what they used to tell him about the word sin but there's lots of people out there who advise Christians not to use the word sin.

I mention this because if you look here, look back up at, where is it here? Verse 21, she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

[34 : 09] And so there's lots of people who advise us not to use the word sin and there's some reason for that. There's some like, it's because partially the word sin is often for non-Christians that they think it just means sex, like being naughty about sexual things.

But the big thing is it's easily mocked. Like, if I got a comedy Netflix special, I could just come walking out to the stage and say, I see a lot of sinners out here and everybody would laugh because it's a ridiculous idea.

Have you been sinning? I just have to say that. People will laugh. It's a ridiculous idea. It's mocked in our culture. And so people will tell us to get rid of it. But here's the thing and I might, I don't think I'll lose anybody in this room.

I might lose some of you online by saying this but just give me some grace. Jordan Peterson has some very wise advice about things. He's reacting to forced use of pronouns and other types of things and he says basically this which is just completely true.

It's just reasonable. We think with words. There's no thinking without the use of words. And if you have controlled speech and certain words aren't allowed then you have controlled thought.

[35 : 23] But controlled thought is an oxymoron. If your thought's controlled it's not thought. You're not thinking. And so if you control the language you control how people think.

It's an Orwellian 1984 world. Welcome to Canada in 2021. And that's part of the reason why we have to find ways to resist it and to not allow our words to be controlled.

And so here's the importance of the word sin. Why we need to keep it. Even if it might be that I'm talking to people I might not use it but I have to keep the word and not be ashamed or embarrassed at the word.

And here's the reason the word is so important. The word sin actually is helpful to Canadians that just don't realize it and it's very helpful to Christians because it maintains the idea of transcendence. You see our culture does have the idea that some things well you know if I if Louise slapped me that would just be wrong. Okay? If I discovered that one of you had ripped off an insurance company for a hundred thousand dollars well that would be wrong.

[36 : 35] And there's a lot of things most things that are just sort of wrong. But our culture still has this idea that there's some things that are wrong that touch on the transcendent. Like when we say that somebody is guilty of a crime against humanity that's what we're trying to get at.

That a crime against humanity is not just ripping off an insurance company. It's not just robbing a bank. It's not just you know two drunk guys fighting over a girl and punching one another.

And that's all bad. It's all bad. It's all bad. But there's certain types of things that we want to try. Our culture doesn't have the language of transcendence but even though we don't have the language of transcendence we still have the sense that there's something transcendent.

And some things aren't just wrong they're wrong in a way and we start reaching it's a crime against humanity. To find out about somebody doing ethnic cleansing that's a crime against humanity.

Part of the reason our culture is so concerned about hate speech is it's saying that it's not just that I call you know somebody in the congregation a not some type of thing. But if there's a sense that it's motivated by a hatred and a prejudice of a whole race or a whole class of people that are culturally you know important right now that in some ways that's not just me not being right with my language.

[37 : 59] When you call it a hate crime we're trying to say it's touching on something transcendent that we violated. And if you know anything about our culture there's no remedy against something which is transcendent which has been violated.

we will all say if I kill somebody and there's a sense that I didn't just kill them but that it's a hate crime or it's a crime against humanity people would be saying that 20 years in jail isn't enough.

You should be in jail for the rest of your life and not only that that on social media and other types of things my sin and my guilt has to be brought to me day and day and day and day again.

I have to be crushed belittled with and made if I don't feel shame everybody else should feel ashamed of me. Because there's some things that people do which isn't just wrong it is wrong against the transcendent.

And our culture has that even if we can't articulate it very clearly. And you see this is what is so important with the word sin. is that what the Christian story is saying is this Emmanuel God with us Jesus God saves that the transcendent became human to really deliver you and me from your transcendent offenses.

[39 : 34] Because you see if we start you know there's no way if you've cleansed an ethnic group how can that whole group like we have this sense of the transcendent but it's transcendent and the transcendent is connected to justice but we just it there's no way to connect it to satisfy it and if there was anything it would have to be as if all of that ethnic group were every gay who's ever lived or every person who's African American or African who's ever lived could somehow as one speak into it and deal with it.

And Christians believe that every human being is made in the image of God and the image itself comes amongst his image bearers the transcendent himself becomes human to deal with that that only the transcendent can deal with in a way that is both fully just and fully merciful where you have the sense that justice has been done with no violation at all not covered up not ignored not forgotten completely revealed and the transcendent has both revealed that transcendent offense and dealt with it in a just way but in a way which is also merciful and gives you hope even if you're camping at the gate of hell.

And that's what the Christmas story is. The transcendent becomes human to deal with that which only the transcendent can deal with for us human beings who violate a moral order and moral things which are transcendent.

There's hope. It's the birth of hope. Please stand. Thank you. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

And by the way just before I pray if you're watching this online either today or later on and if you have never given your life to Jesus there's no time better than just now saying Jesus I've been camping at the gates of hell and I didn't realize that there was a way that all those things in my past in my present that I've dealt with can be dealt with by you in a way that is just but is also full of grace and mercy that you can give me new life in you that you are Emmanuel that you are with me in my mess and in the midst of my mess you saved me and redeemed me.

[42 : 36] There's no time better now than say Jesus be my Emmanuel be my Jesus be my Christ be my Savior and never let me go. Let's pray.

Father thank you so much that Jesus is God with us that he is your great provision for our great need that he is justice transcendent and real justice real at the level of history transcendent as well that he is mercy that he is love that he is grace and that by his life and death and resurrection those things which keep human beings like us far from you have all been dealt with and bridged in his life and death and resurrection and so Father we give you thanks for this we ask that you help us Father to treasure these truths and to be like Mary and to ponder them to live out of the pondering upon these great treasures of the truth of the Christmas story Father help that to be more and more what describes our lives and we ask this in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen you