

Christmas Service

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[0 : 0 0] To save us. If you just think about the things that we look forward to about Christmas. So at Christmas, normal things change.

If you're anything like in our house, especially if you're a child, you might be used to thinking, can I have more chocolate? Can I have another biscuit? And someone often says no. But then at Christmas, it all changes.

And there's just a box of chocolates out. And there's sweets everywhere. And you're allowed to watch more TV than normal. And there's just treats everywhere.

And you can stay up later. All these things change. And it's as though we want Christmas because we want to be saved from normal life. Okay? Secondly, another thing that happens at Christmas is we start seeing our relatives much more than normal.

Who's coming tomorrow? How long are they staying? How far are we driving? Are we nearly there yet? Who even are these people? And so it's as though we want Christmas to stop to save us from growing apart from other people.

[1 : 0 5] And Christmas is the time we see them again. And then we get all this extra stuff, don't we? Amazing, special, extra food. We get Christmas crackers so the whole thing goes off with a bang.

We get all these gifts and presents to play with. Things that are new. Things that are better. And it's as though we want Christmas to save us by making everything bigger and better than before.

So we put all this pressure on Christmas. We want it to be just right. We want to buy everything. We want to see everyone. We want Christmas to be the best time of year.

And by the time we get there, some of us are exhausted. It's almost as though we want Christmas to be the thing that saves us. That's a lot of pressure on one day. Is Christmas really going to save us?

Well, in our true story from the Bible that Lushman just read for us, we heard about Joseph. We love the sweet pictures, don't we, of the nativity of Mary and Joseph on the bales of hay, looking pristine in their beautiful clothes.

[2 : 0 8] The baby in the manger. The lovely couple who faced the odds together with just a donkey. But it almost wasn't the case. It was moments away from being the sad Christmas.

No Joseph. Mary and Joe, they were engaged to be married. The village knew that they were going to get married. The families were pleased. The date was set.

So we've got Joseph here. And you can see how he would have been really happy that he was getting married to Mary. Everyone was pleased. And then Joseph realised that Mary was pregnant.

He noticed. I mean, what was in his Christmas shopping? Let's just have a look. She's brought home nappies. What else is in there?

Wet baby wipes. Yeah. Some sort of nappy cream. Yeah. Okay, we get the idea. What? Him and Mary never even shared a milkshake yet.

- [3 : 11] So he knew he wasn't the dad. And he didn't much care who was. Soon everyone was going to know. Now Joseph didn't want to embarrass Mary. He cared. He was a good guy. He just decided he'd quietly leave Mary. There he is writing out his card. He'd write her a card.
- He was breaking off the engagement. It says, I think we should just be friends. No fuss. He wouldn't go around telling everyone. He'd just do what he could.
- Joseph needed Christmas to save him. Just one sleep. And then he would call the whole thing off. We haven't tested this in advance.
- Off he goes to bed. But you know what? It was the most important sleep of his life. Because he had a dream. And in the dream, an angel spoke to him.
- [4 : 12] That's what we just heard about. At first it would have been more like a nightmare. Because whenever people have met angels, when we look at the Bible, in Bible history, it's terrifying to see an angel.
- But it was easy for Joseph. Because he just slept it off. He's still asleep. Now I don't have an angel. Okay. So can you give him the angel's message? Okay. I'll read it to you.
- It's this. Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. So we're going to summarize it. If you guys on this side, okay, you're going to say, marry Mary.
- Marry Mary. And you're going to do a heart shape. Okay. Marry Mary. Okay. In a minute. In a minute. Okay. And you guys, what are you guys doing? You're going, he's God's baby.
- Okay. He's God's baby. That's the message. So let's make sure Joseph gets the message. What should he do? Marry Mary. Whose is the baby? He's God's baby.
- [5 : 11] What should he do? Marry Mary. Whose is the baby? He's God's baby. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Joseph is startled.
- What? Really? Mary hasn't found another man? No. God has found Mary. So Joseph could marry her, even if no one else believed him.
- So Joseph, you can marry her. Hooray! No need to send that card. So, back he goes to sleep again.
- Because the angel has more for Joseph. Let me read the next bit. The angel says, She will give birth to a son. You will name him Jesus. Give him that name.
- Because he will save his people from their sins. So we need to make sure Joseph gets that message as well. So, this side, you're going to point at Joseph and say, Call him Jesus.
- [6 : 14] And you side, this side, when you're going to tell him how he saves us, you're going to say, From our sins. And point at your hearts. So, what should he call him? Call him Jesus.
- How does he save us? From our sins. What should he call him? Call him Jesus. How does he save us? From our sins. We hadn't planned that bit.
- It's a bit freaky. Right, fine, great, okay. So, the baby's name is chosen by his father. And it's Jesus. His father is God. And he says, Call him Jesus.
- Okay. So, what are you going to call him, Joseph? In our silent production? Jesus. And why are you going to call him that? Because it means?
- God saves. It's brilliant. Thanks so much. Now, we're going to let Joseph off now. Okay. But what fantastic news. Applaud. Brilliant. God. That doesn't happen often.
- [7 : 12] Well done. Okay. So, let's try and think about what that means. Let me tell you about three sisters. This is a true story about Molly and Daisy and Zoe.

They're three sisters. Molly and Daisy are twin sisters. And Zoe is their older sister. Now, when Molly and Daisy were just six years old, they went on a sand bank on holiday in Norfolk in England.

And they were playing on this huge beach. Okay. They're the three girls. And they saw, I don't know whether you can see it on the picture there, on the screen, there's just some objects in the distance.

That's actually an old shipwreck on the beach. And they saw it, and they went across to explore it across the sand. They were playing her up among the shipwreck. But it's a huge sand bank.

And the tide came in, and they got stuck. So, they were left, with the tide come in, and the three girls stuck, and they were just clinging on to the only thing that was still floating.

[8 : 09] There was a buoy floating, and they were clinging on for dear life, as the tide swept past them, stronger and stronger, and no way out. Now, the Bible says that our sin is a bit like that storm was that day.

Our sin sweeps in, and it puts us in terrible danger. We were made to live in God's world and enjoy it, but instead, we've wrecked it when we say to God, Shub off God, I'm in charge, and no to your rules.

And God has to judge our sin. So, we all live under the judgment of God, waiting for his day of justice to sweep in, and it will sweep us away. But God loves us, so he sent Jesus to rescue us from our sins.

So, just think back to those girls, Zoe and Molly and Daisy. They were clinging on to that buoy, as the water rushed past, but eventually, it was too much for them.

And Zoe and Molly, they lost their grip on the buoy, and they were swept away in the sea, in the current. But somebody had seen it happen. There was a man, Mike Darby, who was working for the lifeboats that day, and he spotted the girls going out to play on the shipwreck, and when he saw the tide coming in, he got out on the lifeboat, with his crew, after them.

[9 : 24] And when he got near, just as he got near, he saw them lose their grip on the buoy, and get pulled away by the sea, and he jumped straight into the sea, and he was in all his kits, and he was in metal boots, and he was in a heavy outfit, but he jumped in, and he swam against the tide, and he said it was the hardest swim of his whole life.

But he got them, and he took hold of them, and he brought them out onto the lifeboat. And then he went back into the water to the buoy, and he got Daisy out as well, who'd been clinging on. And all three of the girls were rescued.

Now, that was six years ago, and it was a wonderful rescue. And just five days ago, Daisy and Molly went to see Mike Darby, and they went to give him a Christmas present.

They're both 18 years old now, and they wanted to go and say thank you, because he rescued them when nobody else could. And he said it was brilliant to talk to them, and find out what they were doing now, six years later, from him having saved their lives.

It was a brilliant rescue. So it was a great story to hear about this Christmas, about them seeing their rescuer again. And we hear in the Bible that we needed saving, because of our sin.

[10 : 33] It was sweeping us away. But the baby's called Jesus, because he saves us from our sins. The storm of our sin. And for Jesus to do that, he actually had to die, so that the whole storm fell on him, and he bore it on the cross in our place, to save us from our sins.

As though when he died on the cross, like a big funnel was placed over his head, and all of our sin was placed on him, so that he could bear it, and we could be forgiven. And that means we can have life that lasts forever, saying thank you to Jesus every day, for saving us.

Now that's the first name for the baby. It's Jesus. But God gave the baby another name as well, and Luxury's going to come and read for us the next bit of what Matthew tells us happened.

It's the next few verses from Matthew chapter 1, as we learn about Jesus' next name. The second reading is from Matthew chapter 1, verses 22 to 25.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[11 : 47] When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son, and he gave him the name Jesus.

So Joseph's trusting exactly what God said, but he was given another name for the baby. He was given the name Emmanuel, and Emmanuel means God with us, because God came to live with us.

He came to be alongside us, and this is what we get saved for by Jesus. We get saved to be with God. God belongs in heaven, but he wants to be with us.

He wants us to know him. He wants us to have a friendship with him. And because Jesus saves us from our sins, we can have that friendship with God. God can be with us without us being afraid of him, but instead just knowing him and walking with him.

And that means that whatever goes on in your life, we know that God does care. And Christmas can be a hard day for some people. Maybe we remember sad things. We remember people who aren't with us.

[12 : 55] For some of us, it's a lonely time. But we know that God cares because he came to be with us. He didn't just stay away. He could have stayed away, but he came into our world, and he felt what we feel, and he cried, and he learned, and he was tempted, and he laughed, and he loved.

And it means that he will always be with his people wherever we go. He will never leave us. God became one of us to save us so that we can be with him. So that first Christmas saved Joseph, didn't it?

His marriage almost didn't happen. Now it was back on. Instead of breaking his marriage, Mary's baby, the baby he would raise, was going to save him. I hope that Christmas will be brilliant for each of us, for everyone who's here.

I hope it's going to be a magical day. I hope it's going to be a memorable day. But Christmas itself can't save us. It's Jesus, of course, who saves us.

He's still God saves. And if you ask him to come into your life and forgive your sin, then he saves you from your sin so that you can be with God.

[14 : 02] And Jesus is still Emmanuel. Through him, we can know God, and God made us to know him. So whatever else we're filling our lives with, if we don't know God, we're missing out on what God made us for.

And if we just ask him, he will come into our lives and be with us this Christmas and every day. So if you've not done that before, I'd urge you to consider it. Just ask Jesus to save you and God to be with you in your life.

By trusting in God, Jesus saves us at Christmas. If you think about why we want Christmas to save us, we want it to save us from normal life as the rules change.

But, you know, life isn't so ordinary if you've got Jesus in your life because we're in the family of the King of the Universe. So no matter how ordinary life normally seems, it could never be boring when Jesus is in your life.

Jesus can save us from growing apart because when God comes in your life and forgives you, it allows you to love and forgive others. His Spirit strengthens us to love and forgive other people so that we can be better in our family and with our friends.

[15 : 13] And he brings us into his forever family. And Jesus can save us from always wanting more, always wanting things to be bigger and better and looking forward to Christmas because everything gets new and bigger and better.

You know, when we're forgiven and loved by God, he gives us joy that we could never get from just more stuff or nicer food. He gives us joy that reaches right to the bottom of the deepest washing up bowl or the dulllest meal or the flattest battery, a joy that just will never die out.

Jesus can save us this Christmas. So let's pray together. Let me pray for us. Wow, Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for Jesus that through him you offered to save us from the great danger we're in because of our sin.

And the way he saved us was so costly to him as he died on the cross. But thanks to that, we can have complete forgiveness, no shame, no guilt, life with you without fear forever.

Thank you that in Jesus, you stepped into our world, that he is God with us, and we know you'll never leave us. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on these great promises this Christmas.

[16 : 27] Amen. Well, we're going to sing again, and we're going to sing basically my favorite Christmas song that hardly any of you know. But we did learn it two years ago on Christmas Day, and have sung it every Christmas Day since.

So, it's the Christmas song where every bit of Christmas is used to remind us of a great truth about Jesus, starting with the Christmas tree, who reminds us of people who were steadfast in their lives and upright because they trusted God every day.

So let's stand. Look out for the candy cane, my favorite verse, and Matthew will get us going.