

Carol Service Part 2

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you, Ali. Thank you, everybody who's read for us and contributed and sang for our carol service. I really appreciate it.

So, carol services are part of our preparing for Christmas. And there's lots of things, of course, to be done. Many of us will have lists of various jobs and tasks and requirements to get ready for Christmas.

And some of them can be quite taxing in that sense. I find one of the most difficult things in preparing for Christmas is finding the right gift for each person.

I don't know about you whether that's the case as well. It's easy in one sense when you're buying a present for a child. That's not too hard. You can sort of imagine the things they want.

Or they will tell you, of course, what they want. Or post you a letter to say what they want. And when you start to deal with folk as they get older relatives and older grown-up children and so on and so forth, it can be really hard.

[1 : 02] And one of the problems, of course, is that there's such a staggering choice of potential gifts. And wherever you go, you're bombarded with this sort of buy them this perfume, buy them that aftershave, buy them this jewelry, buy it.

And you just find yourself flooded with so much choice. It was so easy, wasn't it? When some of you were children and you had a piece of coal and a tangerine. That was great, wasn't it?

That was super. You didn't have to worry about anything then to buy a present. Nowadays, the choice is so great. And, of course, you want to buy a present that the person wants, don't you?

You don't want to just buy them any old tat that sort of they're going to look at and say, oh, thank you so much. I really wanted, I'll be careful what I say, those socks again this year that I've had for the last 15 years.

They're just what I need. No, we want to buy them something that they feel that we've put some thought into. Something that they want. Something that they'll keep. Something that is going to do them good.

[2 : 00] And it can be very stressful shopping. Perhaps, and I'm sure for most of the men here, you haven't done your Christmas shopping yet. And you're still going to go out tomorrow or Tuesday to get some last few things.

We don't want to give people what they don't want. I wonder, have you stopped to think for a moment, what can we give to God?

What does He want for Christmas? What gift would God like? When it comes to being the person who has absolutely everything, then that really is God.

Three wise men brought gifts, didn't they, to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And our tradition of giving gifts to one another stems from that original giving of gifts.

But we need to think and consider, what does God want? When I ask you that question, perhaps you may be thinking in your own mind something along these lines.

[3 : 10] You might respond by saying, well, why should I give anything to God? What has God ever given to me? I give gifts to my children because, of course, I love them and care for them.

I give them gifts to my wife or my husband and members of my family because they give gifts to me. We give gifts because we receive gifts. What has God ever done for me? What has God ever given me? I can't think of a single thing.

But you couldn't be more wrong. Everything that you have, God has given you. Whether you recognize it or not, whether you feel that you've made for yourself a career or made for yourself a home or made for yourself a family, the very fact of the matter is that God is the creator of this world.

Everything in this world he has given. And you, yourself, and me, we have life because God has given us life. And the older that we get, of course, the more we should realize that as we see around about us those who are dying.

Why is it that you're still alive? Is it because you're better than those people? Is it because you've lived a healthier diet than those people? Well, the reality is that you and I are alive today because God has given us life.

[4 : 25] Everything that we have, God has given us. We owe God everything that we have. He's done more for you than you could possibly ever realize.

And certainly, he has given to you what is the most wonderful gift of all. But of course, there may be some of us as well who say, well, you're asking, what can I give to God?

But God doesn't need anything, does he? There's nothing I can give to God if the world is his and he created it and owns it. He's self-sufficient. He doesn't need anything that I could give him.

People think that may be religion. And there are many religions like that, that think that they need to give things to God. To somehow make him happy with them or to appease him. They do things for God or give things to God, whatever they may be.

Because they think that that's what he wants. But that isn't the case because God doesn't need anything. But he does want something. God does want something this Christmas.

[5 : 29] God does want something through the year. Not just at Christmas. It's lovely that you're here and I'm glad you're here. And this may be the only time that you're here. Or in a church or singing the praises of God.

I'm glad you're here. But God doesn't just want something for Christmas. All the way through the Bible we find again and again being taught and revealed to us what it is that God really wants.

And Jesus of course is God's son who came into this world. And is the one who declares to us and makes known to us what God is like. Also makes known to us what God does like.

Several occasions and several places. But I'm just going to pick out one. One place where Jesus tells us what God wants. And he's talking about himself and about his coming into the world.

I, says Jesus, have come down from heaven. Not to do my own will. But to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me. That I shall lose none of all those he's given me.

[6 : 36] But raise them up at the last day. And here's what God wants. For my father's will. God the father. This is what he wants. My father's will. Is that everyone who looks to the son.

And believes in him. Shall have eternal life. And I will raise them up. At the last day. So what is it that God wants? Well it seems here from what Jesus says here.

This is my father's will that everyone looks to the son. In other words, God the son. Jesus Christ. God wants us to look at Jesus. He wants us to focus on him.

Now of course as we know at Christmas. Our attention is pulled here and there and everywhere. We get out the TV times or whatever. And we underline the TV programs that aren't repeats.

Maybe one a page. If you're lucky. And we think I'm going to watch that. We get our diaries out. And we prepare for the people who are going to visit us. So and so are coming on Tuesday. We'll lock the door and hide behind the settee.

[7 : 38] So and so. We're going to go and visit them. And take them presents. We write in our diaries. So many things to do. We can be so busy. That we forget about the main event.

We forget about the main character. We forget about the real nub of the matter. Which is Jesus. God's son. God wants everyone. Notice that the father's will is that everyone.

Whoever we are. He wants us to look and spend some time. Considering Jesus his son. To take a serious look at him. To take our focus of all the trappings and trimmings of Christmas.

Just for a moment. To spend time really looking into. And thinking about who is this child born of a virgin. Who is this child that was born those 2,000 years ago.

How can he be so important that in fact the whole world has been affected. I wonder if you've ever done that. Have you ever really seriously taken any time to examine Jesus?

[8 : 40] Or have you just simply written him off? Just a myth. Just something for the people of the generations before us. Who didn't have science or technology. And didn't have TV. So that's why they went to church.

They were bored. Have you ever taken time seriously to examine God's son Jesus Christ? Because I would say to you that that's exactly what God wants you to do.

He wants you to look at his son. He wants you to think about him. He wants you to focus on him. And you would say well what will I see if I focus on this Jesus as God wants me to do?

What am I actually going to see there? Is there anything really of any interest or significance there that I should find? And I would say to you without a shadow of a doubt that if you take the time to think and to look seriously and to examine this son of God Jesus Christ.

Then you will find the most astonishing, marvelous, wonderful truths. Because if you examine the life of Jesus you shall find indeed that what God says about his son is true.

[9 : 44] That he is God with us. In one of our readings we were told that about how 600 years before. Again in the prophet Isaiah the people were told that the virgin will be with child and give birth to a son and you will call him Emmanuel which means God with us.

And if anybody who is really serious, if anybody is sincere and will look at the life of Jesus they will come to the conclusion. They will see that truly this was a man who was more than a man.

And more than a great leader or religious teacher. But here was someone who was God in the world. That's why Jesus was born.

That we might hold God up to scrutiny. That we might find and see that here is God in our midst. Here is a God who is not indifferent about this world.

Here is a God who cares and is concerned about the people of this world every single one. Here is a God who has come to save the world.

[10 : 56] I'm sure all of us would agree. Whatever our difference is. We would all agree this world needs saving. Whether we think it needs saving from environmental chaos. Whether we need saving from atomic warfare.

Whether we think it needs saving from poverty or whatever it may be. I'm sure we'd all pretty well agree that this world needs saving. And I think all of us as well would be pretty sure on the same page.

And say there's nobody that we can think of on the face of this earth today. Who's got what it takes to save the world. There's a lot of hot air. A lot of conferences. A lot of talking.

A lot of delegations. A lot of politics. Boris. There's nobody. Not even Boris. Can save the world.

God. And if you take time to look at the person of Jesus Christ. You'll find there. One who is truly God. And has a track record.

[11 : 54] A proven track record. Of saving. Just read about his life. Read about the people that he meets with. The people who were blind. Who after meeting with him can see again.

For the first time in their lives. You'll read about the people who were paralyzed. Who couldn't walk. Had to be carried around everywhere. And when they've met with Jesus. They take up their mat.

And they start to walk. You'll read about the deaf who hear. The dumb who speak. The diseased. Who were the unclean and outcasts of society. Because of their leprosy. Who he healed and cleansed.

You'll even find there. People who were dead. That he raised to life. And it's not bumpkin. And it's not myth. And it's not legend. It's real.

We've got four historical eyewitness accounts. Of the life of Jesus. That's more than any other historical person. In history. And they all say the same thing.

[12 : 54] When people met with this man. They found out that he was more than a man. That he was God. Here's somebody to believe in. Here's somebody to trust.

Here's somebody to put our faith in. Here's somebody who won't let us down. Here's somebody who again and again. Is unbelievably good. So God wants you to examine.

To take the time. To look at this Jesus. And see who he is. That he is someone that you can believe in. Because that's the second thing isn't it. For my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him.

Believes in him. Puts their faith in him. Trusts in him. I'm confident that if you took the time to focus and to look and examine the life of Jesus. You would find there every reason to believe in him.

If you look at the life of Jesus. I dare you to look at the life of Jesus seriously. Not just so that you can dismiss him over your own prejudices.

[14 : 01] Not so you can sort of just get that out the way. But I dare you. If you look at the life of Jesus. You'll not find a single flaw. You'll not find a skeleton in his cupboard.

You'll not find a fault. You won't hear an ugly word. You won't see an act of unkindness. What will strike you in the life of Jesus when you examine and look at him is here is love.

Overflowing. Unhuman love. We talk about being humane. When we talk about kindness and love.

Dear friends. That's just madness. What is humanity? What is it that is humane? What is human like? Human like in this world is cruelty, greed, pride, selfishness, jealousy.

That's what being human is isn't it? Being faulty. We say to err is human. We see that's the real humanity of Christ.

[15 : 01] In that he was touched. And felt. He wept. He laughed. He experienced all the very depths of emotion. But here as God we see most of all that there is love. And you won't say well love is just a social construct.

It's just a word. It doesn't really exist. It's usually because of selfishness or something else. We love those who love us. But here we have a man who is God. Who loves those who not only hated him.

But who murdered him. Who tortured him. Who drove nails through his hands and his feet. If you want to know what a person is really like.

Then put them in a tight spot. And Jesus when he is being crucified. Is in the tightest of spots. Facing the most awful and painful and cruel of deaths.

And what flows from his mouth. Does he rant and rage. And I'll have my revenge on you. Read the life of Jesus.

[16 : 03] And from his heart and his mouth. The words of a prayer. Father. Forgive them. Don't hold this against them. What?

That's. Then no man or woman would ever say that. We'd want revenge. We'd want justice. Jesus wanted forgiveness.

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the. Loud speaker. Of God. Proclaiming to this world.

That God. Is. Love. And that God. Loves. The people of this world. To make absolutely sure.

That we. Have. One in whom we can put our faith and trust. Not only did he die. With words of forgiveness on his lips. But he rose again from the dead.

[17 : 00] It's not a myth. It's not a fairy story. It's not a. It's not something that we sort of made up. Or the Christians thought about later on. It's something that was. Real.

And tangible. Over 500 people. Over the course of 40 days. Spoke with. Touched. Ate with. Drank with.

Heard. The life. Of this one who had been truly killed. But was truly alive. Not a ghost. Or a spirit. Or some sort of phantom.

So God wants you dear friend. This Christmas. And at any time. To look. And study. And examine. His son. Who he sent. Into this world. For that very purpose.

That we may see what God is like. And we will come. I believe. To the conclusion. If we are open minded enough. That here is God. In this world. A God. In whom we can believe him.

[17 : 56] Because not only is he powerful. To save. But that his heart. Is filled. With great. Love. Then you might say.

Well what's the point. What is the point. Of me spending time. Examining the life of Jesus. Yes it's what God wants me to do. But why should I bother. Why shouldn't I just get on with my life.

As it is. Why should I spend any time at all. Focusing and looking to. And thinking about Jesus. Why should I seek to. Find a reason to believe in him. What good will that do.

How will that change my life. How will that change the world. God wants you to do these things. Not so that he gets something from you. He wants you to do these things.

So that you can receive from him. The greatest gift of all. For my father's will. Is that everyone who looks to the son. And believes in him. Shall have.

[18 : 53] Shall be given. Shall receive. What? Eternal life. You're quite right. There's nothing that God needs. There's nothing that we can give him.

Or do for him. That somehow is going to make his life better. But you're fully. And completely mistaken. If you think there's nothing that you need from him. If you think you can carry on through life.

Without God. If you think you've done so far. It's a very brave man. Or woman. To look back over the past. Decades of their lives.

And say I've done really well. If you think there's nothing you need from him. That he can't give you. Then you're totally misguided. Every one of us needs eternal life.

This is the father's will. That those who look to the son. And believe in him. Shall have. Eternal life. We all need it. Because we're all going to die. I don't think any of us would disagree with that.

[19 : 53] We're all going to die. Everybody that we've known. Who's been older than us. Has died. And it's going to happen to you and me as well. We can't get away from it. No matter how much technology and science.

No matter how much medicine has improved. And we thank God for that. Every one of us will die. Every one of us without exception. But eternal life is what God promises.

And it's much more than simply life beyond death. When God speaks about. When Jesus talks about eternal life. He's talking about life as life was meant to be. Life as God intended it.

Life that is full. Life that has purpose. Life that has meaning. The gift of eternal life that God gives to everyone. Who looks to the son. And believes in him.

Is life without limits. Life lived. In joyful unity. And friendship. And relationship.

[20 : 50] With God. And so much more besides. It's the assurance that we are loved by God. And that we can trust him in every single situation that we face. The gift of God.

That he gives us eternal life. Is what we've been searching for all our lives. Whether we realized it or not. And you can't find it in the shops. And you can't find it in the Boxing Day sales.

And you can't find it online even. It's the gift that God gives. It's what we're hunting for. It's what we're searching for. It's something that is able to give to us.

The very answer. To the biggest question we have. Why am I here? You're not a mistake.

Whatever your parents may have said about you. You're not an unwanted person. You're not just somebody who slipped through the net. You're not a nothing or a nobody. You are God's creation.

[21 : 52] Made to know him. And when you find and discover that wonderful purpose. That there is a God who loves you and cares for you. A God who has made the way for you to know him through his son coming into this world.

And giving his life for you. In your place. So that you can be forgiven all that you feel guilty about. And has risen from the dead to give you life eternal.

Then you will find the answer. The trouble is isn't it. That for all of us. We spent our lives looking in the wrong place. We spent the time looking for the answers to our purpose.

In our education. In the qualifications that we can have. If only I could have a PhD. Or a BA. Or whatever it is. That would make me feel as if my life was worth living. Or maybe put it into our career. If only I could get to that MD's position.

Or that online manager's position. Or if I could only earn that 45k a year. If only I could get there. Then my life would be worth living. And I would accomplish something. And we could go on.

[22 : 55] If only I had children. If only I had this home. This house. This car. And we're all looking and searching. And we're thinking that these things. Somehow. If we can attain them. Then we can say to ourselves.

My life. Has been worth. Living. The trouble is. And you know it. And I know it. We read about people.

Who seem to have got everything that they've wanted. In the newspapers every day. They've got to be the PM. They've got to the 100,000 K a year. They've got this.

And they've got that. And what do we find them doing? We find them looking for another partner. And leaving their husband and wife. We see them finding themselves addicted to drugs.

Or alcohol. Or whatever it may be. What is that telling us? It's telling us that no matter what we try to do in this world. No matter where we seek or hunt. Or look for. Apart from God's son. We shall always be disappointed.

[23 : 50] And we shall always go away empty. God wants you to look at his son Jesus Christ. So that you can discover what God wants for you. Both in this life and in eternity.

Yes we will die. But the promise is not only eternal life. Fullness of life now. But he says this is my father's will. That everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life.

Listen. I will raise them up at the last day. In other words. This isn't the end. This world in which we live. And the things we live for. That's not the end. That's not all there is. Is this it?

No. No. I'll raise them up. There is life beyond death. Life which is not the end but a new beginning.

For every one of us will die. But every one of us can have life. Life. And all it takes. It's a look. At the son of God.

[24 : 50] Jesus Christ. I've got two things here. One is a little book. It's very easy to read. I'm sorry it hasn't got any cartoons.

For those of us who like that. It's called The Greatest Gift. It's only a few pages. Forty pages or so. Examining. Looking at. Something of the life of Jesus. But if you want to go back to the source.

If you want to really find out. Exactly what Jesus is like. Then you need to read the Bible. It's God's word. It's what God has given us. That we might know him. And enjoy him.

And find him. And I've got some copies of this Bible. If you haven't got one at home. Or you don't know where it is. Then please see me. I'll gladly give you one of these. There's several of these at the back. And there's several on the tables downstairs.

But if you want a Bible of your own. And I'd like to help you. To read that Bible. For yourself. To find. The son of God. And what God wants.

[25 : 48] For you. Then please do. Ask me. And I'll be only too glad. To give you. That gift. Let's sing our final hymn. Our final carol.

Hark. The herald angels sing. Glory. To the newborn king. 206. In our books. Please do stay. And have some tea with us.

Please. If you've got questions. Or even if you've got. Insults. Please stay. And make them known to me. That we can talk these things through together. 206.

Hark. The herald angels. Listen. Saying listen. What the angels are saying. Jesus Christ is God. 206. 206. The herald angels sing.

Glory to the human king.àì está Um Night. John Township. He's the shepherd. Estados Unidos.

[26 : 57] God and sinners, where come stand? Joy for all the nations, rise. Join the triumph of the skies.

Hear the angels proclaim. Christ is born in every land. O the herald angels sing.

O eternal you, O King. Christ, my eyes, bear the door.

Christ, the everlasting Lord. Wait in time, behold in time. Offspring of the virgin's root.

Hail him, flesh the God has seen. Hail him, God, and deisting. Jesus, when we've went to dwell.

[28 : 07] Jesus, come, Emmanuel. O the herald angels sing. The eternal you, O King.

Look at the temple, prince of peace. Hail the son of righteousness. Words and life to holy grace.

Praise with me in his grace.■■■ and glory shine.Christophe Holy française. Musil and the ■■■. enjoy his grace.

All that man who obeyed on. Caught to Ultimately. Caught to Peter. Caught to him, too. Come, the herald angels sing.

Glory to the Lord King Of these high nations come He's seen us by humble home Christ above has come, we've seen Brute in us the serpent's bear Thou display by saving power Rewind nature, love is born Thou in this communion joy Cry to us and us to die As the herald angels sing Glory to the new Lord King Lord our God, we thank you for your generosity to us in giving your son and every good thing.

[30 : 13] We pray that this Christmas, as we celebrate, as we enjoy so many things, we pray Lord that you would give to us eyes to see and to look at your son, Jesus, and find in him the greatest gift of all.

We pray, Lord, that you'd keep us safe and our families, we thank you for the food that we're about to enjoy and eat, we thank you for those who've given of it and provided it, and we pray, Lord, your continued nearness to us through this evening and into the week ahead, for we ask it in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and King. Amen.

Please do sit down. Thank you.