

# 2024 Christmas Eve 5 PM Service

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Preacher: Rev. Will Gray

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, thank you, Theo, and thank you, kids, for bringing this story to life for us this evening. So this evening, we have heard what happened on that first Christmas, and now we need to answer together who.

Who was this child that was born in Bethlehem? This is a question that all of us need to answer, and so we are going to do our own investigation. We've heard the Frost Files version, but now we're going to do our own investigation together.

Kids, adults, parents, friends, grandpas, grandmas, we are going to see what we can learn about Jesus from the people who are actually there. And you can follow along. You can participate.

Hopefully you got one of these handouts. This is your investigative report, and you are the investigator. So you can follow along as we go, either here or on the slides at the front.

And so, kids, are you ready to help with our Christmas investigation? Yes. Are you ready, kids? Yes. Yeah. Adults, are you ready to help with our Christmas investigation?

[ 1 : 09 ] Yes. Awesome. Well, let's put on our detective hats and get to work. So the first clue in our investigation has to do with the question, what kind of story are we dealing with?

What kind of story is the Christmas story? Now, I'm sure all of you have your favorite Christmas stories, either books or movies. At Christmastime, my family would always read a little book called The Tompton.

Now, The Tompton is this legend about a kind little dwarf who comes out on cold winter nights to take care of animals on a farm and to talk to them and tell them that summer's coming.

I wonder, do you think the Christmas story is a story like this? Like a myth or legend? No. Okay. Well, maybe it's a short story that teaches us a moral or a lesson.

Like, I just watched Charlie Brown Christmas this morning. Like that or The Grinch. Do you think it's that kind of story? Well, I think the best person to answer this question is the person who wrote the Christmas story.

[ 2 : 20 ] Dr. Luke. Kids, some of you might remember Dr. Luke from Bible camp two years ago. Listen to what Dr. Luke says at the very beginning of his book.

He says, You see, Dr. Luke did his own investigation before he wrote his book.

He talked to people who knew Jesus. And then he wrote a clear account of what happened. And do you know why he did this? He did this so that people like you and me could know, really know who Jesus was and what he did.

And we even see little clues about Dr. Luke's investigation in the Christmas story. Did you notice when Theo was reading that Dr. Luke includes names of real people and real places and times in history?

He does this because this is a true story. Okay. Investigators. We're ready to put some things together. So, based on Dr. Luke's testimony, what kind of story do you think we're dealing with?

- [ 3 : 39 ] There's four options on your report. Do you think it's a short story, like a moral of the story? Or a myth or legend?
- What do you think? Can you call it out if you think you know what the answer is? C? We're thinking C? That's right.
- It's a historical account. And this is our first important clue. The Christmas story is true. It's a real story about real things. It's easy to think the Christmas story is a legend because amazing things happen in it.
- I mean, there's angels just all over the place. I've never seen an angel before. But they're all over the place in the Christmas story. But this story isn't a myth, a legend, a moral of the story.
- It's a record of real things that happened to real people in history. Okay. Okay. Now that we know that this is a true story, we can move on to our second clue, which is from this question.
- [ 4 : 44 ] Where did this child come from? Where did this child come from? And here, Mary is our key witness. If you remember to the story, one day, an angel appeared to Mary and said that she would give birth to a son.
- The angel said, he will be great and will be called the son of the most high. He said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you.
- So the Holy One to be born will be called the son of God. Now, Mary was very confused. Do you think you would have been a little bit confused?
- I think I would have been a little bit confused. Mary wasn't married and it wasn't possible for her to have a baby. At least not in the way that every other baby has ever been made and born.
- The angel told Mary that her baby would come from the Holy Spirit so that he would be called the son of God. Okay, investigators, are you ready?
- [ 5 : 52 ] I need your help again. This time we're doing fill in the blanks. So, based on Mary's testimony, her story and what the angel said to her, how would you fill in the blanks here?
- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Okay, that's a good one. Born of the Virgin Mary.
- And what does this mean? This means that he is the Son of God. Let's see. Oh, very good. You're very good, astute investigators.
- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Born of the Virgin Mary. And this means he is the Son of God. This means that Jesus is a real human being.
- He came into the world as a little baby with a mother who fed him and cared for him. But the angel's message also tells us that Jesus was not just a human being.
- [ 6 : 55 ] Jesus is fully God and fully human. He is God who came down from heaven and became one of us in Mary, his mother. And this is why we worship Jesus.
- This is why we listen to his word and obey him. And this is why we pray in his name. Because Jesus is Emmanuel, the Son of God. God with us.
- God with us. Okay. We're almost at the end of our investigation. But we have one more clue. And that is, what did this child come to do?
- And here we have two very important witnesses. The shepherds and Joseph. The shepherds and Joseph. So when the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.
- For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Now, investigators, the word Christ is a very important word for our investigation tonight.

[ 8 : 04 ] Christ means Messiah or anointed one. The Christ is a Savior and the Christ is a King. He is the promised Savior who came to rescue God's people.

And he is the forever King who would bring God's kingdom on earth. So Jesus is a Savior King. But he's not the kind of Savior or the kind of King that his people were waiting for.

God's people had been waiting for hundreds of years for the Messiah to come. But they were still surprised when Jesus came. Listen to what the angel told Joseph.

Mary will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus. Because he will save his people from their sins. Now, some people thought that Jesus was going to come to save them from different things.

Like bad rulers. And give them this great kingdom on earth right away. But that wasn't right. Because first of all, Jesus came to save us from our sin.

[ 9 : 12 ] Okay. One more fill in the blank for the investigators. And then we're going to make a conclusion to our whole investigation. So, you can call out if you have a thought.

The angel called Jesus Christ the Lord. This means he is the forever King. And the Lord.

Oh, that was maybe a trickier one. We'll see. What do you think? Yeah. The angel called Jesus Christ the Lord. This means he is the forever King and the Savior.

Who came to rescue his people from their sin. And bring them God's peace. So, I think we have all that we need to conclude our investigation.

And I'll remind you of the big question we've been trying to answer. Who was this child born in Bethlehem? What we find out from these clues is that Jesus is the Son of God.

[ 10 : 16 ] The forever King. And the Savior of the world. With all of these clues, God is revealing to us how he has rescued us and his good world.

He's showing us how God the Son came down from heaven. Was born as one of us to save us and bring us God's peace. Now, even if we don't think about sin.

We heard how the angel told Joseph he came to... Jesus came to save his people from their sin. Even if we don't think about sin or know what sin is, all of us sin. We have all told God to shove off and leave us alone.

We have all ignored God and his rules and put ourselves in charge of everything. This is sin. And sin is kind of like a poisoned root that causes all the darkness and death and sadness that we see in the world today.

And so what did God do about this? He came down. He came down to be with us. He humbled himself to become one of us. He died in our place, buried our sin with him in his grave, and rose again to new life.

[ 11 : 29 ] And we have one witness that we haven't heard about yet. Do you know who that might be? It's the wise men. When the wise men came to Jesus, they brought three gifts.

These gifts were pictures of who Jesus is and what he would do for us. Gold for a king. Frankincense, which is something that's offered to God in prayer.

And finally, myrrh, which is a very precious ointment that's used to prepare bodies to be buried. And so from the very beginning, we see that God had this great rescue plan to come and be the Christ, our Savior King, who would die in our place and bring us home to be with him forever.

And so as you go about your Christmas celebrations, I want you to know tonight that it doesn't matter who you are or what you've done. It doesn't matter how old you are or how much the world thinks that you have to offer.

If you trust in Jesus, the Christ, God will forgive you. He will welcome you into his kingdom as a beloved child, and you will be with him forever.

[ 12 : 44 ]    Never having the greatest feast in a world with no sin or sadness or death. And if this is all very new to you tonight, I'd love to talk and pray after the service, because this good news of great joy is truly for all people, even you.

Amen.