

The Angels Song

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[0 : 00] Well, happy Christmas everybody. It's wonderful, isn't it, to be here on Christmas morning! to celebrate and to welcome the Lord Jesus.

! And whatever else happens today, this is the whole point. And just invite you for a few moments, I won't go on for very long, that you notice the preachers lie there.

I won't go on for very long, but I do want to say a few words this morning. I'm going to read some more verses from Luke chapter 2, continuing on from where Fiona left off.

So, Luke chapter 2, beginning at verse 8. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

An angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Don't be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.

[1 : 02] To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth, and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he favours.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that's taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby child, the child lying in a manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returning, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard.

[2 : 10] As it had been told to them. So, such well-known words and such a well-known passage of scripture, a narrative of the angels appearing to the shepherds, and the shepherds going down, rushing down to meet the baby Jesus.

And then, of course, as they told the story, everybody was amazed. But Jesus' mother Mary pondered all these things, pondered all these things in her heart, wondered about them, hid them away, and reflected on them.

And then the shepherds went back to the fields to their sheep, who I presume hadn't come to any harm in the meantime, and they were praising God and worshipping God. But I want to focus today just on verse 14.

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests. The angel song, the huge throng of angels who appeared out of nowhere, terrifying the shepherds as they did it.

But they proclaimed a really important truth that on Christmas Day, and on each day of our lives, but on Christmas Day, we need to reflect on.

[3 : 35] What they were saying was that God is not a remote, inaccessible figure who has no interest in us, and whom we cannot access.

He's a real, personal God who is interested in us. So let's have a look at verse 14 again, just two phrases.

Glory to God in the highest heaven. God resides in heaven. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father.

God is above and foremost. And that's an easy thing to say, but has real depth to it. God is absolutely above all and is foremost.

The God we worship has no rival. The God we worship cannot be bettered, cannot be beaten. And that's the God who cares for us individually.

[4 : 44] No one can take his place. Glory to God in the highest heaven. Heaven is a place full of his praises.

And we read that lots in Scripture, but Revelation 4, Revelation 5, Revelation 7, all have songs of praise. As the hymn says, the saints cast their golden crowns upon the glassy sea.

I'm not quite sure what that all means, but it sounds rather good fun, doesn't it? But whatever it means, what we have is a God who is constantly worshipped in heaven.

There is a constant refrain of praise to God. But really importantly, that needs to be our lifestyle too, on earth.

We can't leave it to the angels and the saints in heaven to worship God on their own. It's for us to have a lifestyle of praise, of worship, here on earth.

[5 : 52] Today, on Christmas Day, but every day. And the excitement of Christmas is the excitement of knowing, once again, that we can worship the God incarnate, God made man, Jesus Christ.

But we need to adopt and grow an attitude and practice of praise and worship to our God, who as Mark 7, 37 has it, Jesus has done all things well.

And again, we need to reflect on that truth, that as we worship God, God does all things well. It doesn't mean that our lives are just smooth and dead easy.

We know that from the prayer request that we have in this church. If you're visiting us, I'm sure that there are similar requests or prayer chains in your church. as we recognize that there are struggles and strife, but God is good.

So our choice to be worshippers, our choice to be praisers, is a matter of choice and a discipline. And one which we need, even today, even as we contemplate whatever your Christmas lunch is going to be, we've got beans on toast.

[7 : 19] looking forward to that rather a lot. Whatever your, I'm joking, we have got some sausages as well. This needs to be a choice that even today, we find a time, we find a space, we find some quiet to give thanks to God, to worship Him, and to choose to do that despite the circumstances we might find ourselves in.

Because 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 18 encourages us to give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God. So the first thing that the angels were helping us know and helping us think about was worshipping and praising God, saying hallelujah to God, even being really excited about it.

You know, that's one of the things that we're allowed to be in church, just a little bit excited. I've told this story before but as a child we used to go on holiday to North Wales and to a little Baptist chapel there and the minister there was the Reverend R.W. Jones B.A.

And one Easter Sunday morning he stood up and said, Christ is risen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. It's like, we could do better than that.

He did come from Birmingham as you could tell. And then what's the second thing that the angel said? Peace for those on whom his favour rests.

[8 : 56] Peace for those on whom his favour rests. We are the people on whom God's favour rests. Isn't that extraordinary?

We are those people. God's favour rests on us. I've got it in my notes here. This is very exciting and a wonderful thing. There you are.

Thank you. I say. We got there eventually. Our Heavenly Father who's surrounded by the worshipping throngs loves us.

But this isn't just a generic love. It isn't a sort of, I love that lot. I love Whitby Christian Fellowship or I love the people of Whitby. This is personal and intimate.

It's a love for each of us as individuals. God loves each of us individually. And that's his favour.

[9 : 58] He loves us and wants the best for us. So whatever today has brought, whatever this week has brought, whatever excitement or disappointment the week has had and maybe both for many of us, whatever 2023 has in store, whatever the rest of this week has in store, God loves us and wants the best for us.

This is not deep theology by the way but it's deep truth. Deep truth. And it's something that I worry we forget about. We forget about because we try and make it too complicated.

And the great thing about the Christmas narrative is it ain't complicated. It's a bit odd in places. Shepherds in a field and then suddenly a whole pile of angels tip up. Some wise men from the east turn up with some gifts. Jesus born in a stable. But the truth is it's very easy.

Why did this happen? Because God loves us so much that he sent his son to die for us. The Christmas narrative is the beginning of the evidence of how deeply we are loved and how deeply God cares for us.

[11 : 25] How deeply his favour rests on each of us. The angels sing that they want us to know peace. The angels sing that they want us to know peace in a world of noise and chaos and confusion.

Peace in a world of strife anger hatred and prejudice. I was talking to a couple of people on Friday evening and looking at the news and just saying the news is full of bad news.

It's full of stuff that just has no joy. Now, you know, in one sense that's because bad things happen. But the news isn't full of nice things.

The news isn't full of good things. And we need to choose to focus on the good. We need to take our attitude and say we are going to celebrate the joy, the fun, the excitement of our faith and enjoy the peace that we can know through Christ in the noise and the mess of our society.

Because peace is not the normal state for our society. And that's of course why we read in Galatians chapter 5 peace is one of the fruit of the Spirit.

[13 : 01] Our job to create the fertile ground in our lives where the fruit of the Spirit including peace can grow. That's our responsibility. That's our choice.

And God really wants us to know this peace and live in a state of peace despite despite what is happening. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

We're hard pressed on every side but not crushed. Perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not abandoned. Struck down but not destroyed. That was Paul writing of his age.

But we are hard pressed. We are perplexed. Well I'm perplexed. Sometimes we're persecuted blessedly in this country. We don't have persecution like some of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world.

We're not struck down. But we will not be crushed. We will not be in despair. We will not be abandoned. We will not be destroyed. As we focus and look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

[14 : 14] So as we celebrate Jesus this morning, we have a wonderful opportunity. We have a wonderful opportunity to embrace and live in the peace brought about and made possible by the Prince of Peace.

And we've just sung. I don't want to pretend for one minute that it came upon a midnight clear as scripture. It's not a song. Not a nice song. Nice tune. But did you notice that I put this on the chat earlier in the week for those who get it.

Look at the end of verse four. The last few words we sang. And war with man hears not the love song which they bring. This is the angels.

Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing. Just sometimes, when I speak to myself, shut up and listen to heaven.

Because the truth of heaven is what will bring us to peace. Me scurrying around and being terrifically busy and helping God understand how he ought to run things is not going to help.

[15 : 30] Me being quiet, hushing the noise, and hearing the angels sing. Hearing heaven's love song.

God's love song. So this Christmas, can I encourage you to find some time, find some space. Find some space to walk, to sit, to kneel, to lie down, to stand on your head in a corner if you wish.

But just allow yourself to ask God to help you with two things. To fill you with a worshipping heart for all he has done for you.

and secondly to create a sense of peace in you that the Prince of Peace brings at Christmas time. Amen.