

Unto you is born a Saviour

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Preacher: Richard Fettes

[0 : 0 0] passages of scripture just now. And of course we heard from John. John, in that wonderful way, just says this, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Now how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us is what we're going to hear just now. So, Barry and then Vicki.

The first reading is from Matthew. The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. His mother Mary had been promised to Joseph in marriage. But therefore, when married, Mary realized that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was an honorable man and did not want to disgrace her publicly. So he decided to break the marriage agreement with her secretly. Joseph had this in mind when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said to him, Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She is pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to the son and you will name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. All this happened so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet came true. The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to the son and they will name him Emmanuel, which means God.

is with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him to do. He took Mary to be his wife. I'm going to read from Luke 2, 1 to 14.

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went out to be registered, each in his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of this house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

[2 : 5 3] And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Thank you. Thank you, Barry and Vicky. The next carol we're going to sing is... Good evening, everybody. Thanks for coming. First of all, it's a pleasure to be here. It's just amazing.

All glory to God. I'm going to give you a quick bit about my background and stuff before I got saved, and try and keep it short. So when I was growing up, I went to a Christian school in Leith. It was called Maniffields Christian School. And I was always sort of troublesome, to say the least, but I got a lot of good messages from there. Like in the morning, we used to spend time doing like a prayer group, and we would sit and meditate on God for a couple of minutes before we'd done each classes and stuff.

And I took a few things away from there that was really, really good. And some scriptures that are still with me even till this day. But so my best friend from there was Bobby, and he left in first year. This school went right the way up to second year in high school. But he left... No, no, he left in second year. And afterwards, I didn't really have anybody that I was close friends with. And I think I just started to cause a bit more trouble and more trouble. And eventually ended up getting kicked out of there. And so I left from there. And we went, I went down to Trinity Academy.

[4 : 56] So going from a Christian school, we're having maybe 30 people in it, to going to a high school where I don't know, maybe a thousand folk, or I don't know the exact number, was crazy for me.

And right away, I started... Bobby had already made some friends there from the fort down Leith. And we started getting into a bit of trouble. And we started stealing things like cycle bikes, which led to motorbikes and to other things. And my mum and dad, probably, they got the opportunity to go away to Brazil on mission and go and speak to people. In Brazil, we were working with a place called Casa Vida Crianza, which was like a house for troubled, troubled girls that have been through like a hard life. And so when we were over there, it gave me a bit of time to keep away from everybody. But I found a friend over there that liked drinking and stuff as well.

And I think that's actually where I first started drinking. But cut along to the short, so we spent six months there. Came back to Edinburgh. And not long after, my friend, who, my childhood friend, he ended up losing his life on a motorbike. So all of us decided it was, I mean, it was obviously tragic what had happened. And you can say, yeah, it was his fault shouldn't have been on the bike and all that. But it was still a life that was lost. And I think through that, we all decided we weren't going to steal motorbikes anywhere. We weren't going to steal cars.

We thought, this is dangerous. One way or another, that's how it went. But I think for myself, it really, really affected me. And I turned to drinking a lot without realising it. But I turned to drinking a lot of the time. And which led from that to smoking the old joint to taking a lot of cocaine, which I ended up doing for the period of like, say, maybe 15 years of my life. I was working, I had my own business, doing everything. I was earning amazing money, but spending it all on drinking drugs and just went mental. My mum and dad were sitting praying for us all the time, like they never gave up. And obviously, it must be amazing for my mum now to see me saved and standing and sharing my testimony to other folk. But it got worse and worse and worse. And I felt, so it was on the 2nd of February this year, God came and spoke to me. I'd been out for a night out up the town. I was fighting, fighting with another group of boys when I was up there. But I was really, really miserable when I was doing it. It came to the point where the drink and the drugs weren't fulfilling me. They weren't doing nothing. I was just doing it to numb out how I was and trying to fill myself with anything other than Christ, basically. But not realising that's what was missing at the same time. So I came home that night and I lay in my bed. I sneaked past. I had a one-year-old daughter at the time. And I sneaked past them because I didn't want to wake her. I was ashamed of how I'd been living my life. I shouldn't be doing that when I've got a daughter or shouldn't be doing any of this anyway. But I went back into my house and I lay in my bed and I heard a voice and heard him saying, Simon, Simon. And it was like, I just opened my eyes instantly and I heard him say to me, he's like, if you don't stop what you're doing, you're going to lose the things you love. And I'd heard it, believe it or not, I'd heard it two years before then. And it really gave me a fright, but this time it was so clear. And I knew, I just knew that I was going to lose everything. I knew it was

God. I knew it was from him. So I sneaked through to the living room and I went, I need to grab my Bible. So I went and seen my Bible lying on top of the computer table. I grabbed it and opened it and I started reading through the book of Isaiah. And it was all about the wrath of God and what can happen when you don't follow God and you don't listen to what he's saying. I mean, the whole of the Bible is like that. People listening, putting other things in front of them and then there was consequences for what had happened. But I really had the fear when I lay there praying to God, asking for forgiveness and stuff and saying, please don't, I didn't know what it was. Please don't do anything to my kids. Please don't do anything here. And I was really in a panic. So from that night, I woke up in the morning and I think I told my partner who I was with and what had happened, but I knew it was only a matter of time before I, before I failed again, because it's something that I've been doing. I don't know if anybody's ever been through like addiction or that, but it was every, every, every night to every second night I was out and it was like, I just didn't know anything other than the life that I was living. And I just knew on my own strength, there was no way I was going to do it, but I persevered and I really, I went, I went through all the, all the feelings and everything for the, for a week and a half. And then, and I was going to church as well. I went down to church in Leith. But then that Sunday night, I went to a church with Joe over there. We went to, I can't remember what the name is, Central

[9 : 51] Church. It was on, it was up Lothian Road. And when they were there, they had a time of communion. And while they were having the time of communion, the, they get, the pastor who was sharing says, listen, we're going to take a couple of minutes to, before to reflect on your life and what, whatever you've done. And if you want, and if you haven't, and if anybody feels like it, you can get, you can get down, you can pray, you can just do whatever you want, but we're going to take this time to reflect. And I just remember when I was standing there, just feeling the, an overwhelming sensation just to, to fall down to my knees. And I did, I fell down to my knees and I was down on the ground and I was praying to God. And I was like, Lord, I was like, I want to turn from everything I've done. I was like, I hate my life. I hate, I can't do it on my own strength. I need you to help me. I just, there's no way I can do this on my own. And I sat there for a, for a minute or two. I don't know what the words in and out see what exactly what I was saying. But it was amazing. And when I, when I stood up, I just felt the whole weight of the world was gone from me. My addiction and everything got broken from me right there on that night. And since then, I've just had a real heart to go out and share to other people what God can do, because if he can do it to me, he can do it to anybody and reach, reach people in the darkest corners, wherever it is, in AI. So, so since then, it's sort of just been, it'd be my job to go around and evangelize and tell other people and go around churches and just share the good news and give glory to God for it. And that's, that's my testimony anyway.

Thank you. In different ways, because we have different lives, backgrounds, et cetera. So now we're going to hear from Caroline. Caroline is sitting here with Heather and Caroline and Heather work together on a Wednesday at the Meadows with Paul James Griffiths. We do a street cafe, coffee, teas, et cetera, and talk to people. And I've been doing a little bit of that myself this year with them. We also work in the Christian Heritage Centre in the summertime, but we have some amazing conversations. So Caroline is going to share how she came to Christ quite different.

Hello. So, I'm just going to go back 15 years. I was living in London and I had it all from the outside world. We had everything. My husband was an investment banker. I worked in software development in an investment bank. We had a huge house, huge cars, foreign holidays, a nanny, a gardener, a housekeeper. It's like we had everything anyone could ever want. Three lovely children. And then something happened. And what happened was that I fell pregnant again.

And this wasn't part of the plan. And we needed to deal with it. It was a very inconvenient thing to have happened. And so we made arrangements to go and deal with this pregnancy. And so I went off to the clinic and the pregnancy was dealt with. And we came home and got on with our lives. And tragically, the same thing happened again not very long afterwards. And about six months after the second time I'd been to the clinic, I was feeling absolutely dreadful and just really empty inside. And all the things that we had and all the life that we had that we'd worked so hard for for years just seemed utterly meaningless. I became very, very depressed.

Everything was very dark. I was crying all the time. I turned to drink. I gave up my job. And it was just a very, very dark place. And amazingly, I used to kind of go in and out of church from time to time. We had a very high church, high Anglican church, where we went very religious. And they used to do Lent. And I had a little Lent book that I'd been given. And I'd kept it and it was on the shelf. And in desperation, I reached out for this book. And the first reading in that book was this, it said, Yet, even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, and tear your hearts, not your clothes. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent.

[15 : 05] And it was like he'd just spoken into my heart, just directly to me, that he was ready to relent, that he was full of mercy. I thought, you can't be. Look at what I've done.

The next day, the reading was, I put before you life and death. Choose life then. And I knew that I'd chosen death. I'd chosen death for what I now knew were two of my children, not just pregnancies, not just cells. These were children. And I'd chosen death for them. And I'd chosen death for myself.

And so through these readings, kind of every day, just coming back to this little book, I learned about Jesus. I learned that he had died and taken all my guilt and all my shame, that he'd carried my sorrows and carried my griefs for me. And he'd risen to new life, that I could have new life, that I could be taken out of this dark, dark pit and brought into the light and have a new start and look at life a different way.

And so I chose to give my life to him. And it's been an amazing 15-year journey of just finding out more and more about his goodness.

He takes those broken pieces and he puts them together again. He rewires your mind so that all the judgment and pride and arrogance that I had as a very successful woman working in the City of London was gone.

[16 : 59] And he filled my heart with love for other people. And it's been a beautiful thing. And he's our redeemer.

And I think the most beautiful thing that God did for me is that he sent us another baby, a baby that we kept, a beautiful little girl. And she's my redemption child.

And I'm so grateful to God for that. And yeah, all praise to him for saving this life. And I just, one of the things I do now, you know, God takes your mess and makes it into your message, just like Simon was saying.

And I have the privilege of running recovery courses for women who have been through abortion. So I'm going to leave some little booklets at the back for anyone that's experienced abortion or has friends that have experienced some abortion.

One in three women in Scotland, tragically, have had an abortion. There's a lot of pain and a lot of hurt out there. So yeah, I'll leave these at the back. But thank you so much for having me to speak.

[18 : 23] Father, we thank you for all we've heard tonight so far. And all we can say is, thank you for loving us.

When we think of how we mess up so many times, even as Christians, but you never leave us or forsake us. Bless now your word to us, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, picture in your mind what it must have been like the night that the Lord Jesus was born.

All Bethlehem was asleep, except for Joseph and his wife Mary. She'd been in labor for the past few hours and had just given birth to her firstborn child, a son.

Outside the town in a field not far away, some shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep, making sure that they were safe from thieves and wild animals. Suddenly, out of nowhere, an angel of God appeared before them in a blinding light.

[19 : 46] And they were gripped with fear. But the angel said, don't be afraid. I've come to bring you good news of great joy, which is for all the people. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

This is not a fairy story. Fairy stories begin in a very nondescript manner. Once upon a time in a land far, far away.

But the birth of Jesus took place at a specific time, in a specific place, and in a specific way. The time was 2,000 years ago. The place was a town called Bethlehem, which still exists in the land of Israel today.

At the time Jesus was born, Israel was under the occupation of the mighty Roman Empire. Jesus was born just like any other baby is born. Except for one important detail.

His mother Mary's husband was not the father. Not unheard of in today's society, though scandalous in his time, and perhaps even now.

[20 : 55] But neither Joseph nor any other man was the father. For as we heard in our reading, the child conceived of her was from the Holy Spirit.

This is important because if Jesus had a human father, he would be a sinner just like us. Because we all sin. It's in our nature. The nature that we inherited from the first man, Adam, when he, together with his wife, Eve, chose to disobey God's command.

In that moment, sin entered into the world, infecting thereafter the whole human race. We Christians call that event the fall. For the entire human race fell from grace.

And because we sin, our sin has separated us from God. But God had a plan to reverse the consequences of the fall.

And restore us to himself. Because, as we heard so beautifully, he loves us. The angel who appeared to Joseph told him to name Mary's child Jesus, Yeshua in the Hebrew, which means Jehovah saves.

[22 : 08] Because he, Jesus, the angel said, would save his people from their sins. What the angel said to the shepherds was, unto you is born a saviour.

Jesus was born for us. The holy angels of God don't need a saviour. We do. Now the purpose of a saviour is to save those who cannot save themselves.

To rescue those in need. To set people free. There are a lot of people who could be described as saviours.

So here's a few examples. A fireman. If you're trapped in a burning building, unable to escape, this is the type of saviour you need.

One who is able to save you from the flames and rescue you. Thank the Lord for our firefighters. It's a dangerous job at times. My brother-in-law was a fireman before he retired and he told me some gruesome tales of things that he had to do.

[23 : 13] Because not everybody gets saved. Firefighters not only attend fires, they rescue people trapped by floods. Or attend road traffic accidents where they use specialist equipment that is designed to cut people out of the wreckage.

They also clean up the mess left by the accidents. When it comes to fires, however, they risk their lives to save us. I remember, by the way, a little funny story.

It's fine, just leave that out. When I worked in the prison, I had to work one day in the women's wing. And it so happened that the fireman had to come in to check some equipment.

And the girls were all aflutter. So I hope you like that picture, ladies, of that fireman. So here's our next picture. A doctor. Doctors are saviours too.

They save lives. We've seen what they do on TV and the medical dramas, haven't we? If they're outside in the street and someone has a heart attack, they jump into action, performing CPR until the ambulance comes.

[24 : 20] If they're in the hospital or have a defibrillator nearby, they will use it to jumpstart the heart back to life. It's very dramatic. And more and more defibrillators are being installed in shops and workplaces with simple instructions that anyone can use.

We've got one at the front of the church there. Doctors can diagnose problems too with the help of their specialist equipment, stethoscopes, x-rays and MRI scanners, for instance.

A friend of mine had an ultrasound scan earlier this year that found a cancerous growth on one of his kidneys. He has since had an operation to remove the kidney and he has made a great recovery because lots of people were praying for him, of course.

Our next slide. That's a picture of a mountain rescue team. They're highly trained and well equipped for the challenging conditions from the often harsh weather or difficult terrain that they often encounter on our mountains.

When called to rescue people who may get lost or who have an accident or fall that requires their help. They work hard to rescue people who might otherwise die without their assistance.

[25 : 32] Many are volunteers who give their time freely and put their lives at risk to help others. There's a soldier. This picture is from a First World War battle.

And the soldier is one of our own Scottish soldiers. When Germany declared war in France in August 3, 1914, Britain sent its army to help our allies, the French, to resist the invasion of the country by a hostile power.

Both sides thought that the war would be over by Christmas, but that proved to be a serious miscalculation. The war dragged on for four years and turned into a brutal affair, fought with guns and artillery, and for the first time ever, tanks appeared on the battlefield.

A fearsome sight to infantrymen attempting to advance from their muddy trenches. Eventually, after millions of lives were lost on both sides, Germany was defeated and France was liberated at the end of 1918.

Firefighters, doctors, mountain rescue teams, soldiers, and others are all saviors in their own way. But they are powerless to save us from the consequences of our sins.

[26 : 47] Only Jesus can. He is the ultimate saviour. Our world is under enemy occupation by an evil and malign being and his army.

He is the devil, a fallen angel with a vast number of similarly fallen angels behind him. Their purpose is to deceive men and women and keep them from finding God.

But Christ came into the world to set us free from Satan's dominion. Like all these other saviours, Jesus too uses specialist equipment in his work.

His special equipment is the cross. For by his death on the cross, he bore the punishment that we deserved so that we could go free. For God is a just God and cannot let sin go unpunished.

So Jesus took God's wrath for us and has become the saviour of all who believe in him, repent of their sins, and acknowledge him as Lord. Our firemen can save you from a burning building, but Christ saves from the fire of hell that God has prepared for the wicked.

[27 : 54] A doctor can bring you back to life, yet cannot prevent you from eventually dying. But Jesus has promised eternal life to those who come to him.

The mountain rescue team can rescue you when you're on a mountain and the mist comes down and you realise that you're lost. But you can know exactly where you are and still be lost.

We heard that from Carling. John Newton was a man who plumbed the debts of sin more than most, but he found Christ and experienced the mercy of God afterwards.

And he penned these words, All the members of this church were lost too until Christ found us.

You have heard too how Simon and Caroline came to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. If anyone here has not experienced that yet, and would like to know more, we'll talk to you afterwards.

[29 : 04] I'm sure Caroline and Simon would love to chat with you. Any of the ladies here, we're all here for you. So we're going to sing our final carol, and then we invite you to have a cup of tea, and mince pie, and whatever, cakes.

And it's just been great for you to have you here tonight. I hope you've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed the testimonies and the song immensely.

So let's just praise God in our final carol, which I've forgotten which one it is. Ah, the Herald Angels sing. Yes, here we go. Are you okay?

No, you haven't. We shouldn't have done that many years here. We should I hope you want you as well. Thank you. Same