

Christmas Eve 2021

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Date: 24 December 2021

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

I'm really excited. A lot of you folks have joined us tonight. And we look forward to just celebrating a wonderful message of Christmas. God so loved the world, which meant he loved sinners, that he gave, out of love, he gave his only son, that we who believe in him might have eternal life.

And so that's the meaning of Christmas.

And we're going to continue to fall.

And she's told she's going to have a baby.

[4 : 54] And she's going to do the right thing and quietly, you know, not disgrace her. But when he found out this was of God, he says, okay. And so he was told to name the child Jesus.

And Jesus is the greatest name, according to Philippians 2, the greatest name above all names, because it means Savior.

[illegible]

Didn't reveal it to the priests, didn't reveal it to the religious leaders, revealed it to Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and these magi, these wise guys from far away.

That's what we're remembering today. And then we'll close the service with a purple candle, which represents his royalty, because he also came as a king. So that's what we're going to do. Let me pray, and we'll begin to celebrate together.

[6 : 14] Father, we thank you for the joy of Christmas, the love of Christmas, the holiness, the salvation, the worship. And we thank you, O Lord, that our king is on his throne.

That no matter what is happening today, no matter what is going wrong or going sideways, we know our king is on his throne, and everything will be okay.

We thank you, O Lord, for this great gift of Jesus. We want to adore him and love him and worship him tonight. Help us do that. And may we, Lord, feel the joy spring in our hearts.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Please welcome to the church.

It's kind of an old-fashioned church, so we're going to do a little bit of old-fashioned stuff. The hymnals, you'll have to grab a hymnal if you'd like to sing. I'm going to give you a chance to, there's some extra hymnal at the end of the views.

[7:15] There's a stack of them at the end of the view here, if you're in the front view. There we go. It's okay. Everybody in the front. And that's why we get the candles, so we can see the last song.

Okay. Our first hymn that we'll sing is, O Come, All Ye Faithful, hymn number 145.

And we're going to sing verses 1, 2, and 3. Please stand. Please stand. Oh, come ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of angels.

Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him.

[8 : 38] Christ the Lord. Sing choirs of angels. Sing in exultation.

Oh, sing all ye bright hosts of heaven above. Glory to God, O glory in the highest.

Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him.

In Christ the Lord. Say, Lord, we greet thee. Born is happy morning.

[illegible]

It is the night of the dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error, find me till he appeared and the soul of his birth.

[illegible]

[15 : 35] Let all within us praise His holy name. Christ is the Lord.

His power and glory is the Lord proclaim.

Joy to the world. Joy to the world.

And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and nature sing.

While fields and floods. Marks, hills and plains. Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat the sounding joy.

[18:02] Nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings flow.

Far as the curse is found. Far as the curse is found. Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace. And makes the nations prove.

The glories of His righteousness. And wonders of His love. And wonders of His love.

And wonders, wonders of His love. Amen. With the red candle, we remember His redemption.

[19 : 23] As the angel announced to Joseph, You shall call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins. I'll be reading from Matthew 1, 18-25.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, Before they came together, She was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, And not wanting to disgrace her, Desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, Saying, Joseph, son of David, Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, For that which has been conceived in her Is of the Holy Spirit.

And she will bear a son, And you shall call His name Jesus. For it is He who will save His people from their sins. Now all this took place, That what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Might be fulfilled, Saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, And shall bear a son, And they shall call His name Emmanuel, Which translates meaning God with us.

And Joseph arose from his sleep, And did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, And took her as his wife, And kept her a virgin, Until she gave birth to a son, And he called His name Jesus.

[21 : 13] Hymn number 123, O come, O come, Emmanuel, O come, O come, Emmanuel, Verse 1 and 4, O come, O come, Emmanuel, Rejoice, rejoice, Rejoice, rejoice, And ran so captive Israel, And mourns in lonely exile, Until the Son of God appear, Rejoice, rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel,

O come, desire of nations, Rejoice, rejoice, All peoples in one heart and mind, In the strife and quarrel cease, Fill all the world with heaven's peace, Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Amen. Amen. With a pink candle, We receive with great joy, The angels' announcement to the shepherds.

Luke 2, 8-20 And in the same region, There were some shepherds Staying out in the fields, And keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord Suddenly stood before them, And the glory of the Lord shone around them, And they were terribly frightened.

And the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, Which shall be for all the people. For today in the city of David, There has been born for you a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.

[24 : 05] And this will be a sign for you, You will find a baby wrapped in cloths, And lying in a manger. And suddenly there appeared with the angel A multitude of the heavenly host, Praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men, With whom he is pleased.

And it came about, When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, That the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, And see this thing that has happened, Which the Lord has made known to us.

And they came in haste, And found their way to Mary and Joseph, And the baby, As he lay in the manger. And when they had seen this, They made known the statement, Which had been told to them about this child.

And all who heard it wondered, At the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured up all these things, Pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back, Glorifying and praising God, For all that they had heard and seen, Just as it had been told them.

Let's sing in number 133. We'll sing verses 1, 2, and 3. Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King, Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled, Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies, With angelic hosts proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem, Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King,

[26 : 20] Christ thy highest, Christ the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb, Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Veiled in incarnate deity, Pleased as man with them to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel, Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King, Hail the heaven of the King, Hail the Son of righteousness, Hail the Son of righteousness,

Light and life to all he brings, Present with healing in his wings, His glory by the Lord, Born that man no more may die, Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give the second blood, Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King, Glory to the newborn King, Glory to the newborn King, Camp number 132.

Angels we have heard on high. And let's sing one, two, and three. Angels we have heard on high.

Sweetly singing o'er the plains. And the mountains in reply. Echo back their joyous strength.

Gloria. In excelsis Deo. Gloria.

[29 : 07] In excelsis Deo. Shepherds, why this jubilee?

Why your joyous strains belong? Say what may the tidings be. Which inspire your heavenly soul.

Gloria. Gloria. Gloria. In excelsis Deo Gloria In excelsis Deo Come to Bethlehem and sing In whose word the angels sing Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the new one King Gloria In excelsis Deo

Gloria In excelsis Deo Amen Amen While I set up, if you want to go ahead and turn to Philippians 2 verses 1 through 13, you're welcome to, there are pages 980 and 981 in the Pew Bible.

On that note, good Christmas Eve's Eve.

[31 : 35] Thank you all for being here. Thank you for bringing your traditions in line for ours. Thank you for celebrating. Thank you for making your traditions divine, if I dare say, at this moment.

Philippians chapter 2 verses 1 through 13. Philippians is a Pauline epistle, a fancy word for saying that it is a letter of Paul's, particularly a letter of Paul's to the church at Philippi.

And you can read it feels very personal as a church that he may have very well planned it, people he knows. But through God's sovereign plan, that relationship has been used to give us a grounding with the God of the universe.

I want to thank everyone who has said the gospel up here today.

Particularly, yeah, the gospel account of Christmas. I think those past and those future as well. You can find the whole accounts yourself in Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 1 and 2.

[32 : 45] Very powerful pieces. However, they're only a part of the Bible. They do not make sense without the rest of the Bible. And the rest of the Bible does not make sense without them.

Which is why I want to read Philippians 2 today to gain some biblical insight outside of the Christmas story to shed light on what the Christmas story means. Philippians 2, 1 through 13.

Here's the word of God. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[34 : 08] Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

So reads the word of God. Let us pray. O Yahweh, O triune God, O Father in heaven, O Spirit that is with us, O Jesus, who took on our form and laid in the manger for our sake, may my words glorify you or be forgotten.

In your name I pray. Amen. Let's get started. Now, I'm diving a bit into the middle of Philippians. If you read it the whole way through, it does very much feel like a letter.

Not just a letter of Paul's, but a letter to a particular group of people. This section, verses 1 through 4, starts out with some moral exhortations, some moral axioms on how to guide us.

[35 : 30] In some sense, it's not unusual for Paul. You can find these in pretty much every one of his letters. However, this one struck me, because in this particular season, even in the secular realm, there are virtues that come with it.

I mean, we'll probably read about, talk about, watch movies about this guy, whose whole MO is just giving presents to people, backed up by an army of other persons who spend the whole year making stuff just to give to other people.

And on the face of that, that doesn't seem, if you go into the rest of it, the reindeer and all that stuff, it doesn't seem very biblical. But when you read passages, like the beginnings of Philippians 2, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves, look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others, you have to wonder where these views came from.

And I'd say, if God of the Bible, who he says he is, it is no accident. Not just across the world as objective moral values, but in the particular to Western culture and even the secular ideas that have come from it.

I do say that as no coincidence. However, he doesn't stop with these moral exhortations here. As the commentators in the ESV study Bible say, such radical love, as in the love he talks about right there, is rare.

[36 : 52] So Paul proceeds to show its supreme reality in the life of Christ. And that's where the next section comes in. Verses 5 and 6. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ, who, though he is in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Form of God, equality of God. Now, what does it mean? This is where the whole Bible comes into play. One, those of you who know me may not find this surprising, but Genesis 1 is where I love to go to for things like this.

The first book of the Bible, in fact, just the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible gives you some hint at this. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, there's a time where ancient metaphysics will come into play, like how they understood the universe, but I don't think it's needed here.

You have earth and you have the heavens. You have earth, you have everything that is not earth. If that was just empty space, just the sheer size of it would be impressive enough. But later in that same chapter, he fills it with things.

He does way more than that. This is just a piece of it. And on one, at the end of verse 16, I love this, with many Christian astronomers, and he made the stars. Just like that, just an after effect.

[38 : 09] Just to say, one way I've heard astronomers talk about it is this. Our sun, just that star, is big enough that you could fit a million earths inside of it if it was hollow.

But it's not just like earths in it. The whole sun is a fusion reactor. It is a million earths worth of nuclear power in action.

It's one of billions of stars in our galaxy, and there's estimated billions of galaxies out there. You can do the math on that. I would say this is the God we're dealing with. This is the power he's dealing with.

This is the complexity, the intelligence he puts into things that we're dealing with. And right here, this Jesus, who was laid in a manger because there's no room in the end, had that equality with God.

And if you read other sections like John 1 and others, it gets even deeper than that. But at the very least, in this passage, he had that form of God. He had that equality with God. But he did not count it a thing to be grasped.

[39 : 10] Well, I'm a person that feels messed up when I don't have the internet. That's something I can't deal with well. And this is what God was okay with letting go.

So what did he do? That's where verses 7 and 8 come into play. But emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Christmas event is an incredible event in and of itself. To see that God give up his equality so he can be this crying, gurgling newborn is incredible.

But this is, in one sense, as important as this point is on itself, this is a means to an ultimate end. God by himself, just analyzing the concept in general, let alone talking about this God, to be God is to be immortal.

You cannot die. The only way you can do that is if you take on a perishable form. And that's what Jesus did here through the full development, through the full stage.

[40 : 22] Every stage of humanity we go through, he did to the point of the cross. He came as a baby so he could die for us. But it doesn't end there.

Verses 9 through 11. Therefore, God has highly, therefore, this is all coming, this is all flowing. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. However, this one may seem hard to take at times, especially see a secularization of the world.

If you believe that there is some heavenly dimension where things are taking place, I believe you'll see it there. There is much glorification. I don't mean to presume too much on there, on how time works and other events in the relationship, but some way, some shape, somehow, on that side, there is much rejoicing, much glorification happening.

However, I'd say even if you look now, you can find it. If you just remember Baby versus Herod, remember that kind of dichotomy? You see constantly, as what Billy says early in 1 Corinthians, the foolishness to the world defeating the wisdom of the world.

[41 : 43] My favorite example is the former Soviet Union, one of the most secular societies ever, top down, of course, tried to destroy everywhere it was, all the religions, especially the Christian religions of its western side.

It seemed like they succeeded, but then it collapsed, and nowadays you see a huge rebirth of the religions. And there are ethnically specific Christian denominations.

Catholicism in Poland, Russian Orthodox in Russia. It's incredible. And, yeah, they're just back. They never died, and they're all the stronger, all the greater, all the more cherished.

So if you look for it, you see it happening now. It's not the end. It's not time. Thank God it's not time for him to call it done. But if you know where to look, you will see it.

You'll see the baby beat the kings. But all this, there's one more section in this I'd like to point out. I believe it's important. Another therefore, verse 12. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

[42 : 52] Note the personal touch here. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Fear and trembling. That's what I want to focus on. Now, in one sense, I believe this is pure fear and trembling. It's a fearful fear. This is the God of the universe who everyone will confess, whether by force or by delight, that Jesus Christ is Lord.

To the glory of God the Father. That is real. That is just as real as when he was a baby as it is now. However, if you follow that, I believe that definitely makes sense of that section.

But it's not the full story if you follow from the beginning onwards about the spirit we're supposed to have. I think with this baby, with this baby Jesus, just as in Jesus in total, there's an awe to this.

There is a wonder. There is looking at who he is, not just looking at his tremendous power and saying, wow. Seeing that in contrast with how he came down, how he gave this up, how he took on a limiting form and did all that he did from baby to cross.

[44 : 08] Going there. So, no, there is a wonder to this. There's a fear and there is an awe. Now, to conclude, in one sense, you could have summed this up by me saying, I'm going to biblically tether the book Mary Did You Know?

Sorry, the song Mary Did You Know? by Philipians 2. In one sense. And also, in another sense, I don't mean to speak over everything.

I hope all of you have all wondrous and unique traditions for this holiday season with your family, with your loved ones, even maybe joke ones for yourself. May you have a spirit.

If it could happen in the trenches of World War I, it can happen here. But I pray that you will ground these traditions, even talking snowmen, even guys with big beards, to the divine, to what God has done.

May it start with a great, healthy fear of who God is and what he'll do. May it move to an awe that he did this for us. And may that flow into a love for the piety and virtue that we see in this holiday season.

[45 : 25] To God be the glory. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas.

With the gold candle, we recall the worship of the Magi who asked, Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?

We saw a star in the east and have come to worship Him. Matthew 2 verses 1 through 11 tells of this Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king behold wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying where is he who has been born king of the Jews for we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him when Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him and assembling as the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where is Christ was he to be born they told him in Bethlehem of Judea for so it was written by the prophets and you O Bethlehem in the land of Judea are by no means least among the rulers of Judea for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared and he sent them to Bethlehem saying go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him bring him bring me word that I too may come and worship him after listening to the kings they went on their way and behold the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over a place where they where the child was when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and they fell down and worshiped him then opening their treasures offered him gifts frankincense gold and myrrh

NINGNINGNING Oh little town of Bethlehem.

Let's see it. 141. One and four. Thank you.

[48 : 53] Oh little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie.

Above thy deep and dreamless sea, The silent stars go by.

Yea, in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting light.

The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

Oh holy child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray.

[49 : 52] Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell.

We have one more song we're going to sing. And you've all got candles. Right? Now, they're not the old-fashioned ones that we used to do.

[56 : 02] We used to light them. You know, the wax would drip on your hands and all that fun stuff. So, get your candles ready. We're going to sing Silent Night.

We're going to dim the lights. I don't know how good it will be. But we're going to sing to candlelight. Silent Night. Silent Night.

Silent Night. Holy Night.

Holy Night. Holy Night. All is calm, all is bright.

Round yon virgin, mother and child. Holy Empress, O tender and mild.

[57 : 04] Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night. Shepherds wake at the sight.

Glories stream from heaven afar. Heavenly hosts sing alleluia.

Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born.

Silent night, holy night. Son of God, love's pure light.

[58 : 31] Ray and peace from thy holy face. With the dawn of redeeming grace.

Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Amen. I'm so glad you joined us.

Now I can't see you. Where'd you go? We would love for you to join us if you're in town or if you don't have a church. We would be glad for you to join us on Sundays.

We're looking at this little book called Revelation on Sundays. So this whole king thing is coming very real.

[59 : 37] It's not the kind of book I thought it was going to be. It's really about worship. And it's really about what's happening now. Let us close with a good word, shall we?

Blessed be the God of Israel. For he has visited and redeemed his people. And has raised up a horn of salvation for us.

In the house of his servant David. Now may God give light to those who sit in darkness. And in the shadow of death. To guide our feet into the way of peace.

Amen. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas.