

Born On A Starry Night

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to Carlyle Free Church for our annual carol service. It's so so good to see so many of you here and I want to thank you all for coming especially on a night that is not the nicest but it's definitely a little bit calmer than it was this morning and that was our prayer at the morning service that the weather would calm down enough for everyone to be able to get out tonight.

So thank you so so much for being here and a warm welcome to you all, a warm welcome to your dear brothers and sisters in the Church of Scotland. It's so good to be able to unite together for this service and for everyone else who's visiting and joining us thank you very very much indeed for coming and it's such a joy for us to gather together tonight to celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. So a warm warm welcome to you all our service will be very simple we're going to just sing together and we'll have some short readings I'll give a short talk towards the end and the whole thing I think will take less than an hour and then afterwards we're going to have tea and coffee, mince pies, baking, mulled apple juice and chocolates and lots of treats so we'd love for you to stay behind for that as well and I'll say a little bit more about the logistics of that when the time comes but most of all I just want to thank you so much for being here and also if anyone's joining us online some we know won't have been able to come out because of the the awful weather this weekend but we welcome you warmly and wherever you are may you know the joy and hope that has come that comes through the birth of Jesus as we gather here together tonight. So we begin our service every service we have here we start with a call to worship and I just read a short verse from scripture reminding us of the gospel which is the whole reason why we are gathered together tonight so I'm going to read from Isaiah 9 6 and as we read these words we're preparing our hearts for worship. For to us a child is born to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty god, everlasting father, prince of peace. Let's sing together our first carol which is

Hark the Herald, Injil Singh, a wonderful wonderful carol just speaking of the reality of that first Christmas when God the Son came into this world to be our Savior. So the musicians are going to lead us and we'll stand and sing together to God's praise.

Hark the Herald, Injil Singh, glory to the newborn King, peace on earth and mercy man, God and sinners break on sand, joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies.

Flip and jelly, ghost proclaim, Christ is born in deathly heaven. Hark the Herald, Injil Singh, glory to the newborn King. Christ by high is her God, O'er Christ we ever asking, Lord, think in time the old hand come, all spring of the versions.

[3 : 5 6] Hail in flesh the God that see, Hail in carment dinty, Lace us mine with lives to dwell, Jesus, now in my new hell. Hark the Herald, Injil Singh, glory to the newborn King.

Give the heaven, for hence the peace, Hail the Son of righteousness, Light and light to all he brings, Risen with healing in his truth.

Mild he lays his glory by, For that man no more may die, For to raise us from the earth, For to give us second birth, Hark the Herald, Injil Singh, glory to the newborn King.

Let's pray together. Dear God, our Father, we thank you so, so much that we can gather here this evening. Thank you for bringing us together on this night where we can come together to rejoice the fact that you have sent your Son into this world, that Jesus was born and that he's come to be our Savior. Thank you for everybody who's come here tonight and it's such a joy to be together.

Thank you for the privilege and opportunity that tonight gives us and we pray that as we come together that we would come to worship you, to meet with you and to know the joy and peace that comes through your Son, our Lord Jesus. Thank you for everybody who's here and we pray for each one of us that our hearts will be warmed, that we will be encouraged and strengthened, that we would deepen in our love for one another and in our love for you and as we gather we want to praise and thank you, we want to worship you and we want to acknowledge just how utterly amazing you are.

[6 : 16] And so we pray Father that you would bless us as we gather in the name of your Son, in the presence of God the Holy Spirit. May you pour out your blessing upon us and may your name be honoured and glorified as we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We're going to sing again the Carol Joy to the World. Again, I think I've probably said this every time, this is my favourite Carol, they're all my favourites, they're fantastic and this is amazing because it just emphasises that at the heart of the Christian message, at the heart of the Gospel, is incredible joy about everything that Jesus has done for us. So we come together tonight to rejoice and we can express that joy as we sing this Carol together. So again the musicians will lead us.

Let's stand and sing to God's praise. Music Joy to the World, the Lord is come, Let death receive her name, Let every heart prepare in room, And death and danger sing, And death and danger sing, And death and death and danger sing.

Joy to the Earth, the Savior brings, Your sweetest songs, Lord, What fields and streams, Grot hills and lakes, Repeat the standing joy, Repeat the standing joy, Repeat the standing joy.

Music Joy to the World, the Lord is come, Let death receive her name, Let death and danger sing, And death and danger sing.

Music Joy to the World, the Lord is come, Let death receive her name, Let every heart prepare in room, And death and danger sing, And death and danger sing, And death and death and danger sing.

[9 : 06] Music Amazing, so good, so so good. So we're going to have three readings from God's Word just spread throughout our service tonight. Our first reading is going to be from Sam 8 and I'm going to ask Yuna to come up and read this passage for us. So we'll read Sam 8 together.

Sam 8, O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth, mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your homes. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea. Whatever passes along the paths of the sea, O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Amen.

Thank you Yuna. We're going to sing together this time from Sam 16. We're singing the same Sam's version of Sam 16 from verse 7 to verse 11. These are beautiful words. Most of the all the Psalms were written in the Old Testament. Most of them were written around about a thousand years before Jesus was born. Yet the Psalms speak very powerfully about who Jesus is and about what Jesus has come to accomplish. The verses that we're going to sing from Sam 16 to Snow are verses that speak very powerfully about the resurrection of Jesus.

Even though in many ways our focus at Christmas time is on the birth of Jesus, we never want to forget that that birth was just one step in a bigger mission. That ultimate mission was to conquer death and to give us the hope of eternal life. These verses that we're going to sing speak very powerfully about that hope of eternal life that we have through our Lord Jesus.

These are beautiful words. Again, the musicians are going to lead us. Let's stand and sing together. Sing you in hope and victory.

[13 : 28] For you will not allow My soul in death to spin Nor will you make your holy one To see the turns decay You have made bone to me The path all might be mine This shall I know At your right hand Joy from your face will shine

That was so beautiful. Wow. We're going to sing again. This time we'll just stay seated as we sing one of the most well-known and famous carols of all, Silent Night. And again just a beautiful, beautiful song. Bringing our minds, bringing our minds back to that night when Jesus was born. So the musicians will lead us. We can stay seated, singing together to God's praise.

Silent Night Silent Night Holy Night All is done All is done I'm gone virgin mother and child Holy infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace Sleep in heavenly peace Silent Night Holy Night

Shepherds wave at the sign Glory streamed from hell upon Every old Saint Hallelujah Christ the Savior is born Christ the Savior is born Silent Night Holy Night Son of God Love's pure light Radiant things from my holy face With a dark redeeming grace

Jesus more than I know We're going to have our second reading and this time we're reading from Luke chapter two.

[17 : 40] And for the reading from Luke chapter two I'm going to ask John McCaskill, one of the elders in the Church of Scotland, to come and read this passage for us. So Luke chapter two starting at verse one, the birth of Jesus Christ.

In those days a decree went out from Caesira Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinus was governor of Syria and all went to be registered each to 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 the city of David. Which is called Bethlehem because he was off the 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 clothes 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 flock 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 great fear.

[19 : 13] 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 the angel, 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 with whom he is born.

When the angels went away from them into heaven the shepherds said to one another, let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord had made known to us.

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told to them.

[20 : 44] Thank you so much John. We're going to sing together and again this time we're going to sing in Gaelic from Psalm 8 which is the passage that Euna read for us.

And we're going to sing two verses from verse 3 to the first half of verse 5. Now if you've never sung a Gaelic Psalm before, very very simple but a little bit different.

So I've got the English and the Gaelic up there so let me just go through the English word. So even if you don't know Gaelic you'll know what we're saying as you give it a go. When I look up to the heavens which thine own fingers framed unto the moon and the stars which were by thee ordained.

Then I say what is man that he remembered is by thee or the son of man that thou so kind to him should be for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.

So as you sing these words you're imagining standing underneath a beautiful star filled night. And as you see the vastness of the universe it makes you feel small.

[21 : 46] And that was the experience of the writing of this Psalm 3,000 years ago. And we can have exactly the same experience today because we're looking at the same stars and it's exactly the same for us.

So as we sing it we'll sing the first two lines all together. So we'll sing all of that together and then from the third line onwards where it says A Gaelic Psalm is a beautiful star, we'll sing that on its own and then we will sing it back to him.

So if you're not sure what to sing just listen to the star because you'll just be singing the same thing again. And then we follow that pattern all the way through to the end. So the fact that I have made it so clear and so simple everyone can have a go.

And as I said before if you don't know how to pronounce the word just put a couple of pfffts in it and I'm sure you'll be close to the right pronunciation. And again even if you don't know Gaelic you can have that image in your mind of a star filled night standing beneath it.

The magnitude of God, the smallness of humanity. And so we'll stay seated and all will lead us as we sing together. Very, very well done. That was beautiful.

[26 : 05] We're going to read again this time from Hebrews chapter 2 and I'm delighted to ask Duncan, a dear friend and colleague in ministry as he pastors the Church of Scotland beside us here.

And Duncan's going to read Hebrews chapter 2 for us. Thank you. I think I'll stick to my text here all up on the screen.

As we the word of the Lord therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard. While God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere. What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the son of man that you care for him?

[27 : 20] You met him for a little while lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honour putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him you left nothing outside his control.

At present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels namely Jesus. Crowned with glory and honour because of the sufferings of death.

So that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one soul. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers saying, I will tell if your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.

And again I will put my trust in him and again behold I and the children God has given me. Since that for the children share in flesh and blood he himself likewise partook of the same things.

[28 : 32] That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil. And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not the angels that he helps but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you very very much indeed Duncan.

And we're going to sing again together a beautiful carol, Oh Holy Night. And again this is a carol that just takes us to that night when Jesus was born it echoes the language of Sam 8 that Hebrews 2 quoted.

The stars are brightly shining. It's the night of the dear Savior's birth. So we'll sing these words together. Let's stand and praise God. The stars are brightly shining. It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.

[30 : 17] Long may the word be sin and never mind me till he appeared and so felt his word.

And filled of hope, the weary wealthy joists for young deities and new and glorious God.

All on your knees, O hear the angel voices, Oh night divine, oh night.

When Christ was born, Oh night divine, oh night divine.

Who really taught us to love one another, His glory is high and His gospel is peace.

[32 : 09] Trish shall he reign for the slimmest our brother and in his name all oppression shall cease.

Sweet hymns of joy, in grateful quarters praise me that all with Him Christ raise his glory again.

Christ is the Lord, Oh praise His name forever, His power glory ever.

Oh praise His power and glory ever.

All on your knees, O hear the angel voices, Oh night divine, oh night.

[34 : 07] When Christ was born, Oh night divine, oh night divine.

Oh that was amazing, so good. Well just for a wee while I want to just talk and share a little bit about some of what we've read and some of what God wants us to think about as we remember the birth of Jesus.

And when I think of the birth of Jesus, I think of a starry night, which is something that we can all relate to, maybe not tonight, but on a nice night you can go out for a walk in Carlyway, you can see just the incredible beauty of the stars above us.

And so that makes me think of the birth of Jesus because Jesus was born on a starry night. The shepherds, as we read from Luke to the shepherds that are out in their fields, and an angel appears, it's a beautiful night.

It's an astonishing night. And I want us to think a little bit more about all of what that means. And I've got three maybe slightly odd headings that we're going to go through one by one.

[35 : 50] Telescopes, microscopes, and a journey that everyone has to take. So starting off thinking a little bit about this heading, telescopes, often the Bible will get us to look into space, into the heavens, and to marvel at the vastness of the universe.

And of course, they didn't have the advantage of telescopes that we have today, but they were still drawn in the days of the Bible to look up and to see the vastness of what lay before them. We do that too. And when we do that, two things happen.

We marvel at how big it all is. And we're confronted with the reality of just how small we are. And that was what Sam ate, spoke about. We read it, we sang from it.

When I look to the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you've said in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the Son of Man that you care for him?

Three thousand years ago, the Sam writer stood under a starry sky and was confronted by the vastness of the universe and his own tininess. We do the same, but we actually know more, we know a lot more than him.

[37 : 05] We know today that as you look up into the sky, you're looking at one septillion stars. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. There we go.

That's how many stars NASA says that are roughly. Many, many, many. And because of that, looking up into space can actually bring those moments when we feel it are most insignificant.

And maybe that's how you feel as another year draws to a close. Maybe you feel tiny, insignificant, overlooked, not worth very much to anybody.

And maybe it's not the universe that makes you feel like that. Maybe it's just a really hard year that leaves you feeling like that. Maybe this year has just brought things that you did not want and maybe work's been a nightmare.

Maybe school isn't going very well. Maybe the person you really like doesn't feel the same way. Maybe somebody who you thought would never let you down has actually hurt you. Or whatever else it may be.

[38 : 16] Maybe the dreams that you had for life haven't come through. Maybe the dreams that you had for life have come through, but they turned out not to be as nice or as good as you thought.

Maybe you feel lonely. Maybe you feel rejected. Maybe you feel like a failure. And whether it's the vastness of the universe or maybe because of the depth of our bruises and our anxieties, it's so easy to feel tiny and so insignificant.

And so on the night that Jesus was born, we have a starry night, a vast universe, and a moment of almost total insignificant for tiny humans like us.

And yet at the very same time, the night that Jesus was born is the moment when humanity and when all of us discover just how precious you are.

Because this is the moment when God the Son becomes one of us. So the God who spoke that entire universe into existence, the God who upholds it all by the word of his power, the God who is the ultimate explanation for why there is something and not nothing, he becomes a baby.

[39 : 36] The one who made us becomes one of us. And our reading from Hebrews describes that so beautifully as it quotes from Sam 8.

So as we read from Hebrews 2, it's quoting from Sam 8. It's been testified somewhere, Sam 8, what is man that you're mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels.

You've crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now, putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside of his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Then verse 9, but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus. All pointing to the fact that God the Son has become one of us.

It speaks there of him being made a little lower than the angels. And theologians describe that in the language of condescension, sometimes in the language of humiliation, all in the sense of coming down, of being brought low.

[40 : 40] And Jesus, the one who created the angels, is now for a time made lower than them. And that's definitely what was described in Luke chapter 2, which John read. You have the angels filling the sky with their glory in a dirty manger.

While all the time Jesus lies unnoticed in a dirty manger. And to understand all of this a little bit more, we need to think in terms of a microscope.

Because a microscope reveals what we're made of, the fact that actually we're made up of tiny particles, fragile cells that divide and align.

It's also intricate. It's all so microscopic. It's also fragile. And anybody here who is maybe this year who's had something difficult with their health to go through will have known and realized just how fragile we are.

And so I want you to think about what's been described before us. Think about what's happening. I want you to think about the massive universe stretching out above Bethlehem.

[41 : 54] And I want you to think about the tiny baby lying in a manger. And nine months before that, that tiny baby was an even tinier embryo that you would have needed a microscope to see.

Now he's a vulnerable newborn baby, totally dependent on his mother's nourishment while he was in her womb. Now totally dependent on her care as he's born into the world.

So you've got this vast, star-filled sky. You've got a tiny baby. You've got millions of galaxies beaming light in every direction for millions and millions of miles.

And at the same time, you've got the tiny veins and capillaries carrying the blood of this baby as his wee heart frantically beats to keep him alive. You've got the scale and magnitude of the universe that takes your breath away.

You've got the baby's lungs breathing in and out, keeping him alive as he cries and feeds and sleeps and wakes. And the sky and the manger, the telescope and the microscope are both telling you who Jesus is.

[43 : 08] The sky shows you what he made. The manger shows you what he became. The sky shows you his glory. The manger shows you his mission.

The sky shows you that he is beyond you. The manger shows you that he's come to meet you. The sky shows you his magnitude. The manger shows you his mercy.

Sometimes Christians have been a bit scared of telescopes and microscopes. So people have been afraid that the great discoveries of high-energy physics or of microbiology are going to undermine the Bible.

And sometimes that's people's basis for rejecting Christianity. They think, well, Christianity and science can't live side by side. I have to choose one or the other and science seems more robust and more persuasive.

So often people think that these are things that we have to either ignore or be afraid of. That's never true. It's never been true.

[44 : 22] Just a wee research of history will tell you that actually the whole reason why we have telescopes and microscopes and universities and all these research centres being established in the Western world over the past 500 years is because of the influence of the Christian faith.

So many of the greatest discoveries of history have come through those who had such firm faith in God. And a friend of mine who's had a long career in microbiology was once telling me that the more he discovered of the intricacies of how DNA and all of these things work, the more he recognised that the existence of God is an ontological necessity.

In other words, nothing can be explained without him. And so we don't need to be scared of telescopes and microscopes. And what I want us to actually see is that they are actually great friends of the Christian theologian.

The Bible has always said that if you want to get an idea of how big and glorious God is, you need to use a tool. That tool is the universe.

It's the universe that will declare to you the glory of God. In other words, if you want to think about how big God is, you need the universe. And one thing that every discovery of physics has shown us that every generation before us has underestimated the size of the universe.

[45 : 55] We keep seeing and discovering more and more and more. And of course the theological consequence of that is that we have always underestimated how big God is.

And that's one of the things I absolutely love about the discoveries of space and physics and the number of stars and the number of galaxies. Because every time our understanding of that gets bigger, I realise that the glory of God is beyond what I had imagined it to be.

And the Bible also says that if you want to understand more of the care and interest of God, you need to become a biologist. You need to look at the petal of a flower. You need to think about the number of hairs on your head.

And so in the magnificent discoveries of physics, we see an astonishing outworking of God's power creating the universe. In the beautiful intricacy of chemistry and biology, we see the extraordinary balance of life that God has given to us.

And sometimes when we see these big discoveries, when you kind of see how big the world is or you see how tiny subatomic particles are, it can overwhelm us.

[47 : 09] But it does not overwhelm God. I read a brilliant quote this week from Thomas Chalmers. He was a minister, he was a Scottish minister about 200 years ago.

He was probably the most famous Scotsman in his time. There's a statue of him on George Street in Edinburgh. And he spoke about this. He was speaking about the vastness of the universe.

People were like, oh, what does that mean for our faith? And he was saying, you've got nothing to worry about. Because speaking about God, he said, magnitude does not overpower him. Magnitude cannot escape him. And variety cannot bewilder him.

Of course it doesn't. It's all the work of his hands. So if the telescope stretches you further and further into that vast universe that you cannot take in, and if the microscope draws you deeper and deeper into the magnificent intricacies that you cannot unravel, then that's a very good thing theologically. It's a very good thing theologically.

And the reason it is good theologically is because it shows you just how far Jesus has come for you.

[48 : 27] God the Son, who is above this vast universe that our minds cannot take in, that he created, has come down to meet you in the fragile intricacy of a newborn baby.

That's what's been described in the birth narratives in the Gospel. And that's what we are thinking about as we celebrate Christmas. And Jesus took that journey because he wants to join us on the journey that we all have to take.

The journey that takes us through life. And Hebrews 2 describes that so, so beautifully. Let me read some of the verses there.

And therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself partook of the same things. In other words, because we are humans with flesh and blood, he became like us. He became one of us.

And you see further down, it speaks of him being made like his brother in every respect, made just like you. And that means that as you think through every stage of your existence, Jesus is saying, I'll come with you on that journey.

[49 : 52] And one of the things that's amazing about looking out over all of you, looking out over the population of our island, looking out over the population of the whole globe, we came on the same journey.

We were all in our mother's womb at one point. All a tiny microscopic collection of cells rapidly dividing and arranging and growing until a wee heartbeat started.

And after a few weeks starting to wriggle, fluttering away in a mother's womb and then growing bigger and bigger.

And we all took that journey. Jesus says, I'll come with you. And so he too was conceived in Mary's womb, taking the journey that you took.

We were all infants. Every one of you was a newborn baby, a helpless newborn baby, totally dependent on the care of others. You would not be sitting here today if it were not for the care that was taken of you by the people who were surrounding you when you were born.

[51 : 10] And into that cradle of helplessness that every human child is born into, Jesus says, I'll come with you.

And he too was that helpless baby dependent on the nourishment and care of others. He grew into a child and experienced all that childhood brings, learning to walk, learning to talk, stumbling, laughing when things go well, crying when things go wrong.

Taking in the vast world around him, recognizing the face of his parents, siblings, friends, understanding that if you bang two things together, it makes a noise.

That if you roll something that's round down a hill, it'll move. And all the other things that you discovered, that I discovered as we go on that journey, Jesus says, I'll come with you.

We've all, nearly everybody in here has moved into that stage of adolescence, teenage years, best and worst years of people's lives for different reasons.

[52 : 22] Brilliant because you're getting older, you're getting stronger, you're getting faster, you're getting wiser, you understand more. And your gifts and talents are being fanned into flame.

Jesus took that journey at the same time as you hit your teenage years, you discover that the world is not as nice a place as you thought it was when you were we. And you realize that there's a whole pile of injustice and suffering in the world around us in our lives as well.

As we walk through that journey, Jesus says, I'll come with you. Most of us now are in adulthood with all the privileges and responsibilities that that brings, the opportunities and the challenges that that brings.

Jesus says, I'll come with you. And in that adulthood, we face trials and pressures and temptations. Jesus says, I'll come with you.

And he experiences them all as well. We experiences bruises, pain, suffering. Jesus says, I'll come with you.

[53 : 37] All of that means that at every point in your experience, Jesus will meet you. There's never a moment in your life, never a moment from when you were conceived until right now.

Never a moment when you do not matter to him. And there's never a moment when he does not know what it's like. And that journey of life culminates in death.

Jesus says, I'll go there too. But here it's a wee bit different. Here there's more because in that death, Jesus didn't just say, I'll come with you.

He said, I'll go there for you. And Hebrews describes that in the language of a high priest.

And so since the children shed in flesh and blood, he particular same things that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death. He did that as a high priest. Now, what that's speaking about is the idea of representation, the fact that he did something in your place.

[54 : 46] He did something instead of you. He did something for you. And that's the very depth, the lowest point of his condescension of his humiliation.

He went all the way to death. But by doing that, he destroys the power of death. That's what's proved in the resurrection. And that's why now we don't worship some guy who lived 2000 years ago.

We worship Jesus who is risen and exalted at the right hand of God. That is the central cardinal truth of the Christian faith. Now, Jesus is crowned with glory and honor because of everything that he suffered, because of everything that his death accomplished.

He went under the power of death. He did not stay there. He broke that power. He died in our place, tasting death for everyone.

Now he's at the right hand of God, back where he belongs, exalted over the heavens and the earth.

[55 : 57] And he's calling us to come to him. And this is where we see a crucial change in that journey that we all have to take.

As you think of that journey from the womb to infancy, to childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, you can think of it a wee bit maybe like this, like kind of just these stages of life dashed lines.

You've got the womb, you've got infancy, you've got childhood, you've got adolescence, you've got adulthood. I'll write it here. Those who don't come to church normally will discover that my writing is amazing.

Childhood, adolescence, I can't even spell it. And adulthood, adult. I can't even spell adult for the looks of it now. There we go. So there we go.

So there's the stages of your journey, right? Jesus says, I'll come with you there. And he goes into the womb of his mother. He says, I'll come with you there. Born as an infant.

[57 : 01] He says, I'll come with you there. Into childhood. Entering adolescence, he says, I'll come with you there too. And into adulthood, he says, I'll come with you.

At every step, Jesus says, I will come with you. And then we hit death.

And at that point, we hit a crossroads. Because now Jesus stands victorious over death.

He's been raised from the dead. We sang about that in Psalm 16. And if we don't believe that Jesus is risen, then the Christian faith has got nothing. It all centers on his resurrection.

He stands victorious over death. And now he is exalted here, offering salvation to everyone.

[58 : 10] And so what that means is that he's walked with you through every reality of human experience. And again and again and again, he has said, I will come with you.

But at that crossroads of eternity, and at that question of what happens next, that question of eternal life or eternal death, Jesus is not saying, I'll come with you.

Jesus is saying, will you come with me?

Will you come with me? That is what the gospel is all about.

That is why Jesus was born so that he could die and so that he could rise again and so that he could offer that eternal life to everyone. And whatever stage in life you are at, you don't need to ask Jesus to come with you because he has come with you. He's met us.

[59 : 28] But for us to go with him, we are the ones who have to do something.

We have to respond. And he is saying to you tonight, will you come with me?

And I want you to just think about that. And I want you to imagine that you're standing under the stars again. I want you to think about the vastness of the universe.

I want you to think about the fact that there is something and not nothing. I want you to think about what is ultimate reality? What is ultimate truth? Is there a God out there? And the Bible is saying yes, there is, but he's not out there.

He's actually come to meet you. He's come to stand alongside you. He's come to die in place of you. He's come to give you life. And he is saying to you, to you all tonight, will you come with me?

[60 : 31] And do you know the amazing thing about the Gospel is that there is only one thing, one thing that you need to do in return to respond to that. One thing. Do you know what you have to do?

You have to say yes. So you don't need to renovate your life. And you don't need to learn tons about the Bible.

And you don't need to fix everything that's gone wrong. And you don't need to become a better person. And you don't need to do any of these things. And whatever hurdle looks like it's lying in front of you, it's an illusion. Because all you need to do is say to Jesus, yes, Lord, I want to come with you.

That is the message of the Gospel. That is why Jesus came. That is the most important, most beautiful and most joyful thing I will ever be able to tell you about.

Jesus is saying to you, come with me. And I hope all of us are saying, let's do it. Amen.

[61 : 40] We are going to sing together as we conclude. Two songs that have very similar titles. The first one is called, come all you unfaithful. And the second one is called, oh come all you faithful.

And the two songs actually sit side by side beautifully because they both describe the posture that we have as we come to Jesus. The first one speaks of the fact that we don't come to Jesus as those who are successful or clever or wise or strong.

We come in our weakness. And that's how Jesus calls us, to come to him in our weakness to find all the healing that we need. And then the second song, oh come all you faithful, speaks about the joy and triumph that the Gospel gives us.

And so these two songs together are telling you that you can come to Jesus as you are in all your weakness and with every mistake that you've made. And they're also telling you that when you come to Jesus, you will find joy and peace that nothing can compare with.

And so I think these two songs are wonderful for us to sing together as we close. So we're going to stand and we're going to sing and we're going to belt it out to God's peace.

[63 : 23] Oh come, glad and waiting, once weary of praying, come see what your God has done.

Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you.

Oh come, turn and broken, come with fears unspoken, come see the stop is perfect love.

Oh come, guilty and hiding, once there is no need to run, see what your God has done.

Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you.

[64 : 55] Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you.

He's the Lamb who was given, slain for our pardon, His promise is peace for those who believe.

He's the Lamb who was given, slain for our pardon, His promise is peace for all who believe.

Oh come, though you have nothing, come, He is the Offering, come see what your God has done.

Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you.

[66 : 25] Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you.

Oh come, holy faithful, joyful and chai ammen, oh come, ye, oh come, ye to death in heaven.

Come and behold Him, born and king of Him, oh come, let us adore Him, oh come, let us adore Him, oh come, let us adore Him, Christ is born.

God of God, I know of mine, glory and voice of that word.

Hey Lord, be God and not be Him, oh come, let us adore Him, oh come, let us adore Him, Christ is born.

[68 : 16] Sing, limes of angels, sing in exultation, sing all ye citizens of heaven above.

Glory to God, glory in the highest, oh come, let us adore Him, oh come, let us adore Him, Christ is born.

Yeah, Lord, be greedy, born this happy morning, Jesus to be, we all glory Him.

Word of the Father, now in flesh appear, oh come, let us adore Him, oh come, let us adore Him, Christ is born.

I don't know if this has ever done the features before, but I just feel like going, whoa, that's just amazing, amazing. Let me pray and then I'll just say a few words.

[69 : 55] Father, we just, we just thank you so, so much that you sent your Son Jesus to be our Saviour. And we pray that every one of us would know the joy and peace and hope that you want us all to have in Him.

And so bless us as we go on together. Bless us this week may it be a time of great joy for everyone here and for everyone in our community.

And may you be our guide and our rock and our light and our strength today, this week and for the rest of our lives. Amen. Please take a seat.

And so just to say a couple of things, we're going to have tea, coffee, there's mild apple juice, mince pies, baking, chocolates, all sorts. So we've got two stations.

So if you're going to go to the back, start off at the table and take a plate, load it up with mince pies and stuff, then go to the hatch and get your beverage of choice. And then do the same at this end.

[71 : 00] We can kind of queue along the front here and you kind of go from this side of the table to the end and just again fill up your plate and then take a tea, a coffee or a mild wine.

Just before we do that though, I think we should just take a moment to say a massive thank you to our incredible musicians for a wonderful night and for all they do for our church. So thank you very much indeed.

Last of all, I just want to say a massive, massive thank you for coming. I cannot tell you the joy it is to stand here and to see nearly every seat filled.

So thank you for coming and I hope you all have an absolutely amazing Christmas and may God bless you all. Thank you. you you