

# Thank You - Christmas Day 2024

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Preacher: Andy Lloyd

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's read from Luke's Gospel. I'm going to carry on from where Fiona read. So if we go to the third slide please, Josh, the next one as well. Thank you.

So we got to Mary having a baby and the baby in a manger. 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. No kidding. But the angel said to them, don't be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths.

And lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.

[ 1 : 13 ] When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the angel said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see about this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in a manger. When they seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

What a wonderful passage and God bless it to us as we read it and hear it. There are a number of sermons in there and I'm going to only preach four of them this morning because I know that you're in a hurry.

I want to talk about thank you. And we've already had some prayers of thanks. But if we go to the next slide, Josh, please. When I was growing up, which is a surprise to many of you because I haven't really grown up, but when I was growing up, Christmas Day was wonderful.

[ 2 : 34 ] My mother, though, being an English teacher and a stickler for manners, mildly spoiled it. Because on Christmas morning, we had to open presents in rotation and she made a strict list of who had given us what.

All right? And then on Boxing Day morning on the table were a number of envelopes addressed to Auntie Aedie, Auntie Jean, Uncle So-and-So, friends and family.

And we had to write thank you letters. Now, there's a bit of a disconnect with modern life, isn't it? Because these days you just do a WhatsApp saying, well, probably you'll send an emoji, wouldn't you, these days?

But we had to write a letter with our address at the top and the date underneath, and dear Auntie Aedie, thank you very much for the postal order. Remember postal orders? Ooh, they were good, weren't they?

Yeah? For those of you who haven't had the experience of birthdays that some of us had, they were like cash drops in your bank account, but you just had to go to the post office to change them.

[ 3 : 48 ] Thank you very much for the post office. It was lovely to receive it. I shall buy something nice with it. Yesterday we had a nice time and we had turkey. No kidding, it was Christmas. And we had to write these letters and we had to put them in the envelope and when all three, my brothers had done them as well, they were posted off to various people in and around Mid Wales and various other places.

Didn't really spoil it, but it was just something that was important. It was important to say thank you for our gift. So if you've been given a gift, don't forget to say thank you.

There's also an issue there around common decency, isn't there? Just saying thank you is common decency at any time of the year.

I don't know whether I'm the only one. I suspect I might be, but let me just confess. I think it's a good day to confess, isn't it? If I'm driving along and I let somebody out of a side road and they don't acknowledge it, just under my breath I say, you're welcome.

They don't hear it. I don't need to say it, but just an acknowledgement. Or if you hold the door open for somebody or if you step aside to let somebody through and they just push past, you're welcome.

[ 5 : 08 ] So maybe, again, there's something there about common decency. But what about our conversation with Jesus?

What about our prayers to Jesus? Do we remember to say thank you? Do we prioritise saying thank you?

We do when it's a special day, Christmas day, Easter day, maybe other days, anniversaries, birthdays, and what have you. But what about a wet Thursday in January?

It gets dark about half past one. It's only got light about quarter to one. And it's cold. And you're grumpy. What about saying thank you then?

What about the attitude that we have in our heart? That what God has given us in the birth of Jesus, in the hope that comes on Christmas Day, is literally and theologically out of this world.

[ 6 : 18 ] It's a wonderful thing. And we can give thanks to God in all circumstances. I was reading as I was preparing a little episode from the life of Corrie ten Boom.

Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch woman with her sister, Bessie, hid Jews from the Nazis. And they were caught and sent to a concentration camp.

And tragically, Bessie died there. Corrie didn't die and lived a full life sharing the gospel of Jesus. One of the things that they managed to do was to smuggle into the concentration camp a small portion of Scripture, by no means the whole of Scripture, but a few pages.

And in the women's residential blocks, they ran Bible studies. And Bessie said to Corrie one day, we must remember to thank God for everything.

For everything. Now bear in mind, they were in a concentration camp. Their friends were dying. Bessie was going to die. It was horrible. Now the problem with the women's block was that it was infested with fleas.

[ 7 : 42 ] And it was really nasty. As soon as you went in, you just got bitten. And Corrie said, I'm not going to thank God for the fleas. And Bessie said, well, we need to.

A little later on, Bessie came in and she said, I've just overheard the guards talking. You know we get away with doing the Bible studies in here. Yeah.

Do you know why the guards don't come into the women's block? No. Because of the fleas. I'm going to give thanks to God for the fleas.

Now, I really hope I don't ever get into a place where I have to give thanks to God for fleas. I think I'd find that a struggle.

But what an extraordinary little story. Whatever God has for us is good and in his plan. And it's hard to understand why Bessie died.

[ 8 : 45 ] It's hard to understand why terrible things happen. But God has us. And the purpose that he has in our lives is all started.

Well, it started with creation, didn't it? But it starts with the birth of Jesus. The good news of Jesus. Our salvation, our hope, our eternity is secured because of Jesus.

Born a helpless child on the first Christmas morning. No Christmas tree, no presents, a bit of a mucky stable.

Next slide, please, Josh. So, saying thank you for everything is really important. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God, the Father, for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Ephesians 5.

Isn't it nice that we can make music in our hearts? We don't have to be able to play the music or even sing it out loud. You can do. Some of us choose not to because our voices growl in the basement rather than trill in the heavenlies.

[ 10 : 06 ] always giving thanks to God, God the Father, for everything. It's a real challenge that, and on Christmas morning we need to receive the challenge.

The challenge that, as part of our day today, as part of our day tomorrow, and for the rest of our life on earth, we need to learn the discipline of thanksgiving.

The discipline of singing and making music in our hearts because we are delighted and thrilled with the truth that Jesus is with us through his spirit.

How do we do that? How do we do that? Rejoice always.

Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. God's will for us is that we rejoice, we pray, and we give thanks.

[11:18] and it's a lifestyle thing. It's a lifestyle thing. If we spend our lives bellyaching and moaning and being critical and negative, that's who we turn into.

We turn into somebody who's gotten out good to say. If we make a choice, a disciplined lifestyle choice, to be thankful, to be grateful, to give thanks in all circumstances, even for the fleas, that's who we turn into.

We turn into people who delight in the truth of our salvation and the truth that God has us whatever our circumstances. Saying thank you a bit like having a dog is not just for Christmas.

saying thank you is what we do day by day, week by week, through our lives. Next slide, please, Josh. The shepherd said thank you.

The shepherd returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they'd seen and heard which they were just as they had been told. Just a couple of things about that. First of all, it isn't in that verse there, but first of all, they told loads of people about it.

[12:42] You'll never guess what happened to us. We were washing our socks and there all of a sudden was a bunch of angels and the angels were singing to us and they said don't be frightened which we thought was slightly wild but there we are.

And they said that Jesus has been born and we went to see and it's true. You want to go and see yourself. That sense of excitement. But what they had been told, they saw to be true.

And one of the things that we have to do is in our own lives understand what we have been told and see it to be true. And that's sometimes hard.

Some of you here will be facing all sorts of difficulties. That's going to be hard because some of us will find the truth that we have to give thanks for the fleas really hard.

but if we see it as true that our hearts will be changed and we glorify and praise God.

[13:51] So this morning and through this holiday time and through into 2025 thank God for what you've seen and heard which means counting your blessings.

some of you if you went to Sunday school in the 1380s like I did will sing the song count your blessings count them one by one. Yeah yeah you see some of you just going yeah I know I know I'm not going to sing it.

Do you record your blessings? Do you have a little book or something on your phone if you're really modern or on your computer do you have a little something a record somewhere of God's blessings let me encourage you maybe to do so.

You don't have to show it to anybody you haven't got a publisher on the internet or put it in the Whitby Gazette but just have a list of the things that God's done for you on a daily basis on a weekly basis just make a list record them list them and then delight in them read back over what God has done for you make a list and give thanks next slide please Josh and so this Christmas day enjoy the presents enjoy the food the time with family you can even enjoy the TV if you're like us we have 755 different channels and there's an out on the telly but you might find something I suspect there's something to do with dancing going on I don't I've not watched it myself but I'm sure there is somewhere or being a celebrity somewhere or other enjoy the day have fun laugh a bit if you want to delight in what

God has done for you and what he's given you find a time today to give thanks find a time today just to be quiet on your own just go and sit somewhere quiet if you can find somewhere quiet on Christmas morning Christmas day and just give thanks give thanks to God for what he's done what he's given you start with the birth of Jesus and then see where you get to your heart will take you to a place of gratitude make sure you take time to remember what you see and give thanks with a grateful heart and great joy Amen