

The Christmas Story for: History Lovers

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall upon us afresh, that your Holy Spirit would fall upon our minds, our memories, our images, the wounds of our minds, the longings of our minds, that your Holy Spirit, Father, would fall upon our bodies, our emotions, our wills.

Father, may there not be any part of who we are that your Holy Spirit does not fall upon. Father, may there not be any part of who we are that your Holy Spirit would fall upon and he's been to some of the different Christians, I should talk to several people this week, have been to some of the classical music concerts that go on during Christmas season.

And one fellow in particular was really struck by the fact that some of these performances of classical music around the Christmas and Advent season, how they're completely packed.

And the different words of Isaiah and of the gospel texts are very, very powerfully sung. And yet it seems to be that it's completely, nobody's moved by it.

I mean, people are moved emotionally by it. But it doesn't seem as if it makes any type of a difference to them, as if hearing these powerful things about God doing miracles and the birth of Jesus, and it seems as if for many people when they're listening to it, it's just an aesthetic and emotional experience.

[1 : 54] But it doesn't seem to change them spiritually. And it was sort of puzzled as to how that can happen in a country like Canada. I had a bit of an answer to it last night.

I did not attend, not that I'm opposed to it, a classical music concert. I watched The Furious 7 with my son Tommy. That's the seventh installment of the Fast and Furious movies.

And, you know, as I'm watching it, I kept laughing all the way through. I know it's not a funny movie. There are jokes. But it's such an overwhelming young man's fantasy of powerful muscles with no working out, fancy cars with no job.

And you can just do all of these things. You can roll out of cars and have your car go all the way up so it can hit helicopters. And nobody's ever hurt. None of the good guys die. It's such a young male fantasy, at least some young men.

And I would just keep laughing because, of course, it's completely and utterly unrealistic. And, but, you know, it sort of fulfills the type of fantasy and emotional needs. I'm not putting it down.

[3 : 02] You know, it's fun. But, you know, in some ways, how most Canadians hear the Christmas story is really the same way people watch Furious 7.

It's, it maybe is more high class to go to watch, to be part of a classical music concert or sing the Messiah. But it's just really fulfilling different emotional needs for people.

And it doesn't really seem to be connected to history or reality, so to speak. And I forgot to set my clock, which is not a good sign at the beginning.

So, so, so for many people, it's just sort of like the Christmas story or really hearing Isaiah 9 or Isaiah 7 or Isaiah 53 and Matthew and Luke.

It's no different than watching Furious 7 or hearing stories of Santa. So, so the question is, is this really what, is this sort of a fair way to hear it?

[4 : 02] Or is, is, is there a deeper claim being made that if we recognize the deeper claim, it would make us mad or maybe excited?

So, it'd be a great help to me if you could get out your Bibles and we're just going to sort of look and see whether at least the original writers of the Gospels were thinking that they were writing something that would merely be inspiring or give some type of enjoyment or fun to people or whether they were making, in fact, some claim very, very, very different.

And if you don't have Bibles, there's always a few Bibles up here at the front that you can come and take if you'd like to use them. And actually, we're going to not just, you know, we're going to not look

at Luke 2 at first.

We're going to look at Luke chapter 1. It's the beginning of the, of the Gospel. And if you look at Luke 1, in this particular Gospel, it gives you an idea about what Luke thinks he's doing when in a few verses on, a few lines on, he talks about the birth of Jesus.

Like, what does Luke think he's doing? And by the way, there's very good reasons to believe that what we see here isn't written by a person who was born a Christian, and he wasn't born Jewish.

[5 : 21] He was born a pagan and Greek, probably from Syria, and he was a doctor. And sometime after the birth and death and resurrection of Jesus, he became a Christian.

And he probably wrote this in the mid to late 60s. That's the 060s, not the 1960s or the 1860s.

And here at least, listen, what Luke thinks he's doing or is trying to do, and we'll just hear it in his own words. And in his own words, he says this, Luke 1, 1.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account to you, for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that have been taught.

And if you just sort of go on later, if you actually turn to the book of Acts and look at the first few verses of the book of Acts, that's Acts chapter 1.

[6 : 46] If you don't have Bibles, you can just listen to it. And when you hear this, you'll realize that Luke, when he was writing this, he actually wrote sort of two books, what we now see of his two books, but they were linked.

And in the beginning of the book of Acts, chapter 1, the first few verses, he says this, Luke says this, in the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands to the Holy Spirit, to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

So it's very interesting. If you're just listening to it, you'll see that Luke believes that he's telling a story of Jesus, things that have happened to Jesus and other people who came into contact with Jesus, that it's based on eyewitness reports, and that things actually happened, that he's not writing a fantasy novel or a fiction novel, that he's not like in many modern movies.

At the beginning of the movie, they'll say something like, inspired by true events, or say something like, yeah, inspired by true events, or based on true events, which are Hollywood wiggle words, which means that there might be one tiny little dollop of actual truth in it, in terms of what happened, and the rest was just creative license.

[8 : 25] No, Luke actually doesn't say anything like that. He says that he's really saying that, you know, I've done a lot of research, and I've talked to eyewitnesses, and I've looked at other documents, and I want to tell you about the things that Jesus actually did, and that he actually said, and what people said when they actually saw Jesus.

That's actually what he claims to be doing. And so he's claiming that this is, in fact, historical events. So when it comes to the text that we're going to really look at today, if you turn back in your Bible to Luke chapter 2, verses 1 to 7, Luke is claiming that this happens in history.

And in fact, one of the things, as I start to read, is that he actually, he doesn't sort of say, I'm going to talk about history, and then he sort of says, in a land long ago, in a time far away, and as if it's just like a bit mythical, and he doesn't sort of give any historical details.

Already, prior to this, he's referred to historical personages that other historians and documents and monuments talk about, and then when he gets to the story of the birth of Jesus, he specifically locates it by well-known historical figures, historical figures that we know existed from historians like Josephus and Tacitus, and we know from coins that had been found and other types of historical records.

And Luke begins his story by placing the birth of Jesus firmly in Roman and Jewish customs, and the world. He goes like this, in those days, not long ago or once upon a time, but in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all of the world should be registered.

[10 : 26] This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage

of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And so Luke is claiming that he's writing what we would call history. Now, at this point in time, we start to run into some trouble. And people want to say, okay, George, listen, everybody knows. And in fact, if you were probably to go to a local Starbucks, or a local Tim Hortons, or a hipster coffee place, or no coffee place at all, and you were just to say, do you think the things in the Gospels actually happened?

Do you think the things in the New Testament actually happened? And that we can sort of know that they happened? And people would say to you, probably all is one, we all know those things didn't happen. We all know that you can't trust the documents.

[11 : 45] We all know you can't trust the Bible. We all know that it's just not historical. That's one of those things the Canadians just know. And it's basically told us when we read the National Post, or we read the Ottawa Citizen, or we watch the CBC, or watch Hollywood, we just all know that, I mean, Luke might say these things, but it can't, he can't, you can't take it, like, it's just, don't, don't, like, don't believe him.

Like, just listen to it in a religious or spiritual way. Don't actually listen to it like the way you would listen to instructions about how to, how to, you know, install Netflix on your, you know, so you can watch Netflix.

Don't listen the same way. That's what everybody would tell you. So let's just look at this question for a second. Andrew, could you put up screen one, please? So, for instance, these are two significant ancient historians for New Testament times.

People, when they want to know about what was going on, they will refer to those. If you take courses at University of Ottawa or Carleton in classics or antiquity, these are two of the principal historians of the New Testament times that people would use so that we could understand it. And if you went there, people wouldn't say, oh, yeah, you know, Josephus doesn't know anything, or Tacitus doesn't know anything. We would just, you would just be taught who the different governors and emperors were and all the different things, and they would be depending upon these two people.

[13 : 16] So the question would arise, well, if this is the case, then obviously if you can't trust the New Testament, if you can't trust Luke, it must be because Luke was born, like, way after this, because Jesus was probably born in very late the year 5 BC or early in 4 BC, and he died either in the year 30 or the year 33.

There's a bit of, it's not quite clear. But so obviously if Luke can't be trusted, he must be far born a lot after that. Andrew, could you put up the next slide? That's when Luke was born and died. You go, one moment. You said Jesus died in 30 or 33, and the two other historians, some of whom mentioned Jesus and Christians, they actually were born way later.

There's question marks because we don't know precisely when Luke was born or when he died. What we do know is that he was already a medical doctor in the year 49, and we also know for sure that he was still alive in the late 60s.

And so I just put a question mark beside it. He might have been born a little bit earlier, a little bit later, died a bit earlier, a bit later. There's an old Christian story that he lived to the year 84.

[14 : 35] But that's sort of a bit surprising for considering what all Canadians know. So then maybe we could say, well, the problem is actually not that Luke wasn't at the right time, but maybe what it is is that whatever Luke wrote, like whatever the real Luke wrote, probably what is the case is that he must have written...

Sorry, I'm out of place in my thing. Maybe the problem is that... You know how they didn't... So they wrote something at some point in time, but then maybe the... Maybe there's not very many manuscripts around what, you know, these...

Because nobody has the original document they wrote. So maybe what happens is that, you know, there's hardly any copies of ancient copies of Luke's writings, and we have a lot more copies of Josephus and Tacitus.

Could you put up the next screen, Andrew? I didn't sort of say that very well. So, you know, when people want to figure out what Josephus actually wrote, there's... You know, archaeologists have

found copies of what Josephus and Tacitus have actually written.

And they're ancient manuscripts, like ancient copies. And this is how many copies of Josephus, either all of his work or part. Tacitus actually, even though nobody doubts Tacitus' writings, there's actually no complete one finding in ancient copies of Tacitus.

[16:00] It's all bits and pieces, and from the three different copies, we have what we understand Tacitus to have written. So the question must be, if gosh, if that's the case, then obviously it must be that there's only like one or two copies of the New Testament.

That's why people can't trust it. Next screen, Andrew. That's not a typo. 5,700 ancient manuscript copies.

5,700. What's not counted there, if you were to add copies of the New Testament that were translated into Latin or Syrian or other languages, there would be over 10,000 extra ancient manuscripts.

And if you were to add writings of early Christians where they quote sometimes big passages of the Bible, there would be over 100,000 extra.

100,000. Compared to 3 and 133. Well then, okay. So we all know that Luke can't actually be trusted.

[17:05] So it must be the case that the Josephus and Tacitus documents are written really close to when they wrote. And maybe those 5,700 New Testament documents are all like four or five, six hundred years later and there's a big gap.

And that's why we can't trust them. Andrew, could you put up the next screen, please? That's the gap between the earliest copy of Josephus and when he would have written and the gap for Tacitus.

And yet, remember I told you that if you take courses at University of Ottawa or Carleton, you won't see professors saying you can't know anything about the ancient world from Josephus or Tacitus. They won't say anything like that.

So it must be, since every Canadian knows what's true, it must be then that, gosh, they have all those extra manuscripts, but it must be a lot later than 1,000 years. Could you put up for the New Testament?

It's not a typo. Now, that's for the Gospel of John. And depending on how you do the carbon dating, it could be as close as 20 years to when Gospel of John was written.

[18:09] 20 years compared to those other figures. And I'm sort of, you know, I'm using the New Testament because generally people just don't focus on Luke, but the New Testament in general, at least the Gospels in general.

In fact, if you were to put there the gap between when Luke wrote and when the earliest part of Luke has been found, the earliest copy, it's 100 years, about 105 years.

And that ancient document not only contains almost all of Luke, but very interestingly, and very interesting, it actually has on one of the pages that they found, Luke comes to an end, and then they start the Gospel of John. And then there's a large part of John.

It's actually quite stunning. I'm just going to sort of stop with this for a second. If you could put up the last screen, at least for this. If you're interested in getting more information on this, you can go to that, and this will be on the webpage if you don't have time to write it down right now, but you can go to Dig and Delve, or you can Google Dig and Delve YouTube, especially 2014, and there's a whole range of talks. If you don't want to watch the videos, you can speak to our sound guy afterwards. He has the audios of them, and he can give them to you if you'd like to listen to them. And actually, before we go any further, this is for our Muslim friends. Our Muslim friends often say that you can't trust the things in the New Testament that the Koran tells you, the true story.

And listen, even if you take for granted, and Christians aren't necessarily going to disagree, that God can give somebody a prophetic vision, but the fact of the matter is that Luke isn't equivalent to Muhammad. Muhammad wrote in the 600s. 600 years. Over 600 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so you can't, you have to compare what the Koran says with the historical documents. And when you compare it with the historical documents, you realize that the Koran is not correct. It's just not correct. It can't, you see, if Luke was writing at the same time as Muhammad, you could just say they're battling visions or prophecies, but they're not equivalent.

[20:30] Luke is writing eyewitness report that fits in with all of the known fact in the culture. And if the Koran doesn't mesh with that, then the problem is with the Koran, not with the history.

And so some of you might say, George, go back to that text that you just read a moment ago. Isn't it the case that Luke is wrong? He's not trustworthy. But isn't it the case that Quirinius wasn't the governor at the same time that Augustus Caesar? Like it's a very, very common thing that this sort of proves that Luke isn't trustworthy. I'll just read you the text again. Look at this in verse chapter one. I mean, chapter two, verse one. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And George, isn't it true that the historical records show that Quirinius was the governor of Syria in the year 6 AD and that Caesar Augustus died in, I think it's April of 4 BC?

That's a 10-year gap. Ha ha. Told you you shouldn't go the history route, George. Well, that's a very, very interesting, it's a very, very common objection. And I don't have time to go into all of it, but I'll just say a couple of things. If you go and look at some of these videos, one of the things you'll see is that one of the archaeologists who speaks tells, quite frankly, that in Israel, Jewish, not Christian, but Jewish archaeologists use gospels like Luke to make more archaeological discoveries because they found Luke's and the other gospel writers' accuracy helps them to know where to look to find things. And when they look, they often find things there.

In fact, in the Gospel of Luke, he mentions 32 different countries, like Luke and Acts, 54 different cities, nine islands, and dozens of ancient officials. And in every case, archaeology has found him to be accurate.

So on one level, if he made only one mistake out of all of that, let me tell you, Josephus and Tacitus make far more than Luke does. But in this particular case, it's not even obvious that Luke has made a mistake. And I won't go into the technical answers, but it basically comes around to two particular things. First of all, while we know that Quirinius was not the governor of Syria in 4 BC, the word governor also can mean administrator. It's another completely valid way to understand it.

[23 : 26] And the fact of the matter is, is that Quirinius is a historical figure. There's historical documents that talk about his existence. Luke knows that Quirinius, if you go on and read the book of Acts, Luke knows that Quirinius was the governor of Syria in the year 6 AD, and that his census caused a riot.

So he understands that. But when you actually go, there's a big gap in terms of what we know of what Quirinius was doing. And during this time period of 5A BC and 4 BC, there's no historical record separate that tells us what Quirinius was doing. In other words, if the word can also mean administrator, there's no historical evidence that says that Quirinius wasn't the administrator in 5 BC or 4 BC.

It's not contradicting anything in history that we know of from any other source. So here's the point. Andrew, if you could put up the... I had to make Andrew run all the way back down. If you could put up this first point.

The other points will be briefer, by the way. But I want to just see, Luke gives a true historical account of the life, birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

That there is very, very good reason. Not a mystical reason. Not an emotional reason. Just there's actually good archaeological, historical reason to believe that Luke gives a true historical account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

[25 : 00] Now, this is deeply troubling to Canadians. Because, you see, for Canadians, religion and spirituality is not about truth.

Not a historical truth. It's all about... It's about emotions and having peace and having meaning. It's about higher things and spiritual things.

And it's about... You know, when I... In Anglican churches, when I was part of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, and the kids would make a noise in the service, people would complain about it, and they'd say, You know, the kids are making a noise.

I just want to have that hour or hour quarter on a Sunday morning of peace and quiet where I can just have a moment of reflection and some uplifting thoughts.

And these irksome children are irritating me. And that's a very, very Canadian view. It's, in fact, to talk about history and truth, it's almost...

[25 : 59] It's offensive. It's like native spirituality. Okay, like, are you... If you start talking about this, George, it's going to mean that you're going to start saying to native spirituality that there can't...

The world wasn't made by turtles or bears or, you know, ravens pooping or whatever the... You know, whatever the myths are. And it's going to be deeply troubling about hard questions about other types of faiths.

And so Canadians, part of us, on one hand, want to recoil against it, and part of us also want to have a bit of a... Well, we're... Well, here's a perfect example, another perfect example. Back when I was like this, about 15 years ago, and I was still in the Diocese of Ottawa, we used to have these things called clergy days. It would be like a continuing ed day. And in one of the continuing ed days, we had this guest speaker come, and he was talking about demons. And it was a very well-attended one, and it was a very civil conversation as he was going through different things about possession and attack and all that. And then about halfway, two-thirds of the way through the presentation, a person put up his hand and said, one moment, this has been really, really, really fascinating and very helpful, but what you just said, are you actually saying that demons really exist?

[27 : 22] Like, actual have ontological, actual existence that can affect, like, actual things that are real?

Is that what you're saying? And the speaker said, yeah, of course. And then, he wasn't able to fulfill any of the rest of his talk. The entire room erupted in attacking him.

Because as long as demons were just ways of talking about evil or mental illness or sociological or political types of processes the way theologians like Walter Wink would talk about it, as long as it was just talking at a symbolic level, you know, then it was all fine.

But when it actually gets to be real, it's actually deeply offensive to many people in Canada. And so the problem with this statement, Luke gives a true historical account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, is if you read past verse 7.

Because when you go past verse 7, all of a sudden, God appears in a way which is deeply troubling. God appears as non-tame, authoritative, planning, powerful, acting, and intrusive.

[28 : 48] And Canadians don't like it when God shows up not tame and actually acting and intrusive. Let's read from verse 8 on. So verse 7 is like the actual Christmas story, and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Verse 8, And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel spoke to them in words, in Aramaic. He speaks in Aramaic, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. Lots of angels. angels. Praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.

[30 : 09] How dare Him only be pleased with some. That's not Canadian. When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told to them.

the meaning of the birth in the manger, the birth and the baby in the manger, the meaning and significance is given by God to the angels.

Andrew, could you put up the slide? Luke gives a true historical account of God communicating the meaning and significance of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

[31 : 24] Now just a very, very little brief aside. When people say that miracles aren't historical, what they're doing is actually almost always arguing in a circle.

They'll say history is the study of things that aren't miraculous, in a sense. And then when you study history, you don't find any miracles because historians say if there's a miracle, it can't be historical. But that's just not actually, that's not being open-minded to inquire. If you start off by assuming that all miracles are non-historical, and then you go and look historically to see if miracles happen and

you don't find any, all you've done is you're just following what you've assumed.

But if you just look, and it's beyond the scope of this because it's an Easter sermon, the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is quite strong historically.

And it ultimately is the reason why I trust, and Christian people who've looked into it trust Luke on everything. But if you see this text, it describes a non-tame God, a God who intrudes, a God who is authoritative, a God who plans, a God who is powerful, a God who is present, a God who can act.

[32 : 48] And this causes a bit of a dilemma for Canadians. Because you see, on one hand, our understanding of religion and spirituality cloaks despair.

because it's really just saying that there's not, you know, in a sense, history is, and forgive me for saying this, I'm just quoting how it's said, history is just one damn thing after another.

It doesn't really mean anything. And, you know, if a story about Santa gives you some meaning and some pleasure, if listening to Bach or listening to Handel gives you some meaning or pleasure, if Jack Daniels gives you meaning or pleasure, then it's all sort of basically equal.

Because you just have to grab whatever will amuse you until you die and then that's the end. But on the same time, we're sort of, we understand at the same time that there has to be some type of meaning to life.

We stop short of the abyss. On one hand, we want to just sort of have the meaning that we can sort of grasp or create for ourselves. But on the other hand, we have some type of sense that there must be some type of meaning to our lives, our real lives, not just our emotional lives, but our real lives, our embodied lives.

[34 : 08] It's why we're always trying to find meaning in human actions when other people act. We don't want to just say it was just one thing happening after another. We want to understand, well, why did they say that? Why did they do that?

Why did they say that to me? Why did that happen to me? On one hand, we want to ask these types of why questions about our real life really lived. But on the other hand, on the other hand, we basically have an understanding that if there is true meaning, not just meaning that we've made for ourselves, that it not only has to be in a sense personal, but it has to be more than personal.

There has to be something transcendent about it. In other words, that real meaning, if there's real meaning in human life, it not only has to be part of human life, but it has to be in a sense outside of or beyond human life.

So, you know, on one hand, we're stuck as Canadians, as human beings, that we're committed to this project of being like God. And we don't like anything that interrupts or intrudes upon being like God.

And if there really is a God, and He really can speak, and He's really authoritative, and He really can intrude, and He really can act, then our whole project of being like God crumbles.

[35 : 37] Yet at the same time, there must be meaning. And so on one hand, to start to have a glimmer that there's actual historical evidence of God speaking and communicating and giving meaning, on one hand, for some, is an answer to the longing and yearning of our hearts.

Yet at the same time, there is great fear. There is great fear. In fact, we worry, we instantly go to saying that it, instantly, thinking that this actual story, that this, that there could be a story like this which is actually true, that it's inherently imperialistic, that it's imperialistic to spiritualities, non-traditional spiritualities.

It's imperialistic to religion. It's imperialistic to atheists and agnostics, that it's somehow imperialistic and forceful and not good.

But that's just, that's just our fear, that the true and living God also has our God project at work. That the real God is going to act in a way that we would act if we really had power to be God. I mean, just be honest, you know, sometimes I get mad at drivers.

[36 : 57] If I had God's power, there'd be a lot of dead drivers. And maybe driving's not your thing, maybe it's cutting in a line. How many people would be dead today if they cut in line of you and you had God's powers?

And that terrifies us about God. But listen to the story again. Look at verse 7. Look at this. If the things in verses 10 to 14 are true, look at it. He doesn't come with power.

He doesn't come looking like the furious seven. He doesn't come looking born out of nowhere like the rock, like Dwayne Johnson with unbelievably bulging muscles and a negative body fat count, who's able to just flex his muscle and the cast explodes off his arms.

And then he can pick up heavy guns and have ambulances, knock predator drones out of the sky. I mean, this guy, no, verse 7, and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

The king and king and lord of the lord's first throne was a feeding trough for animals. And look at verse 10 and following. What the angels say, and the angels said to them, fear not, fear not, fear not, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people, for unto you, ordinary people like you in Ottawa in 2015 is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ, the Messiah, the promised one of God, the Lord.

[38 : 45] And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths in line in a manger and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth shalom among those with whom he is pleased.

And he died. So when we put our faith and trust in him, he is pleased with ordinary people. Ordinary people. Here's the message.

Luke tells us of the humble birth of the humble Lord who will save ordinary people that humble themselves and humbly receive him as savior and then humbly follow him as Lord.

The world is filled with proud Christians but God does not call us to pride. Come to me all who are labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[39 : 54] The words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew. Luke tells us of the humble birth of the humble Lord who will save ordinary people like you and me that humble themselves and humbly receive him as savior and then humbly follow him as Lord.

Just sort of in closing, when we realize that this is actually historically true, it, it, it, it, it, it, as this grips us, it revolutionizes and revolutionizes our lives.

Why do I pray? When I pray at the beginning of the service for the Holy Spirit to fall, I pray to a God who does exist who can listen and who can do that. When I pray for somebody to be healed, I don't know if God will say yes or no or how he will heal them, but I pray to a God who can do that.

How can it make a difference? Why should anybody like stand at the door like Owen and get cold to serve people? Why should anybody look after snotty-nosed, sniveling little kids and not get any thanks?

It's because there's a meaning and purpose to life and I'm humbly following the Lord and I'm following a trajectory that will lead to an eternal life in the new heaven and the new earth. Why is it that I should take the risk of forgiving people while I, Jesus, my Savior and my Lord has told me to do this.

[41 : 17] He died so that I might be forgiven. He died so my enemies might be forgiven and out of that as I'm gripped by the gospel it makes sense to try to forgive. And why is it that, I don't know, we should take, like why is it that we have people from our congregation who decide to leave very profitable jobs or careers to go to closed nations to share the gospel with them?

Why is it that we take stands and take risks with budgets and other types of things? Why is it that we have people going to places like Turkey and other places like Asia? Why is it, well, it's because if you go to bed every night thinking that it's just one damn thing after another, it's very hard to have courage.

If you believe there is a God who actually exists who's sovereign and can act in human history, who has received you as his own when you put your faith and trust in him, well, why don't we try something?

If God is leading, if God is for us, let's go for it. Please stand. You know, there's, this isn't a myth, it's not a fable.

And, on one hand, to know that there really is a God, an untamed but good God who really exists, who can really act, who humbles himself as a child, this is the end of our longings and of our yearnings.

[42 : 55] And it opens a whole new life of courage and a whole new life of prayer when you put your hand in the hand of the one who came as a baby but died on the cross and rose triumphant over sin and death.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, may you know that there might be people here this morning who have not yet put their trust in Jesus. You know, Father, you know, Father, deeply the fears that

they have about making such a step of faith in Jesus.

I ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would fall gently but deeply upon them and deliver them from fear and fan into flame within them a longing and yearning to call out to Jesus to be their Savior and their Lord, that they would do that today.

And, Father, for those of us who are followers of Jesus, you know how easy it is that our culture seeps away our confidence that you are sovereign or that you hear our prayers, how our culture seeps away our life of prayer or calling out for you to move and act.

Father, may your Holy Spirit fall upon us with gentle but deep power that we might once again know how big and awesome and true and real you really are and that you are not a distant God but our Father who loves us and that Jesus is not just a fable or a story but that he can be my Savior and my friend that he died for me to make me yours and he rose from the dead and conquered sin and hell and all hostile spiritual powers in his resurrection and that I can walk with him and in him day by day as I face my life.

[44 : 39] Father, build and grow in me a deep and humble trusting confidence in Jesus and in you. Pour out your Holy Spirit this we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.