

# Christmas Day

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray. Father, many of us have just spent our entire life celebrating Christmas.

We have no memory of a time that we didn't celebrate Christmas. And Father, it can lose its wonder and its mystery and even its grip on us.

And you know that, Father. You know that about us. And so we ask, Lord, that the Holy Spirit would bring these words deeply into our hearts. That amidst the ways that we will celebrate today and over the next few days and all the other ways that we've celebrated.

That the wonder of Jesus and who he is and the wonder of the cradle that led to a life, that led to the cross, that led to the grave. That that would be brought home to our hearts in a deep way.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. It's, I've been thinking a little bit about darkness and over the last little while.

[ 1 : 16 ] And I guess I've been really struck by two things that have been in the newspaper just recently. And I have to, of course, qualify all of this, that it's in the newspaper. So I don't know if the reports are accurate.

I'm just going by the newspaper accounts. And so that's just a very important caveat. And the first one is those eight girls, 12, I think some of them were as young as 12 and the oldest were 16, that met on social media and met somewhere in Toronto area, I believe, and killed a homeless man.

And I've thought about that a fair bit. It's just, it's really, you know, it illustrates how, like in our culture, we want to maybe try to psychoanalyze that.

And maybe they haven't said anything about the ethnic or cultural backgrounds or, you know, whether the kids had been traumatized by abusive dads or had been from a war zone.

And maybe if that eventually came out, our natural inclination as a culture is to try to figure out some type of biological or sociological ways to explain something, which is just part of the evil of it.

[ 2 : 33 ] It just seems to be just so willful and random. Like it wasn't as if he attacked one of them and they sprang to that person. They just seem to think, let's just kill a guy.

And it really reveals that, you know, at the end of the day, our culture doesn't want to acknowledge that there's just this mystery of evil.

That evil is a bit of a mystery. And it's a mystery that frightens us. You know, and it's an evil that we type to deny.

The other thing that's, and I've just been thinking about this since I'd missed it in the news. I think it's Thursday. It was in, I've discovered about Thursday. I went and looked it up. And this, according to the paper, this principle that basically just assumed at a local elementary school here in Ottawa that kid, and in effect what she did is just that kids were fundamentally basically good, that there should be no consequences to their action.

There should be no discipline. That everything should be completely and utterly kid-centered. And that there just should be nothing, like nothing to limit them or constrain them.

[ 3 : 44 ] They should, we as adults, the teachers just needed to listen. And, and, and, and by the way, it seems as if, at least from the press releases, as if the school boards think this is a very, very good way to do that, and they haven't disciplined the principal.

But the result was that kids didn't go to class, and bullies terrorized younger kids. And, and teachers that wanted to bring some accountability to this or stop it got functionally fired.

Like, so on one hand, we have this evil, and we have this other idea that we don't want to, we don't want to face the fact that there's this darkness, this evil that's in the world.

Like I mentioned last night that, I mean, and this isn't anything new, that it appears reporting, once again, according to news reports, that Russia uses indiscriminate bombing and, and raping as a means to try to control the Ukrainian people.

And if you followed what happened in Middle East for decades, the entire structure of Palestinian, well, it's just they, they target civilians.

[ 5 : 00 ] Like they target civilians. Not just accidentally, they, they do it on purpose. And, you know, if we think about it at all for, for a moment, if we have any type of self-reflection, every single one of us, there's a mystery of evil and darkness within every single one of us.

Like not all the time, maybe for some of us it feels like all the time. But, you know, our friend or somebody just says a very kind word or nice word to us and we do, we say something back to them that's snarky or puts them down.

Or we, we have a chance to be generous or helpful and, and we, we just knowingly don't do it. Or we have an opportunity to be more forgiving or more loving and it's as if we come up to that and then we just walk away from it.

And there's not, and afterwards we might say it's because of this or because of that or because of that. But the fact of the matter is, is that there's just parts of us that just do bad things. We just do them.

And yeah, maybe sometimes we could psychoanalyze them and sometimes we could say there's context. But the fact of the matter is that if you were at all self-reflective, you know that there is something that is dark and chooses evil within you.

[ 6 : 21 ] Now this might seem like a very odd thing to talk about on Christmas morning, but actually the gospel text is going to talk about it in a way which brings great hope.

In fact, in a way that if you are present or watching and you don't call yourself a follower of Jesus, I, I would hope that by the end of it, you want it to be true.

Your mind might still think it's impossible to be true, but that you actually could see it and say, I'd love that to be true. Now we're going to be looking at very abstract things. And before we go any further, we want to get the details of the story straight.

So if we, we're going to watch a short little video called The Wrong Christmas that'll just get the fundamental parts of the story straight up for us. And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock 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 said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

[ 7 : 45 ] 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 king wearing a magnificent crown.

No, Dad, that's not it. Oh, really? Let me try it again. 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 powerful, well-trained soldier. No, Dad, you did it again. That's not right. Okay, how about this?

And this will be a sign for you. You will find a democratically elected president. What? No. A trendy motivational speaker. No way.

A big tech CEO. A movie star. Time-traveling cyborg. No, no, none of those are right.

[ 8 : 46 ] The shepherds, we couldn't find any of those. Okay, then, little Miss Noah doll. What did they find? 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. Oh, that's right. A baby. Does that even make sense?

A baby is totally helpless. Yeah, but if Jesus didn't come as a baby, then he would have known what it was like to grow up. Ah, but wait. Why did he have to grow up?

That's easy. To save us. Ah, well then that means that the best part about Christmas is... The baby. Right, the baby. Oh, well, I guess it's time you get some sleep.

We got a big day ahead of us tomorrow. No, we're not done with the story. Okay, just a little longer. 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 peace among those with whom he was.

[ 10 : 04 ] One of the things which is so wonderful and powerful about the Christian faith is that not only there's very simple stories, but at the same time those stories are connected to very profound and beautiful and wise and true ideas.

And in fact, you know, we're going to read John 1 verses... If you have your Bibles, you can turn to John chapter 1. We're going to begin reading it in a moment. But if Jesus hadn't risen from the

dead, if the grave hadn't been empty, we wouldn't know anything about Jesus. He would have just been one of the hundreds of thousands of people who died by crucifixion. Completely irrelevant. And even if Jesus had risen from the dead, if he had risen from the dead and it was just like a random event, like Louise rose from the dead or I rose from the dead or something like that, that would just be weird.

But the fact is that the resurrection, his death upon the cross and his resurrection was connected to this long story and series of writings.

And it was connected to these very, very, very profound ideas. And it's because of that that we recognize that... I mean, that's why these things are written, because it's not just some, like, random weird thing.

[ 11 : 33 ] It's connected to these centuries of prophecies and these profound and wise ideas. And as I've shared before, they are, in fact, the basis of human rights.

They are the basis of justice. They are the basis of the dignity of human beings. They are the basis for science. These are very profound ideas, and it's within this very big context that we have Jesus dying and rising from the dead, and then people looking back and thinking about Jesus and what he taught, and then telling the story.

And out of all of the ways that the story of Jesus was told, there's four ancient biographies. John is the one who most nests this story and these profound ideas. So let's listen to how he begins the story of Jesus.

Chapter 1, verse 1 of John. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, of the human race.

[ 12 : 45 ] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness is not overcoming. Now, you see there a little bit for a moment why I was reflecting upon darkness, and we're going to get back to it in a moment, because part of our deep hope is that on one hand there's darkness within us that we don't want light to shine into it.

But really, for those of us who've had our darkness exposed by the true light, there is nothing more freeing than having the darkness exposed and dealt with by the true light.

Like, we don't want it, but after it's happened, we're very deeply grateful that it's happened. And it also expresses this profound hope that the darkness within us won't consume us, that the darkness in the world won't win, that there is, in fact, a darkness in the world, but there is a true light that will never be overcome by the darkness.

But let's look just again, just before to get that, just very briefly. Look at verse 1 again. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. You know, it's very interesting. I was thinking about this week again, and, you know, so scientists have put different things out, hoping that if there's aliens out there, they'll hear our messages or they'll see something. And it would be interesting to figure out how scientists try to come up with something that's language that an alien would recognize as language. And I'm sure there's some type of an intentional pattern that can't be random.

[ 14 : 19 ] It can't just be noise. And so it's the very, very same thing here. Like, our brightest scientists are trying to figure out the same type of things that John uses 2,000 years earlier to describe, to try to begin to describe the Trinity and who Jesus is.

And it's very clever if you think about it. If you were to go up and you were to be God's advisor, and God said to you, I want to try to communicate in simple language something about who Jesus is and the reality of the Trinity.

And I want you to try to do it in such a way that the Politburo in China, that a semi-nomadic bushman in the, or semi-nomadic tribes people in the Kalahari, that they'll all be able to grasp it. And you'd go, wow, like, that's quite a task. And then he says, oh, and by the way, it has to be something that will work, like, in the second century, and it has to be something that will work in every century. And you'd think, wow, that's really quite a task.

But what John says is he uses word. Word. Human beings use words. A word shows intention.

[ 15 : 43 ] It shows a desire to communicate. It shows a desire to connect. It sends a message. It's personal. And you could go on and on and on and just reflect it.

And for those of you who are musicians or poets, you could probably write, or philosophers or theologians, you could write a long type of things about how brilliant it was to try to communicate something about the nature of the Trinity.

That there's, and that's how we look at it again. First one, in the beginning, that's before there's anything, before the Big Bang was the Word. And then the Word was with God.

And the original language, the word with, there's more than two different ways, but there's two different words that can, in the original language, communicate with. One would be that I've put this cup with a table, that two impersonal objects.

And the other word is, Louise is with me at the service of two persons. And the word which is used here for with is not the word to say that the cup is with the table, but is the way of expressing that Louise is with me or I am with Louise.

[16:51] It's communicating that the word is a person who's with God, who's a person. The word is God, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

And then again, he says it again, verse two, look at that. He was in the beginning with God. Just to make sure we understand it, it's all very simple. All things that were made, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Claire, if you could put up that little image for me. So once again, as with last night, the church gave me permission to hire the most expensive graphic designers imaginable to come up with this image. We spent tens of thousands of dollars, as you can tell. And you just look at this for a second. Just like it's one of the things, even if you get nothing else other than this diagram, just to puzzle over.

[17:58] You think about it for a second, how human thought works, and what our longings and yearnings are like. And I think if you think about this for a moment, in these very simple categories that the Gospel of John has given here, you'd come to the conclusion that you might say, you know, I'm an agnostic, or I'm a Muslim, or I'm a Buddhist, or I'm just a secular person.

I'm just a person who likes to go to drag shows. Like, I'm just a secular person. But if you understand this, you'd say, you know what, I don't know if Christianity is true, but you know what, for the first time, I wish it was true.

Because look at what he does. There's two different ways to think about things. It's like, you look at B, and B is that life exists, but it's not connected to light.

And that's, in a sense, like what secularism is in many, many ways, that we have life that's created in one particular, you know, through evolutionary processes.

But it's not connected to light. It's not connected to insight or revelation. You can have life without light. I mean, animals have life, but don't have light. They don't have an ability to understand, to discern, to see into the mystery of reality, into the mystery of themselves.

[19:17] They're just animals. And many people in our culture struggle with the idea that really, at the end of the day, a human being is just an animal. In fact, even not that, we're just a clump of cells.

And consider for a second number, you know, C. C. That's this idea that there is light, that there is ways to see and understand everything, but it's not connected to life.

Because at the end of the day, we all die. And part of the tragedy of being a human being is that we have the light to understand that everything will just end in death.

And life is just something that's borrowed for a short season. And for some human beings, a very, very, very short season. And then at the end of the day, you die.

And then consider the most despairing of all, which is the letter D. That, you know, at the end of the day, you know, if you were to really take evolutionary theory and the naturalism which creates it, at the end of the day, you can't really believe there is such a thing as mind or reason.

[20:30] You believe things just because that's just the processes that have led you to think. The cognitions are just mental events that happen inside of you that are caused by physical and other types of events.

And they're just, they just, they're not really connected to the real. And at the end of the day, we all die. And in fact, the matter is, is that given that there's just matter in motion, there's not really any fundamental difference between life and death.

If you think about it in terms of, you know, philosophical types of things, at the end, in the Eastern religions, light is, or conscious, moral conscience and mental insight is something that is a bit of an illusion because everything is just one.

And when everything is just one, it's not really any different than death. But we as human beings, what do we really hope? We really hope for A. We really hope that life is connected to light, that life is good, that it's a value, that it's something to be celebrated, that it's right to celebrate the birth of a baby and to celebrate birthdays.

And that there is such a thing as light, there is such a thing as insight, and that these two things are connected. They're not at war with each other, they're not sort of two random things that might come together, just like two random cars that meet at an intersection and have a traffic accident.

[ 22 : 04 ] They're not just random, that there must be something connected to life that's connected to light. And that's what we long for. And then look again at verse four.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Now, this is going to make a very profound story about who is in the cradle. And to help us to understand, we're going to watch another mini-movie, *The Silence and the Fury*.

It was that silent night when the stars turned their gaze to marvel at the earth, when the heavens gathered breathless round a lowly stable, when a young mother wept tears of worship falling on the baby in her arms, and the song of the earth arose in Bethlehem, soft as the tender beating of his heart.

And all was calm, all was bright. Yet could this be the same God of Abraham, the conqueror of Israel, this baby, this fragile life?

[ 23 : 51 ] Is this child the one who burned his name in rapture, across the gasping skies? Whose voice spoke the oceans into crashing rhythms?

Who crafted the mountains into guardians of the firmament? Whose hand ignited the thirst of the deserts and the warring surge of the elemental hosts?

Who breathed life from dust? Broke the oppressor's rule, scattered the chains of his people like sand, and led them through the wilderness with the pillar of flame?

Is this child the one whose presence billowed thunderous on Sinai's peak? Who surrounded Job with the roaring wind, stood defiant in the raging furnace, wrote judgment against tyrants, emblazoned on the lips of the prophets, scorching history's pages with the fury of his might?

God's death, could this be the same God who chose to come as the vulnerable king, setting his throne on straw and manger, drawing forth the tears of shepherds, receiving the gifts of wandering travelers, his fame unknown in this world?

[ 25 : 09 ] God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, God's death, He is Jesus, the one who thunders through the heavens, yet whispers to our hearts, who reigns victorious, yet bows to serve the broken.

He is God in the fury, God in the silence. He holds this mystery balanced in His hands, holds our questions till they lose their need, until all we see is Him.

Jumping ahead a little bit, but many of you know this, that this whole beginning bit, the first five verses, is going to culminate in verse 14, where John will say the Word became flesh.

And it's making this claim that in the cradle was the Word. And on the cross, there was the Word.

And it's also in this video very helpfully saying that this Word is part of a bigger story.

It's not just God, but it's a story that began thousands of years before the birth of the Word. Let's look at verse 6 of John chapter 1. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

[ 26 : 37 ] He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. Right? So now, one of the ways to describe this word is light.

That's another name for Jesus. Light. When you see the cradle, you're seeing light entering our fallen world. when you see the cross, you're seeing light dying for darkness.

And then verse 8, He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. And one of the things, if you go on to read the rest of the Gospel of John, and if you read the other ancient biographies of Jesus, you'll see that Jesus makes the claim that John was the last of the prophets, that he is the greatest of the prophets.

And the reason he is the greatest of the prophets is actually going to come a little bit later on, if you go on and read another 20 or so verses in the Gospel of John, is that, you know, John, Jesus in

John chapter 12 says that Isaiah, over 700 years before Jesus, that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of it.

We talked about, we read that in Isaiah chapter 9. But Isaiah sees it in some ways. He sees a word, he sees a vision 700 plus years before. But John, out of all of the prophets, John is the one who's standing there one day and he watches Jesus come by and he points to Jesus and says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 28 : 11 ] Like, that's, you see that guy there? You see that guy there? He still has a little bit of tabouli in his beard. He missed after lunch. You see that guy? That, that's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

That's, that's the one who God shouts from heaven, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. That's him right there. That's the, the claim that John the Apostle is making about John the Baptist.

And it's not just that we have these, remember I said at the beginning, maybe you don't, that we have these like very profound ideas and so the life and death and resurrection of Jesus are connected to these profound ideas but it's not just ideas, it's a profound story and it's a very important story because, well actually, if you could put up the slide the true and greater story, that would be very helpful.

Once again, you can see that I, we hired the same group of graphic designers to come up with a cutting edge design and I think I, the one I have up there, yeah, I didn't, I didn't put chapter numbers.

This is in a sense the story of the world. It's the story of the Bible and the, and the Bible claims this is the true story of the world. It's the true story of the universe that you have all those, however you want to understand it, you have all these eons and you have God having a good creation and that's chapter one and two.

[ 29 : 40 ] It comes out of the fact that the triune God, the word was with God and the word was God and together they made everything that is and they made everything that is and it's very good. That's the first two chapters of the book of Genesis and then you have the fall.

This is where evil enters into our world and evil is a type of absence. It's a type of a brokenness. It's a type of a shielding the light so that the light can't, in a sense, or at least they think foolishly that it can't penetrate and it touches everything in a human being and some, even if it's just the tiniest of ways and sometimes in very, very deep ways that there is now this part within us that is bent, that's broken, that's dark and it touches everything about what it means to be a human being and that God, seeing our great need, right back in Genesis 3, he makes the promise that we cannot fix ourselves so he is going to provide a means by which we can be, you know, we've broken ourselves by trying to be God and that still fundamentally describes human experience that we act at different times as if we're God and that's a profound brokenness.

It's a profound, it leads to all sorts of evil. It leads to failure to do what we should and it leads to doing what we shouldn't and God sees that we can't fix ourselves so he promises and prepares the means by which God will come into our world and fix what we cannot fix of ourselves and that's in a sense, it begins with Genesis 3 at the end and it goes right to the end of Malachi.

It's the time of promise and preparation and in a sense, it ends with John the Baptist and when John the Baptist points at Jesus and says, you see that guy there? He's the one that God the Father said, this is my beloved son, you know, listen to him.

This is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world. This is the one that prophets have been prophesying about for centuries and centuries and centuries.

[ 31 : 42 ] 2,000 years they've been prophesying, 1,400 years they've been prophesying that this is the one, this is the one and his name is Jesus and so when we see the cradle and we see his life and we see the cross, this is God's keeping his promise.

This is the end of preparation has come and God has provided the means by which human beings can be made right with him and then after Jesus we are in the time right now, we are in what they call the last days and I describe it as the already not yet and it's the already not yet because on one hand when you put your faith and trust in Jesus as we're going to see in a moment, he gives us the right to become God's children and Jesus, Jesus' death is a purification for our sins, we now belong to him, we become his children by adoption and grace, we have the Holy Spirit present in our lives and so on one hand we have the already of what is going to be the final thing but on the other hand it's still the not yet because the not yet won't come until Jesus returns and that is both the end of all

things and the beginning of all things and this is the true story of the universe, it's the story of the Bible and it's very important because we live our lives in Canada as if we are characters in the movie Inception and many of you maybe haven't seen that movie Inception but it's a movie from Christopher Nolan about 12 years ago, it's a very fascinating movie and some of you have seen it, you know there's a big debate about the end which I'm not going to enter into but what the movie is about is the movie is about entering into dreams and using dreams to change things in people's consciousness and so they have this device that they can enter into a dream and the fellow is trying to explain to a young woman who has this ability to do it like what is a dream and how do you know whether you're in a dream or not in a dream and one of the ways that they describe that you know you're in a dream and you think about it in fact my daughter was telling me about a dream she had last night and in a dream we're just there we don't know how we got in that house we don't know you know why we have goats we don't know why we're doing things all of a sudden we're just there and all of a sudden it's just over and there's in a sense no beginning and no end and that fundamentally is what secular Canada is like we have no real beginning and if that actually if you think about it a lot of the stuff that's going on around identity and identity politics on one hand there's one aspect of our culture that wants to try to trace everything back to being some type of mechanistic mechanistic product of our race just as you know a few years ago it used to be that you trace everything back to whether your mother treated you the right way or the wrong way and that could explain all your problems and there's always been that aspect of us of trying to discover something to explain the darkness within us and the darkness of the world but at the end of the day it doesn't work because evil is a mystery we just choose it and only this bigger story of the fall explains it but for most of us we just it's as if we have no beginning we're just there and we don't think about evolution we don't think about what comes next we just have this present and the Bible gives us the true story of the world and what the Bible says is that every single one of us when we are born every one of us we were born in the already not yet and this is where we are like in a sense if I was able to be put a little arrow about where are you you know like in a mall where are you that little dot would point to right here we're in the already not yet and so when I'm born I'm born as one who comes into a story that begins with a good creation that has the fall and I am implicated in the fall there is a darkness and an evil and a brokenness and a privation that touches everything that is within me and I cannot fix myself and it is just there and there has been a time of promise and preparation which I can read about and I can hear about when I read the Bible and there has been God's keeping his promise and ending his preparation and providing a means by which we can become God's children by adoption of grace and that's Jesus and we live here in the already and not yet and we don't know if maybe even before the end of this service the end of all things will come with the return of Jesus and it's the end of all things the judging of the living and the dead and then there's the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth it is both the end and the beginning and every single one of us the meaning of our life is that we are born in the already not yet and in every single human being there comes a fork in the road and because God is a gracious God he doesn't just give us one fork because after we choose the wrong fork in the road he gives us another fork and another fork and another fork and another fork because his desire is that we will realize that if we continue in our way our end will be

God's judgment and his desire for us is God desires not the death of a sinner but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live and time and time again even today even at this moment I am saying there's a fork in the road and God is calling you to choose that fork that involves turning from you've spent your life keeping God at a distance and turning your back to him and God is calling you to stop to turn to lay down your sword and shield and to kneel and to say to Jesus not go away but come and when you do that he will come and the end of your story is one where the father smiles at you and says you are the one who accepted my son I have loved you with an everlasting and eternal love and I am so glad that you have come to be with me and welcome into my new creation why does Jesus do this?

he does it for love let's look at another short mini movie the spoken word Christmas why?

[ 38 : 19 ] why why did Jesus come to earth why forsake the majesty and fellowship of heaven exchanging a palace for a stable immortal comforts for a feeding trough and robes of glory for the feeble body of an infant an unparalleled irony this supreme unrivaled nobility experiencing absolute and total humility our sovereign God Emmanuel as a baby he didn't come to heap shame upon sinners or to judge and cast out the impious but to break bread with those called unrighteous he didn't come to illuminate every mystery of the cosmos or to enlighten the intellectual but to fulfill the

testimony of prophets clothed in rags he didn't come to elevate a single nation or to advocate a particular political affiliation he came because he saw you broken in need of salvation he saw you lost and abandoned crying out surrounded by deaf ears fighting through the tears but beaten down by the torments of this world and unable to bear your distress he renounced his eternal throne walked the earth bore the stripes accepted the nails and gave up his last breath so that you could receive the breath of life our God our holy infinite God beheld your pain perceived your heart and determined that your soul was worth dying for from the manger to the cross to the empty tomb it is all a story of profound love of a savior who rescued his children from darkness of a blameless king who declared that no sacrifice was too great for the sake of his beloved creation why did Jesus come to earth he came for you as we bring things to a close mindful of that let's listen to the last few words of John's introduction to the biography of Jesus verse 9 the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world that's why

John the Baptist was here to prepare people for the fact that the true light was going to actually enter into our world he was in the world verse 10 in other words he actually did come and in a moment you'll see if you were to go back and read John 1 that moment that first moment where Jesus where John says look at that guy there that's the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world that's who he is right there he was in the world verse 10 and the world was made through him just to be clear and yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him that's that time of preparation and promise but verse 12 this is now talking about Jesus and the already not yet those of us look what it says verse 12 but to all who did receive him who believed in his name that's how we become a Christian we receive him into us we believe we trust in him and receive him inside verse 12 but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become the children of God the adopted child of the triune God how were we born into this not of blood nor of the will of the flesh in other words it's not something natural it's not something that comes out of my will nor is it something social the will of man that's bestowed upon us the only way that we have that is of God

God gives it God's accomplished it verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as the only son from the father full of grace and truth that is the gospel we're going to watch one more mini movie and then I'll ask you to stand and we'll close in prayer and while they were there the time came for the baby to be born she gave birth to her firstborn a son and she wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn where does the creator of the universe send his son where does the prince of peace make his entrance a barn a stable a manger of all places certainly no place fit for a king but then again this was no ordinary king the savior is born in a stable so there are animals and uh animal stuff manure mud a pitiful place for a human much less the king of kings so why why would he do that because the shepherd was coming to care for his sheep to make a way for his sheep and that's what shepherds do they live where the sheep are they eat where they eat and they sleep where they sleep and this will be a sign to you you will find the babe wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger you ever thought about that sign sign for what maybe it is a sign that Jesus is accessible to everyone maybe it's a sign that the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills can relate to a homeless person that God will have nothing to do with the social status of mankind either way it's a sign for all of us to go and do likewise you see later

Paul would write these words that you should have the same attitude as Jesus Christ who being in the nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but he humbled himself he made himself nothing becoming a servant becoming a human likeness creator who had been served since before the dawn of time stepped out of heaven to become a servant who does that the God who's laid in a manger a messy feeding trough yeah why such a messy place because he came to save messy people so that first Christmas was dirty grimy filthy it was messy but thank God it was because without it what a mess we'd be in

I want to invite you to stand and close in closing let's pray father we give you thanks and praise that in Christ we can have hope that in Christ we know that the darkness will not overcome the light that death will not win that life will win that you know us in all of our particularity and all of those parts of us that are very good and bright and shiny and those parts that are very very dark and from which we look away you even see when we get so fascinated with the light of our accomplishments that it becomes a darkness of pride and narcissism and you knew all these things until you came to be born in a manger to live amongst us to die on a cross to taste all there is to taste of death to defeat

sin and death and hell itself and your death and resurrection and we thank you that you did it all out of love for us and we ask father that you would help to make this gospel this good news more real to us at a deeper and deeper level that it might be the story that we live out of that we might know that the end of our story in you is to be welcomed by our father in heaven and that this is his world that you hear our prayers that you want us to have more light and life as we walk day by day until he returns or until we see you face to face in death father grant us this hope make it deep within and we ask these things in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen