The Four Days of Christmas (Full Carol Service)

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Date: 20 December 2020

Preacher: Colin Dow

[0:00] Well, good evening and welcome to the Glasgow City Free Church Christmas carol service. Usually we call this what's so special about Christmas. I think in 2020, we desperately, desperately need there to be something very special about Christmas. This morning we talked of how Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever walks in him, does not walk in darkness. And so this year, as we engage in singing carols and rejoicing in the birth of Jesus, we rejoice in the light, in the darkness, and we love following him. We're going to begin as we sing together in Psalm 95 from verse 1 to 7. Come, let us joyfully sing to the Lord. After this, I'm going to pray and the whole service will just roll on without me. Let's stand.

O come, let us joyfully sing to the Lord. To the rock of salvation, let us raise her voice. Let us come before him, expressing our hands. Let us with our singing praise and rejoice. Let us with our singing praise and rejoice. The Lord is the great of the golden old cross. He has deepest places, he holds in his hand.
The heights of the mountains belong to the Lord. The oceans are his, and he formed the dry land. O come, let us come before him, our maker in prayer. For we are his people, and he is our God. He shepherds and his words and Jesus in his loving care. Let us pray. We have begun our service of worship this evening, O Lord, by singing to your praise, by calling you the rock of our salvation, by talking of how the earth's deepest places you hold in your hand.
Which makes it so amazing and so marvelous that we are so marvelous that we are so marvelous that we are focusing tonight on you, the God who emptied himself and became a child born in a stable and laid in a manger.
[3:26] Holding the earth's deepest place in your hand, holding the earth's deepest place in your hand, and yet being held in the arms of his mother Mary. And Lord Jesus, we lift you up this evening. We exalt you. We praise you.

You are the reason, the motive, and the object of all our praise and all our worship. We worship you. We worship you. We worship you.
But the Lord Jesus Christ, given on the cross for us. And so, Lord, we pray that you be with us tonight. Thank you that we can celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming.
The true light in the middle of this dark COVID winter. Bless us, O Lord, and lift up our spirits, we pray, because we desperately need our spirits lifted.
In Jesus' name, we pray these things. Amen. Amen. Thank you.
[5:18] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
[8:22] 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. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
[9:20] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. And high significance And ■■■■ Shears To non-Harb Through His virginity For the For the And he leaves the children on, till the man's forgive his love.
No day that for no be a stable, may the arms stand in high.

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We are■isch speaking, not in heaven, set such as peace ourselves got free. cells our second reading tonight comes from micah chapter 5 from verses 2 to 5 but you o bethlehem ephratha who are too little to be among the clans of judah from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in israel whose coming forth is from old from ancient days therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of israel he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the lord in the majesty of his name in the majesty of the name of the lord is god and they shall dwell secure for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth and he shall be their peace the birth of jesus foretold to mary luke 1 26 to 38 in the sixth month the angel gabriel was sent from god to a city of galilee named nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was joseph of the house of david and the virgin's name was mary and he came to her and said greetings o favored one the lord is with you but she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be and the angel said to her do not be afraid mary for you have found favor with god and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name jesus he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the lord god will give to him the throne of his father david and he will reign over the house of jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end and mary said to the angel how will this be since i am a virgin and the angel answered her the holy spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called holy the son of god and behold your relative elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son and this is a six months with her who was called barren for nothing will be impossible with god and mary said behold i am the servant of the lord let it be to me according to your word and the angel departed from her silent night holy night silent night holy night all is calm all is bright round long virgin mother and child holy infant so tender and mild sleep in heavenly peace sleep in heavenly peace
silent night silent night holy night holy night shepherds awake at the sight glory streams from heaven afar heavenly host heavenly host hallelujah christ the savior christ the savior is born christ the savior is born christ the savior is born silent night silent night holy night holy night holy night son of god love's pure love love amen amen is from my holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace jesus lord thy birth earth jesus lord at thy birth
[16:05] An angel appears to Joseph.

Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 to 25. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.
And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. 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 sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.
[17:38] He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus. Jesus. To be with. The, The way in the manger, the quick for the rest.

For this Lord Jesus laid by His sweet hand. The stars in the bright sky lived under Him.
The light is on the Lord Jesus, I sleep in the air.
The castle of glory, the name in our west. What list of loy semblance Theatrain in the lace.
I love you, Lord Jesus, let the love of God I'll save my life, my heart, and hope in His name Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay Close by me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay Bless all the dear children, and not in the dead At this time, I ask you to stay In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered
[20:14] 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 line 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 Thank

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you Thank you Also, you may or may not be aware that most of these carols we're singing Or that we're listening to being sung Have actually been put together by you You've actually contributed your voices and your instruments to them And they sound absolutely superb I found myself being very emotional during that last hymn

And I came away in a manger because I heard the sound of our children singing Which we haven't heard in this building now for, well, since March So it was lovely to hear you On the first day of Christmas, my true love said to me A partridge in a pear tree Since 1780, we've been singing the English Christmas carol The Twelve Days of Christmas My challenge to the young folk here is Can you remember what my true love sends to me?
On each of the twelve days of Christmas Traditionally, Western Christians celebrated twelve days of Christmas Beginning on Christmas Day, 25th of December And stretching all the way through to Epiphany on the 6th of January They represent the birth of Christ on Christmas Day To the visit of the wise men at the Epiphany Eastern Christians celebrate Christmas Day on the 25th of December But for them, Epiphany represents the baptism of Christ On the 6th of January Now these days, we're not really going in for the twelve days of Christmas Judging by how early some people started putting their Christmas trees up It would seem to be more of the 120 days of Christmas variety Well, never mind as long as we get to the heart of the message of Christmas It's not about trees and turkey, really It's about the greatest gift ever given to mankind The gift of Jesus Christ Of an infant born of the Virgin Mary in a stable
And laid in a manger Never mind eleven pipers piping Never mind eight maids of milking I usually buy my milk, not from maids, but from Morrisons What's important to me as a Christian Is the central message of Christmas The gift of Jesus Sent to save a sinful world And rescue it from darkness However, let's use at least part of the twelve days of Christmas As an introduction to Matthew 1 verses 18 through 25 And its story of the birth of Jesus After all, the passage begins with the words Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way And I want us to consider together for a short time The four days of Christmas With reference to the four characters in this story On the first day of Christmas, a mighty angel On the second day of Christmas, a righteous man
On the third day of Christmas, a blessed virgin On the fourth day of Christmas, a glorious Savior On the first day of Christmas, a mighty angel A mighty angel In the Bible, angels are not cuddly and cute They are powerful spiritual creatures Whenever they appear, the humans to whom they appear Are filled with awe and fear Remember that all that separates you from the angels tonight Is the curtain of this created order And that, at a moment's notice, God could draw back that curtain The sight you would see of all the angels Would bring you to your knees in awe and fear Well, in our passage, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream We're not told what that angel looked like Because what was important was his message
[24:50] Did you know that the word angel just means messenger? For as mighty and as glorious as the angel is The message from God is far more important than the messenger of God This angel serves one purpose Not to draw attention to himself But to deliver the message God has given him to speak He is gloriously impressive And yet he is interested in only one thing Faithfully delivering the message God has given him to speak And this is the first gift of Christmas God has a message for you God has a word for you this Christmas The God against whom we have sinned Is not sulking in silence The God against whom we have sinned Loves us and speaks through the angel

The great Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer Wrote a famous book with the title He is there and he is not silent God has a message for Joseph And he uses an angel to deliver it You shall call his name Jesus He shall save his people from their sins The message is about Jesus This Christmas, remember God has spoken An angel came to deliver a message from God to Joseph Concerning the birth of our Savior Jesus Heaven is not silent Never has been God has spoken So for all the sensuality of Christmas The sights, the sounds, and the smells Do not forget the spirituality of Christmas That the God of heaven and earth has spoken
And if his message was important enough To be delivered by a mighty angel Then surely it's important enough For us to listen On the first day of Christmas A mighty angel On the second day of Christmas A righteous man A righteous man In the story of the nativity Joseph is rather like the angel He does not draw attention to himself The text tells us that He was betrothed to Mary They were engaged to be married In the world of Joseph's day Engagement was all but marriage But before they were officially married Mary fell pregnant In the world of Joseph's day This was an outrageous thing It was a severe betrayal of social order

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Those who knew them would have been shocked If Joseph was the father of the child Then he was disgraced If someone else was the father of the child Mary was disgraced But let's face it This kind of thing's been going on Since time immemorial All of our family trees Have skeletons In the cupboard Yes, make no mistake Mary's pregnancy was a disgrace For a righteous man A fine, upstanding member Of the community Like Joseph And yet because of what The angel told him Joseph knew that Mary had not been unfaithful to him But that this child Was of the Holy Spirit And Joseph knew that He could no longer go on With the prior plans He had to end this engagement Quietly And it's here we see The righteousness of this Man Joseph shining through Because on account of the message
The angel delivers to him Joseph was willing to stand By Mary And endure the disgrace And the shame He was willing to endure The mocking sneers And the hurtful jibes Of those who cast Dispersions on him And his wife Here's truth Faithfulness to God When the world Is against you On account of sticking By Christ But you're determined To stand by him And not betray him However much it costs you That's true righteousness When you obey God Rather than men And when the gospel Of Jesus Christ Is more important to you Than the opinions Of the world around you There may be some among us Who because we are Finding it hard
[29:56] To endure the mocking jibes And the hurtful sneers Of those who are laughing At our faith in Christ There may be some of us Who perhaps are going Backward in our faith And in our minds anyway Thinking of putting Christ Away And of returning To the world Before we move away From this second day Of Christmas If you're in this position You need to ask Joseph Joseph Was standing by Mary Worth it?

Was obeying the message Of the angel Worth it? Was being faithful To God Worth it? He would tell you It was a hundred times Over Because he became The adoptive father Of Jesus The savior of the world The incubator And provider Of his childhood All the hurtful Jibes And mocking sneers Were worth it Because he was rewarded By having Jesus As his adoptive son Nothing in this world Can compare With the reward Of Jesus And his glorious presence In our lives Nothing On the first day of Christmas A mighty angel On the second day A righteous man On the third day of Christmas A blessed virgin A blessed virgin Mary's a fascinating person So fascinating
That she has occupied The minds of Christians From the very earliest times Some have made Far too much of her Referring to her As the queen of heaven And all but making An idol of her Others have made Far too little of her For fear that they May be accused Of Mariolatry Without a doubt There's something Very special about her Which is why Following the present day Reformed theologian Douglas Kelly I'm happy to refer to her As the blessed virgin Christmas without her Is unthinkable Whatever disgrace Joseph Would have been exposed to Her disgrace Would have been much more One can almost imagine The comments Which would have been Directed her way But what's amazing And what's absolutely Miraculous Is that with no Human intervention Whatsoever
Our text tells us The virgin conceived And gave birth To a son The miracle was The conception You see Such a conception Is humanly impossible But of course We read in Luke Chapter 1 Verse 37 As Hannah read to us Nothing is impossible To God God blessed her By implanting Within her By the power Of the Holy Spirit A holy child And she Not a passive participant A surrogate mother But rather That this child Should bear her Genetic code Jesus in every way A son of his mother And as such She is to be honoured Something very special About Mary She became The bearer of Jesus The ancient Christians Called her Theotokos The bearer of God And even though Matthew records So little about her We know that she was A willing servant
Of God For these nine months The son of God Was living And growing Within her She was the incubator Of his grace And as such She submitted herself To the ignominy Of giving birth In a stable And laying her Newborn child In a manger She submitted herself To the will of God Which is that As God's people We're here to serve And not to be served Just think In her womb Grows the saviour Of the world The word made flesh The glory of God And there in the safety Of her womb His bones are forming And his heart Is beginning to beat She loved him then And she loved him
[34:32] When 33 years later She watched As his heart Stopped beating On the cross Her whole life Wrapped up In her son Jesus And that's true devotion That your life As a Christian Should be wrapped Up in Jesus That you should live As a Christ Bader Nurturing your faith In Jesus Living with Jesus Living in Jesus Living for Jesus This is the Christmas Challenge for all of us Young and old Not that Christ Should physically grow In us As he did in Mary But that we should Grow in Christ

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That we should Strengthen our faith And renew our determination That our lives Should be wrapped up In him On the first day A mighty angel On the second day A righteous man On the third day A blessed virgin On the fourth day Of Christmas A glorious saviour A glorious saviour

Of course the hero Of this story Isn't the angel Nor is it Joseph Nor is it Mary The hero of this story Is the child to be born In our passage In Matthew He is given two names Jesus and Emmanuel Jesus for what he does Emmanuel for who he is Jesus which means saviour And Emmanuel which means God with us And I want us to think Just for a few minutes On the first of these Jesus Saviour Or as the angel Tells us He shall save his people From their sins I wondered if our world Knows this Christmas That its greatest need Is not a vaccine But salvation From its sin Does it know And understand That without salvation From God Through Jesus
There stands only The judgment Of God By Jesus Many foolishly Celebrate Christmas With no reference To Jesus And our salvation From sin What is there To celebrate At all Unless Jesus Is the saviour And that he has Saved us From our sin What is there To celebrate About sin Itself About the judgment On sin And the misery Sin has brought Into the world What is there To celebrate About wars And death And poverty Hey our people Must be celebrating Some kind Of coca-cola Christmas Because surely It can't be A christian Christmas Without the message Of Christ As our saviour From sin But with him Christmas is transformed From a secular festival Into a truly joyful Celebration For with the birth Of Jesus God has sent
A saviour To save us From our sin He didn't save us By being born He saved us By dying Our salvation Doesn't happen In a stable But on a cross Not in Bethlehem But on a small hill Outside Jerusalem Called Golgotha On that cross The saviour Born to Mary Died for us Bury the punishment And penalty Of our sins He dealt with them There And in return He gave us Forgiveness And eternal life He did not come To save himself He came to save you He is a glorious saviour Whose sacrifice Has been forgiving people For thousands of years And washing all their sins away Such a man Was Mick Fleming
From Burnley A town in the north Of England You may have read About him this week On the BBC website At the age of 11 Mick was indecently Assaulted In a Burnley park Brought up also In a very troubled home He became a drug dealer And a gang enforcer His life was headed In altogether The wrong direction Until at the age Of his early 40s In 2009 He believed in Jesus Christ As his saviour And he became a Christian From then on Mick has devoted His life To telling other people About Jesus He has become An ordained minister In the English church And is known as Pastor Mick He works on the street With the homeless The drug addicts And the poor And I'm going to quote now From the BBC website itself Copyright BBC
[39:37] Pastor Mick Has travelled his own road To Damascus From a life of crime To being tested Every day By the impact Of coronavirus And I wanted to know What motivates him To keep going Mick then revealed A staggering story To try and explain Why he is at peace With those terrible events Of his childhood Ten years ago So just after He became a Christian Mick befriended A homeless alcoholic Outside a takeaway Mick listened to him Cared for him Helped him to get sober And reunited him With his family The man died Two years later But his family Was thankful That they had all Been together And now these are The words of Mick Himself What I never told Him Or his family

Or the police Was that He Was the man Who had raped me As a child Why?
I knew that I had been forgiven For my past I didn't do What he had done But still Terrible things But I felt forgiven And I didn't want To live in his sin That's why I'm free I'm not spending My life in torment Mick writes It's redemption Only a savior Like Jesus Could change Could change a man Like Mick Fleming Into Pastor Mick's Pastor Mick A fierce Drug enforcer To a forgiver Of his abuser This is the Christian Message The gift of Christmas All rolled into one The Jesus Who changes our lives For the better I don't care I don't care much For the pipers Piping For the lords
A leaping Or even for those Five gold rings But I do care For this Forgiveness And transformation That the guilt Of our sin Can be removed By faith In Jesus Christ And that by his spirit We can change For the better What then Do we need One thing Faith in Jesus And so I close With this Do you Know Will you Believe in Jesus Tonight For that And that alone Will make this A Christmas To remember Acialty
Love Who Laugh For the Big utan Earth On the Sing Their classy Join the lonely nation's rise, join the triumph of the skies.

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[43:12] With the dead across proclamated, Christ is born in Bethlehem. Like the herald angels sing, glory to the new Lord King.

Christ my high isem, my Lord, Christ the everlasting Lord. Late in time behold him come, all strength of my virgin's womb.
Built in flesh the Godhead see, built in armoured deity. Pleased as man with land to dwell, Jesus of Emmanuel.
Like the herald angels sing, glory to the new Lord King. Hail the heaven, O Prince of Peace.
Hail the Son of Righteousness. Light and light, the hope he reigns, risen with me within his wings.
[44:26] Let he raise his glory high, born that man no more may die. Born to raise a son to earth, born to give the second birth.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the new Lord King. The shepherds respond to the good news, Luke 2, 8-20.
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 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. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, 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 the angel and a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he is pleased.
[45:48] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us 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 has 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 them.
Joy has dawned upon the world, promised from creation.
God's salvation, God's salvation, now unfurled hope for every nation. Not with fences from above, not with chains of glory, But a humble gift of love, Jesus born of Mary.
[47:11] God's salvation, now unfurled hope for every nation.

God's salvation, now unfurled hope for every nation.
God's salvation, now unfurled hope for every nation.
Thank you.
Two different responses to the good news from Matthew chapter 2 verses 1 to 12. He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
[49:45] They told him, in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, And when you find him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him.
After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them Until it came to rest over the place where the child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, And they fell down and they worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, They departed to their own country by another way. O come, O come ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
[51:21] Come and behold him, your King of angels, O come ye, O come ye, come And behold him, your King of angels, Come ye, come and behold him, with him Christ the Lord.

God of power, light of light, he who abhors the first word.
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

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Sing, boys of angels, sing them exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above.
Glory to God, behold the highest, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
[53:12] Hey, Lord, we greet thee on this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be in glory.

Oh, come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
Thank you very, very much to Laura for splicing all these things together. Remember, Glasgow City is a family to which we belong, not a place to which we come.
And on behalf of the leadership of Glasgow City, we'd like to offer to you the warmest, warmest greetings for this Christmas and a blessed, blessed time.
We're going to close now as we sing in Psalm 117. We're going to be singing to the tune at Regent Square. We're going to stand to sing and then close with our benediction. All you people sing his praise.
[54:41] For his love is great towards us, his commitment thus always. He is faithful now and ever.

And now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, one true and living God, rest and remain with you this Christmas and always.
Amen.

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