

Christmas Carol Service 2024

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Date: 15 December 2024

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. . . Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Christmas Carol Service.

Thanks for coming. It's great to see so many people. Now, whether this is your 60th Christmas Carol Service, or your first time here, I wanted to take a moment to explain what we're going to do this evening.

[1 : 42] We're going to sing some carols, of course. Also, throughout the night, we're going to read some small sections of the Bible. And these small readings are going to tell the story of the first Christmas.

Some of the readings might be a little bit different from previous years, perhaps. And because what we wanted to try and do this year is we wanted to try and set Christmas in its context.

So our readings are going to start from the very beginning of the Bible, the very beginning of history. And then we're going to travel to the first Christmas in Bethlehem.

And then we're going to bring it right the way up to today, December 2024 and beyond. So I hope you enjoy the evening. I hope it encourages you.

I hope it maybe even challenges you. And I hope it helps you find your place in the Christmas story. I'll be back in a short bit to speak just for a wee while and hopefully tie some things together.

[2 : 48] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

To the world the Lord has come, let every speaker be.

Let every heart prepare in room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing.

On to the end the Savior reigns, their sweetest songs and call.

Our fields and streams and hills and plains, repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

[4 : 12] He yields the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove.

The glories of his righteousness, the wonders of his love.

Some key verses from Genesis 1 and 2.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light.

[5 : 19] God saw that the light was good. And he separated the light from the darkness. By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing.

O come, O come, O come, O Lord of might Who to thy stripes on Sinai's light Patience rises in the law In power and majesty and law Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel O come, O God of may God Be free, thy own from Satan's liberty

[13 : 34] From depths of hell thy people say And give them victory, O Lord of may Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel O come, O God of this strength, come and cheer Our spirits by thy hand This person who he plows on rise And there's our shadows through to fight

Rejoice, rejoice Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel O Israel O Israel O come, O God of may of David Come And open wide our heavenly home And open wide our heavenly home Make safe the way that leads on high And close the crown to misery Rejoice, rejoice Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel Rejoice, rejoice Let us hear the words of the prophet Isaiah The people walking in darkness have seen a great light On those living in the land of deep darkness A light has dawned For to us a child is born To us a son is given And the government will be on his shoulders And he will be called Wonderful counselor Mighty God Everlasting father Prince of peace Of the greatness of his government and peace There will be no end He will reign on David's throne

And over his kingdom Establishing and upholding it With justice and righteousness From that time on And forever The zeal of the Lord Almighty Will accomplish this So Excuse me Just over a week to go then Nine days Ten sleeps to Christmas day Are you ready?

So every year The Christmas season rolls around And the countdown to the big day starts And for a lot of people That's exciting The Christmas lights go up in town Maybe you have a Christmas tree at home Decorations There's lots of Christmas food to eat Lots of parties to go to People to meet Friends and family All this builds and builds Then to the big day itself Christmas day And personally I enjoy it And as you're here At a Christmas carol evening I'm going to assume That most of you do too But after all this build up And after all this excitement Can Christmas sometimes Be a little bit of a disappointment?

[18 : 14] A little bit of a let down? You know Maybe Maybe it didn't work out as planned Or maybe it just didn't live up to the hype Or maybe you're just exhausted From all of the festive stuff that goes on Did you know that the January blues Is a real thing?

A real condition? And it makes sense December is such a turbocharged month You know It's so busy It's so shiny It's so festive That when January comes along And the holidays are over And you go back to school Or work Or whatever It's cold It's dark It's not surprising really Is it?

January can feel Just a little bit down A little bit glum Now I'm going to suggest That as great as Christmas is And it really is great That What we're looking for Is something Deeper Something even better Something of greater substance And meaning Something that will carry The full weight Of our expectations This Christmas The last Bible reading That Vernon read there Those words date back Some 800 years BC Before Christ And the passage talks about A people walking in darkness There's a people living lives Longing for something more For something better And Isaiah the prophet Comes along And he promises something Or rather Someone Who will finally Meet the expectations Of these people Who will finally Fulfill their longing

And he says For to us A child is born To us a son is given And the government Will be on his shoulders And he will be called Wonderful counselor Mighty God Everlasting Father Prince of Peace And about 800 years later A child Is born A child A baby Called Jesus And that's why We celebrate Christmas Right?

But hold on Why is this so great? You know Babies are born All the time What makes The birth of Jesus Any different?

[20 : 38] This year My wife and I Watched the movie The Christmas Chronicles On Netflix And so the story goes That it's Christmas Eve And Santa Crashes his sleigh Oh no How are the children Going to get their presents In time for Christmas?

And Santa's asking around For help And no one wants To help him Because why should they? Because he's just like Any other man Dressed up like Santa At this time of year Until they realize Wait a minute This Santa's the real deal And Christmas is in danger Well the birth of Jesus Doesn't seem so great Until you realize That actually He's the real deal The birth of Jesus Doesn't make much sense Sense Until you understand Who he is And why he came And this is why We started our Bible readings Right the way back In Genesis 1 This evening Because putting Jesus' birth In context Helps us to understand Or helps us to make sense Of the Christmas story And more than that It helps us to make sense Of our lives And our situation And the world That we live in In the beginning

Genesis 1 says God created the heavens And the earth Take a moment To consider that That the very air That we breathe And the very earth That we stand on Was created It was designed Now exactly How this happens The science behind it We're not ignoring that It's just not the focus Of this passage And we certainly Haven't got time tonight To go into it Rather the point That Genesis 1 Makes here Is that There exists Our God A terrifyingly Powerful creator Who made the heavens And the earth And whose pinnacle Of creation Is us Humankind In Genesis 2 We read that God created Adam and Eve Placing them On this earth In the garden of Eden To work it

And take care of it Eden is the Hebrew word For paradise And that is God's design For humanity For our life To live in paradise To live in perfect harmony With God And with the world And with each other And with ourselves But then Genesis 3 It all goes wrong But rather than living Happily ever after Adam and Eve Do what humankind Has done Repeatedly Throughout history They think They know better Than God And they disobey him And that Perfect harmony Is broken Sin Enters the world Perfection Is shattered And as a result Adam and Eve Are banished From paradise They're kicked out Of the garden And that relationship They had with God Is broken In that moment

We became Incomplete Ever since then There has been a part Of human nature That longs For a return To that Perfection That longs For a return To that That peace And that purpose And that meaning That comes from Being united To God Now what I've just Run through Really quickly The first three chapters Of Genesis Is a very brief Summary Of the first couple Of pages of the Bible The rest of the Bible And it's a really Big book You could say Is an account Of God's Rescue mission God's mission Not to punish Humankind But to rescue them He makes It his own mission To bring us Back to him Now it's important That you know It's not the other

[25 : 02] Way around We're not clawing Our way back To him God doesn't expect Us to earn Our way back Through good behavior Or good deeds Rather he reaches Out to us With a gift And so that's Why we celebrate At Christmas It's not just The birth of any baby But the coming Of the almighty Creator God Himself The coming of God To rescue humankind From a problem Of their own Making Now What other religion Or mythology Or philosophy Offers such a gift Of self-sacrifice What other God Has made it His mission To save you As we continue The story of Christmas Bear this in mind I'm going to be back In a little bit To finish it all off The birth of Jesus

Now the birth of Jesus 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 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 And she will bear a son And you shall call His name Jesus For he will save his people From their sins All this took place To fulfill What the Lord Had spoken by the prophet Behold the virgin Shall conceive And bear a son And they shall call His name Emmanuel Which means God with us When Joseph woke From his sleep He did as the angel Of the Lord commanded him He took his wife But he knew her not Until she had given birth To a son And he called His name Jesus Silent night

Silent night Holy night Sees the world Heed from sight Heed and chosen His table bare Watched for your child Beloved and fair Sleep in heavenly prayers Sleeping in heavenly rest Silent night

Holy night Shemblers first Song of light Zim clear and calm.

Far and hear the angels' song. Christ the Redeemer is here.

[29 : 03] Christ the Redeemer is here. Silent night, holy night, sun of all, oh, how bright love is smiling from your face.

Christ the Redeemer is here. The hour of praise, Savior, still to our Lord, Savior, still to our Lord.

Savior, still to our Lord. Savior, still to our Lord. The Lord, still to our Lord.

The Lord, still to our Lord. The Lord, still to our Lord. I apologize that Isaac Peters has suffered a very recent family bereavement and he's asked me to read in his place.

reading from Luke chapter 2. In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

[30 : 43] This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria and everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid.

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

[32 : 15] the Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. . . .

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Christ my eyes and adore, Christ the everlasting Lord.

Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb. Hailed in flesh that God had seen, Hailed in garment deity, Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.

[34 : 11] Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the new heart King.

Hail the heaven, o'er grace of peace, Hail the Son of righteousness. Bright and high to all he praise, Whist with healing in his grace.

And he lays his glory high, For that man no more may die. Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the new heart King.

The death and resurrection from the Gospel of Luke.

Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We have found this man subverting our nation.

[35 : 52] He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar. Claims to be Messiah, a king. So Pilate asked Jesus, Are you the king of the Jews?

You have said so, Jesus replied. Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no basis for a charge against this man.

And wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, Crucify him! Crucify him!

And the soldiers led him away. It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

[37 : 03] And when he had said this, he breathed his last. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here. He has risen. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[39 : 01] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[41 : 07] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The New Life, Revelation 21.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

[42 : 17] He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new.

Christ the Lord Sing, wise of angels Sing in exultation Sing, all ye citizens of heaven
above Glory to God Glory to God In the highest Christ the Lord Come, come, let us adore
him Christ the Lord Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing
that you may abound in hope for the power of the Holy Spirit.

I'd just like to thank everyone for coming out I'd like to thank you, everybody who put so
much work into this this evening The musicians, all the readers, the singers, the AV, and
everyone else who you don't see and you don't hear But who put a lot of hours in So thank
you very much and have a good Christmas Thank you very much Thank you very much

[50 : 59] Thank you Thank you, I was like, that was very good, I really appreciate it. And all three of
our kids made it through.

It was touch and go with that. It was touch and go with my room. Jasper did a great job.
Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.