

Christmas Day 25 December 2024 HC 3

TIS 303 Hark the herald angels sing

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 the angelic host proclaim

Christ is born in Bethlehem *Chorus*

Chorus:

Hark the herald angels sing

Glory to the newborn King

Christ by highest heaven adored

Christ the everlasting Lord

Late in time behold Him come

Offspring of the Virgin's womb

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see

Hail the incarnate Deity

Pleased as man with men to dwell

Jesus our Emmanuel *Chorus*

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace

Hail the Sun of Righteousness

Light and life to all He brings

Risen with healing in His wings

Mild He lays His glory by

Born that man no more may die

Born to raise the sons of earth

Born to give them second birth *Chorus*

Sentence of Scripture

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. John 1.14

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

God most high, whose eternal Word chose a dwelling among us, that we might live in your presence: grant us a spirit of wisdom to know how rich is the glory you have given us, and how great is the hope to which we are called in the Word made flesh; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever **Amen**

Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. ⁹ Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalms 98

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

² **The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.**

³ He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

⁴ **Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;**

⁵ make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

⁶ **with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn — shout for joy before the LORD, the King.**

⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

⁸ **Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;**

⁹ **let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.**

Hebrews 3:1-4

¹ Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. ² He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. ³ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

John 1.1-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing

was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ 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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - John 1 - We are not worthy

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

TIS 318 Away in a manger

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay**

**The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes
I love Thee Lord Jesus look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle until morning is nigh**

**Be near me Lord Jesus I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me I pray
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with you there**

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Sentence

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.

We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

TIS 312 Once in royal David's city

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed

where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:

Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,

and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;

with the poor, despised and lowly, lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood, day by day like us he grew;

he was little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew;

and he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love,
for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him: but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high,
when his children gather round bright like stars, with glory crowned.

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things,

making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.

We who are many are one body in Christ,

for we all share in the one bread.

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying 'Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.**

We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Father as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen

The Holy Communion

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died

for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Notices

TIS 268 - Joy to the world!

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive its king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing**

**Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns; let us our songs employ;
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**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.**

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Sermon - We are Not Worthy - John 1:1-14

9 Years ago a seriously bad film was released called "Wayne's World" If you have never seen it, my suggestion is: don't bother. In it, two lovable losers, Wayne and Garth, meet their heavy metal idols, Alice Cooper and Aerosmith, they bow down and plead, "We're not worthy! We're not worthy!" This is the way that I felt when I came to face John 1 to prepare a sermon for this morning. I'm not worthy! I'm not worthy.

This passage packs so much theology into so few verses. I studied theology for some 4 or so years, and you would be hard pressed to do more than touch the surface of these verses in those 4 years, so I haven't a hope of giving it any credit this morning in the couple of hours I have to preach. It is not even a passage where you can pick out a key verse and just preach from that - every verse is just so full of meaning. All I will try to do is just give a feel for the great themes that the passage raises, and see how far we get.

The chapter starts with those immortal words "In the beginning" These words are designed to take you right back to the beginning of the Bible, to the first verse of *Genesis*, which starts "In the beginning, God" *Genesis* makes it clear that at the beginning, all that existed was *God*, and nothing because *God* hadn't created anything. When John tells us that the Word was there at the beginning, this tells us that the Word has to be *God*. John makes this explicit in the next phrase - the Word was *God*, but then throws us into confusion by saying the Word was with *God*, so there is some distinction between the Word and *God* the Father.

The next point that John makes is that all things made were through the Word. As we read through *Genesis*, we read that *God* spoke and the different elements of the universe came into being, from light and darkness through to animals and mankind. The Word is not just the words that *God* speaks, but the very expression of *God*, and a very powerful expression as through the Word the entire universe was created. Also, did you notice that John always refers to the word as "he' He was with *God* in the beginning, through him all things were made and so on. The Word is not an it, but has a distinct personality, and in fact is a distinct person, even though he is very close to *God* - as close to *God* as my words are to me, and yet distinct from *God* in a way that my words are not distinct from me.

The Word also has a special relationship with humanity. John says: In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The Word not only created the universe, he is life, and gives all life to the universe, and in particular to humankind. The only reason we live and breathe is because the Word has given us life, and in fact is our life. The men's Bible study group that I am part of has had a really lengthy debate about what exactly this means and how it works out, so I'm not going to try and work it out this morning - I really think there it requires a detailed study of many passages from the Bible, and we don't have time for that this morning.

John goes on to say that the Word, the life, is also the light of all mankind. There are many depths of meaning to this, but at the very least, light allows us to see the way we should go - the path ahead. If you don't have light you are likely to wander from the path and get lost, geographically, as well as morally and spiritually.

John then moves from the metaphoric language to the more concrete - or at least I think I have a better idea of what he is talking about. He talks a bit about John the Baptist, and then he makes it very clearly that the Word that he has been talking about is Jesus, the Jesus who John the Baptist was preparing the way for.

From what we already know of Jesus from the other gospels, from Matthew, Mark and Luke, we know that Jesus was even then coming into the world. John says that the Word, the word who with God and was God, through whom everything was made, became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John and his original readers had seen his glory, the glory of this one and only Son, who came from the God the Father, full of grace and truth. John had spent 3 years of his early life with Jesus, as one of Jesus's inner circle of 3 closest disciples. John personally saw Jesus's grace and truth and understood his glory as God's one and only son, both before and after Jesus's death and resurrection, and for living as Jesus's disciple for 60 or so years afterwards.

From this experience, John tells us that all who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John understood that faith in Jesus would restore our relationship with God. When God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created the universe and gave humans life, God intended us to have unending life walking with God as Adam

and Eve did before they were cast out of the Garden of Eden because of their rebellion against God, their sin. As a consequence, all humans experience death and do not experience the close relationship that God intended to have with mankind.

God's plan to restore things to the way they should be was to send Jesus, his Word to earth on the first Christmas in that stable in Bethlehem. 30 or so years later, Jesus, the Son of God, who never rebelled against God, never sinned, was executed and suffered a death that he should never have suffered because he was the true light that gives light to everyone, in other words, completely sinless.

Yet, not everyone received Jesus. In fact, John says the world did not recognize him. Even his own people, the Israelites or Jews, did not receive him, and would reject the eternal life that he offered them.

This brings us back to where I started this message. Wayne and Garth claimed that they were unworthy to stand in the presence of their heavy metal idols, and whether we think so or not, we are unworthy to stand in the presence of God. We all bear the guilt of our rebellion against God and have no right to stand in the presence of God, and we would never be able to except for the fact that Jesus, God's word, the true Light, came into this world as a baby in Bethlehem, and grew up and lived perfectly sinless, to die on the cross taking the punishment we deserve, and rise again three days later to live the risen life that we can all have, if only we put our trust in him.

We are not worthy, no one is worthy, except Jesus, God's word who came to earth, lived, died and lived again so that we can be worthy, just by putting our trust in him.

Have you put your trust in Jesus, God's word?