

**Sunday December 20, 2020**

## **Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church**

### **Welcome & Prayer (Simon M)**

Welcome to church this morning. Five days out from Christmas, we will be singing carols together and hear from the Bible of the work of God's promised, chosen king. But this week, we won't just be looking to the narrative of Jesus' birth, or even to the passages which foretell of the coming messiah, but rather, we will be spending time in Daniel, in Joshua and in Genesis, as we read of Jesus' work foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

As God's people, our excitement around Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth and God's salvation. It is a time to rouse each other. It is a time to encourage each other. It is a time to call each other to turn our eyes to Bethlehem and praise God for the birth of his son. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem O come and behold Him, born the King of Angels O come, let us adore Him Christ the Lord

#### **Let's Pray**

Heavenly Father, we come to you joyful and triumphant in the victory of Christ over the grave. Born as a babe in Bethlehem, crucified upon the cross at Calvary, risen in power and glory, now seated with you in the heavenly realms. We bring you praise, Lord God. We bring praise to your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord. We praise you, God in trinity - holy, righteous, wise, merciful, strong and kind.

*Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace. Hail the Son of Righteousness. Light and life to all He brings. Risen with healing in His wings. Hark! the herald angels sing. Glory to the new-born King!*

Father, we thank you for your mercy to us. And that your son, born in a manger, took the penalty of our sin, and brought forgiveness. Grant to us this day, hearts that are ready to listen to your word, and praise you for your goodness. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

**Song – O Come all ye Faithful** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9P3zXXCTa0>

### **Bible Reading – John 1:1-5, 14 (NIV)**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

### **Bible Reading – Genesis 18:1-8, 16-19**

*The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. <sup>3</sup> He said, 'If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord do not pass your servant by. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant. 'Very well,' they answered, 'do as you say.' <sup>6</sup> So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick,' he said, 'get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.' <sup>7</sup> Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.*

*<sup>16</sup> When the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. <sup>17</sup> Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to*

do? <sup>18</sup> Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. <sup>19</sup> For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.'

## Bible Reading – Genesis 28:10-16

<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup> There above it<sup>[c]</sup> stood the LORD, and he said: 'I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' <sup>16</sup> When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'

## Kids Talk – Quizworx

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pGrUYH-Hug3gM7TGE2oOub\\_qliaJnEC2](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pGrUYH-Hug3gM7TGE2oOub_qliaJnEC2)

[Hug3gM7TGE2oOub\\_qliaJnEC2](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pGrUYH-Hug3gM7TGE2oOub_qliaJnEC2)

## Carol – Christ the King of Christmas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3UknJaPSLO>

## Announcements

- **Church.** We are very thankful that the NSW state government has eased some of the restriction on worshipping together in time for Christmas. We are now allowed to have 106 at our Charlestown services and 48 at Swansea. We can also sing but the recommendation is use facemasks to sing so that we reduce the chance of droplets from our mouth reaching the people around us. Over the coming weeks we will reconsider our approach to registering, paper and interactive services. If you have any thoughts about keeping these things or dropping them please talk to one of the elders.
- **Wee Waa Christmas Hampers.** We are pleased to advise that 25 Christmas hampers were delivered to Wee Waa Presbyterian Church last weekend by Ean Sutton. Each hamper contained Christmas fare, a Christmas card and a letter of greeting from Stephen Taylor. The hampers will be distributed to people within the district that are still suffering in one way or another from the effects of drought or other circumstances. At last Sundays Church service, Ean was asked by the Wee Waa congregation to pass on their sincere thanks to you for the hampers and your prayers.
- **Focus for December – Christmas.** Is there a way that you can invite your friends or family to Church this Christmas? Or you could post a copy of the Christmas talk on line? Or send the Interactive Service to someone on Christmas day? Or find another creative way of spreading the Christmas message to people who desperately need the hope, joy and peace that only the Christ of Christmas brings? Our services will have enough capacity for you to bring along your friends and family. You will just need to register them!
  - **Christmas Eve**            **6pm**            **Charlestown**
  - **Christmas Day**        **8:00am**        **Swansea**
  - 9:30am**        **Charlestown**

To that end you might consider coming on Christmas Eve?

- **A Christmas message to our missionaries.** If you think that you have had a hard year then spend a moment in thought for our missionaries who have been away from family and friends ministering on our behalf in a very difficult environment. One way we could encourage them is for us to send

them a Christmas card or email saying thank you. What if everyone chose one of our four missionaries and sent them card? What a difference that would make!

- **School Holidays.** From next week our normal activities in our Church will stop due to NSW School Holidays. We then can have a well earned rest until February next year when everything will start up again. Many thanks to all our volunteers who have given so much of their time this year, it was very much appreciated!
- **Accommodation Needed.** One of our regulars at 9:15am needs accommodation soon after Christmas. Can you help? Please talk to Stephen.

## Bible Reading – Exodus 3:1-6

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.' <sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.' <sup>5</sup> 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' <sup>6</sup> Then he said, 'I am the God of your father the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

## Bible Reading – Joshua 5:13-15

*Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' <sup>14</sup> 'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord<sup>[e]</sup> have for his servant?' <sup>15</sup> The commander of the LORD's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so.*

## Bible Reading – Daniel 3:19-27

*<sup>9</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude towards them changed. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. <sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?' They replied, 'Certainly, Your Majesty.' <sup>25</sup> He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.' <sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!' So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, <sup>27</sup> and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.*

## Song – Joy has dawned

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zqAxtZvOEU>

## Prayer Points

**Pray for the country of Columbia (Population 50 million, Christians 47 million)** Colombia is rife with organised crime and corruption. Criminal cartels and the presence of drug trafficking cause violence and unrest. Any Christian who speaks out against organised crime faces threats, beatings or even death. Some political interest groups continue to call for a separation of religion and government. Various criminal groups take control of villages and place difficult restrictions on churches. Christian leaders have been abducted, extorted and have even lost their lives as intolerance for Christianity in Colombia has increased.

Despite this, many Colombian Christians continue to work for the defence of human rights and advocate for the implementation of a peace agreement between opposing criminal groups.

**COVID -19.** Pray for all those who are getting the COVID vaccine that it will protect them from the disease without major side effects. Pray for countries rolling out the vaccine that they might do it in a way that is fair and equitable. Pray for countries with no access to a vaccine that those who have access to it will share it with those who don't!

**Pray for our volunteers.** Praise God for all those who gave of themselves for the benefit of the church this year in so many ways. Pray that they might have a good rest of the Christmas holidays and be willing to stay involved next year.

**Pray for our HSC students as they get their results.** Pray that it will reflect the work and effort put in and will open up doors for them into the future.

**Pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Wee Waa Church.** Praise God for the rain and the bumper crops. Praise God the number of people coming to Sunday services both live and on line. Pray for the 5 HSC students who got their results this year. Pray especially for their pastor Steve who is needs a good rest after a very busy year.

Continue to pray for the debate over **the conversion laws** going through the Victorian parliament. Pray that Christians might continue to have the chance to pray with, counsel and support people as they go through critical identity issues in their lives

## **Bible Reading – Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup> *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

## **Sermon – How low can you go?** <https://youtu.be/6AV5xMJtgmA>

The husband waved at his wife and kids as they headed off in the car to their Christmas Day service. He had finally been able to get out of this nonsense. Ever since he had been married he had gone along with his wife's tradition of going to Church on Christmas morning. Today he had made himself plain. "I just don't believe in the virgin birth. I don't believe in this God man. It's a terrible day outside I would much prefer to stay at home thanks very much."

And no sooner had they disappeared around the corner but a bird flew into one of his front windows. And fallen down stunned. Then another and another attracted by the light. Five or six of them were now disorientated as the snowstorm outside got worse & worse. His heart went out to them, they were cold, disorientated, vulnerable, so he opened the garage door and tried to get them to a place of safety. But they wouldn't move. He got some bread and broke it into pieces leading them along a breadcrumb trail to the safety of the garage but still no success. What more could he do to warn them? What could he do to protect them?

It was useless, he would have to become a bird to communicate to them properly, he thought to himself. And then the local Church bells tolled signaling the start of the Christmas Day service and for the first time he got it. He couldn't become a bird but Jesus, God's son had become as a man. God had lowered himself to the human level to lead those in danger to safety. That was the message of Christmas and for the first time he began to see what it was all about.

There are so many aspects to the Christmas story but this morning I want to take a different approach. Our readings have not been the traditional ones, you know the prophecies of Genesis 3 or Isaiah 6 and 9 or

even Micah 5 which God promises to send his Messiah into this world. Instead I want us to consider the role of the Son, the second member of the Trinity and how he has been involved in the history of our world. And it all starts with the

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### 1. The Mystery of Christmas (Philippians 2:6)

Because this Son, this Jesus Christ *“who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;”*

That’s where we need to start at Christmas. Jesus being, the very nature God. Equal with God. Right from the very beginning Jesus existed as part of the Godhead. He doesn’t just suddenly appear in the manger at Bethlehem and wow God and man now exist in the one place. But right back in the very beginning, even before Genesis 1, Jesus existed. Because Jesus is in very nature God.

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That’s why John can say at the beginning of his gospel, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.”* The Word, which a little later on in the chapter is identified as Jesus was eternally God. Which is why when God starts making the world, he does it through Jesus. <sup>3</sup>*“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”*

Now this is big, really big. And yes for many people it is too big for their minds to grasp. How can Jesus be God? But that is the mystery of Christmas. That is what makes it so special. The star of the story is not Santa Claus or the Grinch or Ruddyolph it is God Himself. The maker of all the earth. The creator of all things. Jesus is God. He is same in size, quality, quantity and character as God Himself.

And because he is God he could have held onto what he had. But he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. Jesus you see could have held onto all his rights and privileges and honour but decided that he was willing to give them up for a season.

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A number of years ago Channel 10 ran a show called Undercover Boss. Where the boss of a major corporation stepped out of the boardroom and went undercover and did the most ordinary, bottom rung jobs in their company. And so Larry O’Donnell the President of a huge company called Waste management goes undercover and cleans Portaloos toilets. Janine Allis from Boots Juice cleans orange pips from the juice machines. Total unrecognized.

These bosses did not consider their position of power something to be grasped but laid it aside to get a front row seat of what is going on in their companies. It was a great show but it is nothing absolutely nothing like Jesus being God coming down into this world.

Slide 5

And in the readings that we have had so far today we see God coming down into his world & getting his hands dirty. In Genesis 1 he comes down and makes the world in the first place. God speaks and it all happens. And we see God’s connection to His world. But early on in Genesis he comes down even lower. We see the Lord in human form come & warn Abraham of the coming judgement on Sodom & Gomorrah. Now that is a come down isn’t it?

And then he speaks to Jacob in a dream and warns him of the dangers he will face into the future and Jacob wakes up and names the place Bethel because he must have been in the very house of God. Here is Jesus doing God like things in connection with mankind. He hasn’t taken on flesh as yet but he is communicating to man, warning man and talking about the coming judgement to man.

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But like a limbo dancer Jesus is about to go lower than that. He comes to Moses in the burning bush and promises to save his people. He comes to Joshua and tells him that he is the head of the Lord's army and will drive out their enemies. He even appears in the book of Daniel in the fiery furnace and protects Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from certain death. These are all appearances of Jesus on earth prior to the incarnation.

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And at this stage all we are seeing is a silhouette. A shape, a form that the OT is saying is the form of God Himself. Later on God will reveal more of Himself but at this point in time the figure is still pretty shadowy. But it is not as if there are two Gods, one in heaven and one that now appears on the earth. No as the revelation of God continues throughout Bible times we find out that there is one God made up of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The same in substance. Identical in being. Coequal, coeternal. And the second member of the trinity Jesus has this unique role in the salvation of God's people. So we move from the mystery of Christmas to

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## 2. The Plan for Christmas (verse 7)

For the plan is for this Jesus to travel even lower still. Like a parabola, that starts up high before it goes down lower and lower so Jesus travels a downward trajectory. Step by step he goes, down, down, down. The one who is equal with God doesn't just visit the earth but verse 7, *"he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."* Here Jesus becomes a human being.

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The God who fills the universe, is joined to cells, multiplying and dividing in the womb of the virgin. The God who has spent his eternity in heaven in perfect fellowship with the other members of the Trinity decides to spend 9 months in the stomach of a peasant girl. He travels down the birthing canal and appears to the world with blood and gunk on his skin. And he isn't placed in a warm humidicrib but in a feed box in a stable in a one horse town called Bethlehem. Now's that's pretty low.

This act of self renunciation, self emptying, self humbling, self denial is even more amazing than that father becoming a bird to warn the rest of the flock and lead them to safety. Or a missionary going to live on a garbage heap to share the good news with those whose whole life is around that dump. But this Jesus became a man because this was the only way to deal with our sin. The only way he could secure our deliverance and give us our salvation.

Nothing less could secure our salvation. That's why Jesus was born. That's why God became man. That's why He lay in such a mean estate. If you only have the baby of Bethlehem and not the man of Calvary, you may have a pretty Christmas scene for your greeting card but that is all you have. You cannot have peace with God. But the incarnation is God's plan. The start of God's plan but certainly not the end of it.

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Because Jesus goes even lower. Not just laying aside his heavenly glory, not just leaving his eternal riches, not just laying aside his divine attributes, but he takes all of God's qualities and puts them into one human body. So there in Jesus is the God man. Still fully God and yet also completely human. If you cut him in half you wouldn't find out that he is 50% man and 50% God. No in some deep, deep mystery he is 100% man and 100% God.

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But now according to Paul he goes even lower and takes on the nature of a servant. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be of service but to serve and give his life as a ransom for man."*

*"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."*

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The whole of Jesus life is a life of service. And yes in John 13 he takes up the basin and the towel and washes his disciple's feet and does the job only a servant does. But if you look at Isaiah 53, the famous chapter of the suffering servant it is all about how God's servant lived a life of suffering and died in other people places. And that is the next downward step. If you think that Jesus has gone down as low as you can go, well the limbo stick is about to get even lower.

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### 3. The mystery of Christmas, the plan of Christmas and then the cost of Christmas

*"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!"*

Throughout his life, Jesus experienced the miseries that we all experience. He knew hunger, *pain*, sorrow and poverty. He was unjustly hated and ridiculed. He endured the taunts of the Pharisees, the floggings of an innocent criminal and the pain of the Roman nails in his hands and feet. Any pain you have felt, he has felt, and the sort of rejection we all secretly feel was his in spades.

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And yet that suffering reached its full crescendo when in the last few hours of his life, his Father God turned his back on him. So when Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was actually experiencing the pain of hell. God's cup of *wrath*, His judgement was poured out in full upon him, because there he was with my sins on him, your sins on him, the sins of the world on him.

And then he *died*. God the one who will never die, died. Jesus died in a state of shame, of rejection, of punishment. His death on the *cross* is the ultimate symbol of humiliation. This is the furthest anyone could plummet. Crucifixion was the cruelest form of execution in the Roman Empire. It was commonly reserved only for the lower classes, especially slaves. This was as low as you could go.

And he did it all voluntarily for you and me. He made himself nothing for you and me. He took on the nature of a servant for you and me. He humbled himself for you and me. He was obedient to death for you and me. Only a divine creature can accept death as an act of obedience. Humans deserve death. A perfect God man doesn't deserve to die. But Jesus was willing to pay that cost, willing to pay any cost in order to open the door of salvation to you & I.

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Jesus was will go as low as can go for you and me.

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*"Though he was rich, so rich. Yet for our sakes how poor he became. Even his garments they parted when he hung on the cross of shame. All that he had he gave for me. That I might be rich through eternity."* (E H Swinstead) You see this Jesus held nothing back. Nothing back. This Jesus was willing to go from the highest highs down to the lowest lows. From perfect union with the Godhead in heaven. Down to this earth, down to being a man. Down to taking on the jobs of a slave. Down to dying for the sins of the world.

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So that the message of the Father can be delivered to his children crystal clear. Life is not a matter of getting but of giving. Life is not about being served but serving others. Life is not about dominance but obedience. So friends we are called to be incarnational Christians. We are called to follow in the steps of Jesus. To enter our world not to go onward and upward but to have the mind and the heart and the actions of Christ Jesus and humble ourselves. And keep going down. Because this sort of humility demands a response, so let's turn to

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### 4. The Response to Christmas (verses 9-11, 1-5)

Because this is where God the Father steps in. Up until now Jesus had taken centre stage in our passage but now God the Father steps into the limelight. For the power of God is shown in what happens after



Jesus dies. Death is defeated and God raises his son Jesus up from the dead. The hold of Satan, the sting of death were not strong enough and so on the third day Jesus comes back to life.

But Jesus journey hasn't finished yet. He appears to his disciples for 40 days and then in Acts chapter 1 after his final teaching to his apostles, he was taken upwards before their eyes, until a cloud hid him from their sight. That's called the *ascension*. Now this isn't some ghost, or a phantom rising upwards, it is the physical body of Jesus, defying the laws of gravity which he helped make!

But when Jesus got to heaven God did something else to glorify Him, he allowed Jesus to take the place of honour and sat him at the right hand side of the Father. That's called Jesus' *Session*. God was infinitely proud of what His Son had done. He had humiliated himself, in order to serve us human beings. He had provided a way, the only way where people could escape the consequences of their sin, so "*God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name above all names.*"

And he promised that one day everyone on the earth would see Jesus in his full glory. One day, he would come back on the clouds, to draw to a close the last chapter of the earth's wonderful history. One day, every person from every tribe in every country will see that Jesus is the rightful ruler of this world and will bow before him and confess that Jesus is Lord. And that day will be the day of his *second coming*.

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That's the picture of Jesus given to us in the book of Revelation. Of the one who will come back and judge the living and the dead. Who will separate the sheep from the goats. Who will judge everyone justly. Who will roll up the earth like he is rolling up a scroll. It will be all over. Done and dusted. With those who have Jesus as their Lord enjoying the eternities of being with God forever and those who continued to rebel against Jesus as their Lord will feel the full force of God's judgement also for all eternity.

You see the response required to who Jesus is and what he has done has to be one of praise. Giving Jesus the praise and honour and glory he so rightly deserves. So we don't keep our eyes on ourselves and our own navels as if we are the centre of the universe. We praise & glorify Jesus. We sing, we hum, we shout for our lives are full of praise. We can't keep it to ourselves. Not just over the Christmas period but in every year and every season.

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And so yes we would love to be singing carols today but our whole life is a song of praise to God. The way we drove to church today and the way we get home, the whole journey we have a song in our heart that just wants to burst out! Our minds are always thinking about Jesus. Our heart are always bursting with thanks for what Jesus has done. So we Christians are always giving God the glory. We are always worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. And we always wanting to be more & more like Jesus.

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Which means, "*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness & compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*"

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These truths are not cerebral they are social. They don't just affect me on my own, they affect us together. In the same way Jesus humbles himself we humble ourselves before one another. We admit when we have made mistakes. We serve others with the best that we have. We open our homes to one another, share our gifts with one another and our aim is to build one another up in the faith.

When we look around at our world, most people are trying to make a name for themselves or make a fortune for themselves, or make life more comfortable for themselves. But the message of Christmas



changes everything. Jesus is willing to give up the things that are his by nature in order to serve his father. And we ought to be willing to give up our time and our talents and our money to serve our heavenly father. Jesus didn't try and dominate the people around them like a school bully. He understood God's plan. And he was determined to execute God's plan even if it meant his execution.

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For when you think about it the same parabola curve that Jesus went on is the one that we need to travel. Our aim is go down to serve others. To be humble before others. To put others needs before ourselves. For each day we want to die to self and live for Christ.

And when we do that God will lift us up. God will ensure we can have our well done good and faithful servant. God will connect us to Christ and so at the end of the world when Jesus gets the place of honour, we will rule with Him. Now how amazing will that be?

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That is our hope this Christmas. It is not based on a vaccine, or the trade war with China stopping or our sporting team winning a game or our family have a harmonious time together or even getting something nice from Santa. For us Christ is the centre of Christmas. And so because of this we want Christ to fill every part of Christmas. Now how are you and going to do that today and for the next couple of days?

## **Song – Hark the Herald**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19w0IHPL4X0>

## **Benediction – We wish you a Merry Christmas**

We wish you a merry Christmas  
 We wish you a merry Christmas  
 We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year  
 Good tidings we bring to you and your kin  
 We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year

Good tidings we bring to you and your kin  
 We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year