

All Age Carol Service

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Preacher: Mark Fossey

[0 : 00] So reading from the Bible is Matthew chapter 1 verse 18 to 25. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

Then his mother Mary was approached 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 it considered these sins, 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 always make Caesar's, for he will save the 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's revival. When Joseph waked in the fleet, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

[1 : 14] He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus. Good. Well, hello, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, mums and dads.

Now, before we have our talk, I think it's a good idea for us to say a prayer that God will help us to understand what we're going to hear. Okay? So when we pray, we put our hands together, and we close our eyes, and we speak to God.

Father God, we ask that please you'd help us today to understand what you say to us in your Bible, and to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

Now, I wonder how many of you are very excited at the moment. How many of you are very excited? I am very excited at the moment. Put your hands down. Have a think. Do you know that in less than two weeks, something's going to happen?

What do you think is going to happen in less than two weeks? What do you think is going to happen? It's going to be Christmas. Absolutely right. And that's why I'm really excited. Christmas is one of my favourite times of year.

[2 : 26] What happens at Christmas? Well, we have lots of food, don't we? We have stuffing and turkey and lots of chocolate and cake and all sorts of food. We get to see our friends.

We get to see our family. We get to decorate Christmas trees. We get to play lots of games. But one of my favourite things about Christmas, I don't know if it's you, are presents.

Presents is my favourite. Now, I don't know if you'd stop and think. What is the best Christmas present you've ever had? Just stop and think in your head. You don't need to put your hands up. What would be your best Christmas present you've ever had?

Maybe, and I want the adults to do this as well, maybe it's a toy you had. Maybe it's a bike you got. Maybe it's a Sony PSP someone got. Maybe it's a set of golf clubs or a diamond necklace.

Fat chance for you. I know. Well, I've got my favourite ever Christmas present with me and I want to show it to you. I got this when I was six years old. I don't know if you can see that there.

[3 : 28] This is a Star Wars alarm clock. And if you're not excited, you really should be. This is brilliant. Let me show you what it does. What R2-D2 is saying is that you have to get up right away.

R2, you shouldn't be so blind. This little rebel is going to be late. Very good. I woke up to that every morning for about ten years. I love that clock. That was my favourite ever Christmas present.

But what we're going to learn about this morning is that in the Bible it teaches us that there's one Christmas present that's even better than your favourite toy or your favourite Sony PSP or your diamond necklace.

And even better than actually a Star Wars alarm clock. And that is Jesus. And I'll explain why in a minute. But before we do that, I've got so excited about Christmas that I'm going to need some helpers because I want to open my Christmas presents now.

I just can't contain myself. So I need a volunteer to come and help me open my first present. Who shall I have? Would you like to come up and help me? Come on up. Come up on the stage.

[4 : 39] Well done. Right. Now what we do with Christmas presents is just hold that a minute. Don't open it yet. And just face everyone. Now, what I do with my Christmas presents is I like to work out what it is before I've opened it. So what I do is I bang on it.

Give it a good bang. Give it a bang. Oh, good noise. Give it a shake. Oh, no noise there. So we've got a guess. What do you think it is? What do you think it is? A drum.

Well, let's open it up and find out. Do you want to rip it up? Give it a good tear. Rip it nice and hard. Well done. Rip it like you've never ripped a present before. Brilliant. Oh, look.

What is it? Hold it up so everyone can see it nice and high. What is it? It's chocolate. Now, I love chocolates on Christmas Day.

Do you not like chocolates on Christmas? Isn't that exciting? It's amazing. But the problem is with these chocolates, this... Oh. Looks like my wife has already had some of these.

[5 : 34] Thank you very much. Do you want to go and sit down? Well done. Go and grab a seat. Well, let's open the second one. That wasn't a great present, was it? Well, who's going to help me with my second present? Do you want to come up, Callum? Good lad.

Right. We can do the same thing. Give it a shake. Hit it hard. Did it make a noise? What do you think that is? Any ideas? Why don't we open it up and see what it is?

Give it a nice tear. Rip it nice and hard. Let's open it up and see what's in there. Tear it. Tear it. Go on. There we go. Oh, look.

Put it up. It's a pair of socks. I think they're from my mum. My mum always gives me socks.

Do you know what? I work for a church and most of my socks are holy socks. So, it's a good thing I've got some new ones. Thank you very much. Do grab a seat. Go and sit down. Well done. Well, I've got one more and I don't know about you, but I always leave the biggest one till last.

[6 : 34] Always leave the biggest one till last. So, here's the biggest one. Who's going to help me open this massive one? Do you want to come up? Well done. Right.

Same thing. Give it a shake. Oh, what do you think that is? Any ideas? A pillow might be. Let's open it up and see what it is. Do you want to open it up?

Give it a nice tear. Oh, how funny is that? What is that?

How funny. It's a life jacket. Thank you very much. Go and sit down. Well.

Well, it fits, but it's a very funny present, isn't it? I mean, who would give someone a life jacket on Christmas Day? Who knows what life jackets are for? Does anyone know?

[7 : 34] What do you think life jackets are for? If you fall in the water. That's exactly right. See, if I fall in the water with this on, I will float. But the funny thing is, I don't see any water around there.

I'm not on a boat, am I? When people fall off of a boat into the water, they need to be rescued. But I don't need to be rescued. I'm not near any water. What a funny thing.

I wonder why that is. Oh, hang on. Just a minute. Here it is. There's a little card that's on the present. Let me just read this. Here it is. To Mark, Happy Christmas.

This will help you remember Matthew chapter 1, verse 21. Ah, Matthew chapter 1, verse 21. Well, if you've still got your service sheet, we can look and see what Matthew 1, verse 21 says.

I'll read it to you. It says this. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins.

[8 : 40] You ought to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. So the Bible says we do need to be rescued. We need to be saved from our sins. Well, I don't know what that means.

We'll have to have a think about that in a moment. What we're going to do is we're going to sing another song and then we'll have a think about what that saving is, what that rescue is all about. And we're going to sing now Away in a Manger, which is all about Jesus in a manger as a baby.

So while we sing this song, I want you to be thinking, why is Jesus in a manger? It says here he is going to save his people from their sins. So why don't we all stand together and sing this song?

Now, I just opened my Christmas present and I got a life jacket, which reminds me of being rescued. And I didn't think I needed rescuing.

But the Bible says that she will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he'll rescue people from their sins. Now, in the true story in the Bible, you might know this story.

[9 : 41] Mary and Joseph, they're engaged. But before they get married, Mary gets pregnant. And in those days, that was a very strange thing. Ladies didn't get pregnant in those days before they got married.

So Joseph's a bit shocked. And he wonders if it's a good idea to marry her at all. So he's all very worried. But he gets calmed by an angel.

An angel comes and visits him and says, it's all right. Don't worry. This child is not from man, but from God. Now, I wonder how many of you put your hands up if before you were born, an angel came and visited your daddy.

I don't think so. There's a few that like to think so. The only people that your daddy might have visited was a midwife. And they're not angels. They're different to angels. So, if this child has an angel come and visit your dad, this must be a really special child.

She will give birth to a son, the angel says. And you're to give him the name Jesus because he'll rescue people from their sins. And here's the important bit, kids and adults.

[10 : 47] Jesus is the best Christmas present ever because he rescues people from their sins. So, you see, we do need rescuing. I need rescuing. Not from water, but from our sins.

Now, I wonder if anyone could tell me what this is. Who can tell me what that is? It's a crown. And who wears crowns? Kings wear crowns.

That's exactly right. Now, you want to imagine that God is the king of the whole world because he made the whole world. And what sins means is that many of us live our lives, all of us live our lives, as if God wasn't the king.

We don't want him to be in charge of us. We want to do things our own way, don't we? And all of us do this, however old or young we are. It's as if we say, I want to be the king. I don't want you to be king, God.

I want to be in charge of my own life. Stuff off God. And that makes God angry. God isn't happy when we live like that. So, we need to be rescued from God's anger.

[11 : 47] And the reason that God has sent Jesus into the world to be born in a manger is that when he became a man, he died on a cross to rescue us from our sins, which is brilliant news.

That's why Christmas is such a great time. Because whatever you've done, however many times you've done it, whoever you've done it to, we can be forgiven from our sins.

We can be rescued from our sins. That's why Jesus is the best Christmas present this Christmas. Now, I wonder how many of you would get a Christmas present and imagine this.

Mum and Dad gives you a Christmas present and you open it up and you think, oh, I've always wanted that toy. It's a Star Wars alarm clock. Brilliant. And then Mum or Dad says, okay, thank you, Mark.

That'll be £20, please. And you say, Mum, I haven't got £20. How can I pay for that? Because Mum and Dad would never do that, would they? Because always Christmas presents are free, aren't they?

[12 : 47] Who has to pay for their Christmas presents? No one. And so it is with God's present of Jesus rescuing us from our sins. It's free. Although I find that every year lots of people, children and adults, come to carol services and sing carol songs and they get offered this free present of forgiveness from their sins of being rescued and they don't accept it, they don't open it.

Can you imagine having all your Christmas presents under your tree and then you open all of them excitedly but then you leave one unwrapped and you just don't open it?

I mean, who would do that? But I find that every year lots of people don't unwrap the best present that they can get offered which is to be forgiven of their sins.

Now I think sometimes we need to think a bit more about what that means and it might be that if you're a child here today, all of you guys and those children here, you could come back to church because every week at 10.30 the children learn more about what it means that Jesus rescues us.

But it might be for the adults, just for a moment, that you'd like to think more about what it means to be rescued from our sins. There's a couple of things I want to suggest. One is that we've got some leaflets called The Real Christmas that are free.

[14 : 02] They're on the desk at the back. They'll take you about five minutes to read. Please do take one of those and read it. It might be that you want to come back to church. We meet here every week at 10.30 on a Sunday.

But it might be that you want to do this Christianity Explored course which I help run and it runs every few months and it's only seven weeks. And in that time we just meet together, we have a talk, we have discussion and it's very open and easy.

You'll really enjoy it. Everyone who does it enjoys it. Some become Christians and some people don't. Do you know what? This Christmas lots of people will open lots of presents but many people won't open the best present which is that Jesus rescues us from our sins.

And I'd like to encourage all of us, don't be this year one of those people that doesn't open that present. Be like the billion odd people around the world who have opened that present and now know that their sins are forgiven which is brilliant.

Isn't that good news? The truth is I've opened some brilliant presents. I've opened some chocolates. I've opened some socks. I've got a life... But I think the life jacket is my favourite one because this reminds me that we can be rescued by the best Christmas present which is Jesus Christ who was born in a manger so that we might be forgiven for our sins.

[15 : 20] And that is the best Christmas present ever, isn't it? The peace conundrum ■■■ ■ang will open. Thank you.■■■