

Heaven to Earth and Back

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Date: 17 December 2000

Preacher: Phil Meulman

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 17th of December 2000.

The preacher is Phil Muleman. His sermon is entitled Heaven to Earth and Back and is from Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 to 11.

Well, it's now the 17th of December and it's only seven more shopping days until Christmas. Now, if you're anything like me, that raises a couple of problems and the problems are these.

Why didn't I buy those presents earlier? And the second problem is, what do I buy people for Christmas? Every year, I wonder what on earth I'm going to buy.

Now, it may not seem like much of a problem to you, but I find buying presents a tricky business. Choosing the right present for people is difficult.

[1 : 11] And there are more than a few of us, myself included, who are not good at it. My guess is, most of you still probably have a lot of Christmas shopping to do, am I right?

But I'll bet, I'll bet there are still plenty of names on your list that you haven't bought a present for. You'll no doubt be pouring over the junk mail and catalogues coming in the letterbox, all that have arrived this weekend.

Lots of Myers catalogues, I can tell you. You'll also be watching the ads on TV and listening to them on radio, trying to find the perfect gift.

Trying to find the perfect gift for those hard-to-buy family members and friends. It's not easy, is it? And it's also a risky business, buying presents.

You don't want to make a mistake. I'm sure that we all know the feeling of opening a present on Christmas morning. The paper is ripped off.

[2 : 16] The gift is in full view. And you're left wondering, what in the world is this? That's what you think.

It's what you think. But that's not what you say. What you say is this, oh, this is wonderful. Or, gee, this is an unusual gift.

Mind you, that's the last thing that you want to hear someone else say about the gift that you gave to them, isn't it? Another thing. You certainly don't want people to be offended by the gifts that you buy, do you?

Will your wife be offended if you buy her a cookbook? I'm not trying to be sexist here. Will they be offended? What will they think that you were trying to say about their cooking?

Will your husband think you were rude if you buy him a jumbo-sized deodorant stick and I'm not lifting my arms up? Will he take it as an indication of your thoughts of his personal hygiene?

[3 : 28] I don't want any jumbo-sized deodorant sticks for Christmas. Then there are the other issues, the wrong size, the wrong colour, the wrong style, all those sorts of problems that we have to deal with at Christmas time.

This buying presents, friends, is a difficult, difficult thing. Well, we've come here tonight to sing Christmas carols and to cast our minds back to the very first Christmas when God gave us a gift. Now, when God chose this gift for us, there was no question about him making a mistake. He knew exactly what it was we needed. And there's a verse in John's Gospel that says this about God's gift. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

The gift that God gave us was his son. Now, it may seem like a strange gift to a person, but Jesus was exactly what each one of us needed.

[4 : 42] He was a perfect gift for all of us. God knew that we had a problem. We were in trouble. In fact, we were in serious trouble.

And God knew that sending his son Jesus would be the only thing to get us out of that trouble. This is what the angel said to Joseph about the baby that Mary was going to have and Esther read it to us from Matthew's Gospel.

She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. Our problem was that we had ignored God.

Our problem was that we had shut God out of our lives. Our problem is that we need to be forgiven by God.

You know, you may not think that forgiveness is a gift that you need. You may not think of yourself as being what we call sinful and unfashionable word in this world today.

[5 : 47] Most people tend to think, sure, there are a few grey areas in my life, not just grey hair, but grey areas, where I could improve. But forgiveness, is that really necessary?

Well, God says that it is. God says that it is. He says that you need to be forgiven if you want to be friends with him. But he also says that he is willing to give you that forgiveness and that's why he sent his son into the world.

And that's what Christmas is about. God's gift of his son. Jesus came into the world to live among us and to die on the cross, which is what we celebrate and remember at Easter time, so that we could be forgiven.

The last passage that read to us, Jeff read to us from Philipians, tells us that even though Jesus was God, he came into the world as a human being and emptied himself even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The reason being is that he came into the world to rescue us, to save us from our sin. And then we see after Christ descended that God raised him from the dead again and exalted him up high in heaven where he now reigns forever as Lord.

[7 : 23] Now on Christmas morning, there are some people who will be looking over their presents and I can guarantee you they will be rating their presents. And there's often two questions in rating the gift.

How expensive is it? And secondly, how much do I need it? If you apply those criteria to the gift that God has given in Jesus, then Jesus is the best gift that you have ever, ever been given.

God has given us his one and only son. You don't get a gift more expensive than that. And this is a gift that you need more than you can imagine.

If you want to know God, if you want to be forgiven by God, if you want to share eternity with God in heaven, then this is a gift for you.

Well, this evening we have been singing about the gift that God gave us. We've been singing about the gift of forgiveness given to us by God through his son, Jesus Christ.

[8 : 41] But the question is this, have you accepted that gift for yourself? Our Christmas tree is set up here in the church.

It's got nice pretty lights on it and a headless angel. It had a head during the week. Our Christmas tree is set up at home and at home we have a tradition of setting up our Christmas tree on the 1st of December and there are a few presents under our Christmas tree at home and it's good to see lots of presents under this one as well.

And on our Christmas tree at home there are names on the cards. It is clear who all those presents are for under that tree and I can tell you my kids are really excited about it.

But the presents don't really belong to the person until they accept them and open it for themselves. And the same applies for God's gift to you in Jesus Christ.

And you need to make sure that you accept God's gift to you in Jesus. You need to make sure that you make it your own. If you want the gift that God offers of forgiveness then all you have to do is accept it and receive it.

[10 : 05] He has already given it. You just need to make it yours. Well we have had a great night of singing carols and stunning singing from individual performances as well and songs about Jesus coming to be our saviour which is what we're here to remember and celebrate.

we still have one more song to sing which we're going to sing in just a few moments. But I guess just on a personal note on behalf of the staff here at Holy Trinity I want to wish everyone here a very happy Christmas.

But above all can I say that we hope this Christmas is one where you can honestly say thank you to God for the gift he has given you.

Now if you're not sure about the gift that God has given us in Jesus then out the back at the end of the services there are two little leaflets which you can take. One's in the nativity scene in the foyer out here and one's on the table at the back of the old church. And you're welcome to take these brochures or leaflets which explain about the gift that's been given to us by God in the form of his son Jesus. Jesus.