

CHRISTMAS
“Christmas Is...”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (24/12/2025)

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Bible Passage: Luke 2:1-14

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Christmas! Thank you for the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings.
In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

There are two types of people in the world.

- Not those who love cricket *and those who don’t.*
Not those who drink coffee *and those — who — well, I’m not sure what they do.*
Not even those who think pineapple belongs on pizza *and those who are adamant it doesn’t.*
- No. // There are those who absolutely LOVE celebrating their birthdays;
and those who are simply, not fussed.
- Word of warning — a little *public service announcement*, Christmas gift to you tonight:
If you’re not fussed on celebrating your birthday do not assume everyone else feels that way.
And if you know someone who isn’t that enthused, they still might want you to mention it,
just don’t make it into something that would rival riverfire. /
- There’s those who love celebrating their birthdays and those who don’t.
- Okay, I know it’s a bit more complicated than that. /
That there might be seasons in life in which you’re eager to celebrate and other times you’re not.
There are exceptions and extremes.
Most *little kids love celebrating their birthday —*
I know in our household there’s almost always one counting down.
I know quite a few 90-year-olds who were never particularly keen to celebrate in the past,
but once they reach *nonagenarian* status they’ll shout it from the roof tops.
- But whether you like celebrating birthdays or not, we know *how to celebrate them.*
- We might do that in all sorts of ways, but we typically know what to do.

But—I'm not sure if you've noticed, that Christmas is a very unusual type of birthday celebration.

- It **is** a birthday celebration of sorts, right? It's Jesus' birthday. /
- But it's a bit upside down and back to front. Because...
- Instead of the birthday boy getting the gifts — we give them to everyone else.
Instead of just a few select family and friends celebrating — people from every nation do.
Instead of it just spanning the person's lifetime — we've done it for over 2000 years.
And whilst normally, the one who we are celebrating is present,
the star of Christmas — Jesus — is seemingly — *at least to us* — nowhere to be seen.
- There's nothing else quite like it. // It's a bit topsy-turvy.
- Amidst all of the busyness of Christmas:
the plans, the presents, and the parties it's easy to lose sight of WHO we're celebrating.
- This isn't just an event — we're being invited to rejoice — in a person!
- The reason why our celebration of Christmas is different to any other birthday,
is because of just how *out of the ordinary* the one who we celebrate is,
and how extraordinary it is that he came to us.

There's always so much going on at Christmas.

But amidst all that we're doing, let's not miss what's really happening.

- Christmas is:
- **Surprising; Revealing: and Worth Responding To.**

SURPRISING | 우리를 놀라게 하는 은혜의 사건이고

First, Christmas is **SURPRISING**.

There's a few obvious surprises that set Christmas apart.

- I'm not sure when you had *one* angel appear, let alone a company of them. /
It was surprising that shepherds would be amongst the first to know.
And magi — who were relative outsiders — to be some of the first to see.
- *Certainly the need to make a long trek by donkey would have been pretty surprising to Mary.*
As would have been finally arriving only to find very limited accommodation options.
- But behind these easier to spot surprises, there are a few *significant* ones not to be missed.

First, Jesus is born into a surprising **context**. *Verse 1...*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

- The King of Kings, God's Son — the Saviour and Lord,
is not born into power and prestige, but was poor,
living in a land in which the Jewish people were oppressed by the Roman empire.
- The socio-political landscape was not quiet and serene as our nativity sets might portray. /

- When we read that Caesar Augustus issued a decree to kick off a census, **it wasn't** so that they could make better plans for transport, health, and education... **it was** to ensure that they could extract the maximum amount of tax that they could.
- This wasn't just filling out on a form, but was a stark reminder of who was in charge. It was particularly problematic for the Jewish people, because *a census was often paired with the requirement to make a declaration of allegiance to the Caesar as the ultimate ruler*, as a concrete expression of submission to Roman authority.
- We're due for our next census in Australia in 2026, imagine as you fill out the form online — in the knowledge this would help the government get the most money out of you, you also had to tick a box declaring absolute allegiance to the prime minister of the time.
- And if you didn't — who knows what would happen to you. Yikes!
- Yet it's right into that type of context, that a surprising claim is proclaimed: // Caesar thinks he is the LORD of the whole world, but Luke says actually, this baby, Jesus — is the true Lord. / That's quite the surprise.

But so is Jesus' **origin**. Verse 5...

He [Joseph] went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him *and was expecting a child*.

- There's quite the controversial back story to this!
- Joseph and Mary are not yet married.

- Back in Luke chapter 1, when the angel told Mary that she would have a child, Mary responded, but how can this be?! She wasn't naive. She understood basic biology. She knew the social, religious, and relational implications as well.
- And when Joseph finds out, his first response isn't, "*great, no worries — it must be a miracle!*"
- No, we're told that he's planning to break off their engagement quietly. /
- *It took a miraculous angelic appearance in a dream to convince Joseph this child was from God.* Mary and Joseph had to be persuaded that this was a miracle.

And the surprises don't stop there, *because the identity of this child is the biggest surprise of all*.

- He's not just a child. He's not merely a King. But the claim is that this is God made flesh. God has shown up and plunged himself into our world as a real human.

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the **Lord**.

- Not only is this child the long-awaited King, whose mere existence threatens to undermine the sovereignty of Caesar's rule, but this child is none other than the LORD himself.
- God became human like everyone *but he wasn't just anyone*. //
- This year with the rise of AI, it has been harder to pick what is real more than ever before. *It's hard to know if the video you are watching is authentic or something artificial.*

- *Even some of the humanoid robots that are starting to be released are looking more life-like.*
- But the incarnation — God being born as a human, is not a masquerade.
This isn't God pretending to be human. Or putting on a costume.
- Jesus truly is. In fact he still is.
- We're to be left without a doubt — he didn't appear out of nowhere with no backstory.
Mary was pregnant with Jesus. She gave birth to Jesus. He was a baby before a man. /
- At Christmas, we're remembering that:
the God of the universe once lay in a manger. /
- Whether you believe in God or not, *just think of the implications of the claim.*
- *It means:*
The one who is all-powerful became vulnerable.
The one who sustains the universe needed to be fed.
The one who is over eternity was born into history.
The one who is glorious embraced our ordinariness.
The one who is all-knowing has become knowable *to us*.
- *Christmas is wondrously surprising.*

REVEALING | 하나님을 분명히 드러내는 계시이며

But it is also **REVEALING**.

If I asked if Christmas should be everyday, I suspect *there would be a range of responses, BUT my hunch is that the overwhelming consensus — except for a very specific demographic — would be “no!”*.

- I suspect it would be “no”, because beneath the tinsel and the decorations,
Christmas can also be accompanied with a fair share of *stress, strain, pain, fights, and grief*.
- And of course, that's not just true in our own lives and hearts, but also in our world.
- There's lots of mess. We've felt the weight of some of that mess in the past few weeks.
- One of the reasons we can show up and celebrate today, even with the mess around us,
is because we're rejoicing that Jesus — the light of the world — enters into our darkness. /
Even the darkness of our own lives and hearts. /
- Not long after Jesus' birth, his life was in danger, because a murderous king ordered a violent *massacre* of children in a fleeting attempt to maintain his grip on power. /
- We *see* the evil. We *grieve* that it exists. We *long* for it to be overcome.
Remember what the angel declared? Do not be afraid!

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”

Whenever you read descriptions of angels in the Bible they're not the fluffy friends imagined in pop culture. They're described as warrior-like. *It's no wonder that the shepherds are terrified.*

- That's how Mary feels when an angel appears to her.
Joseph, too afraid when he first got the news.
But the greeting on repeat is: *Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid.*
- This isn't just a sweet pleasantry. There's *tangible* cause to not be afraid.
- Today in the town of David a Saviour — that Saviour has been born *to you*.
- *God didn't ignore our mess. He entered right into the thick of it. To save us.*

A bit over a decade ago now when I had been hit by a car, I was seeing a physiotherapist as part of my recovery. And on my very first appointment as the Physio was checking out my injuries and giving me a general look over, they had a bit of a quizzical look on their face. *They kind of wobbled my knee, looked at my feet, rotated my ankle, and said: you weren't very good at running at school were you? I said no, and then they proceeded to tell me all of the reasons why that was the case! Apparently my legs aren't made for running. Which is a bit of a downer because these are the only pair of legs that I've got. I'm kind of powerless to change it.*

Left on our own, we're powerless to truly deal with the evil in the world. Or even our own sin.

- It's like a credit card debt that has piled up and it's just impossible to pay it off.
- We're powerless to do anything on our own. But Christmas doesn't just reveal that we need saving, it's news that God has sent someone to save us. That's what a Saviour does!

- *Jesus has paved a way for true peace. Forgiveness. Because he grows up and goes to the cross for us.*
- The cross was the ultimate demonstration of Roman power,
But Christ became poor for us — giving everything up, including his very life,
so that we might become rich through him.
- Not rich in a monetary sense — but rich in life, relationship with him,
and forever citizens of his coming Kingdom. //
- It's common to not like asking for help.
But asking to be saved can cause us to be offended.
- It involves not just admitting that something is wrong,
but also that there's something wrong with us.
- But we're all in the same boat.
God doesn't ignore that or simply condemn us.
- He says: *Do not be afraid. This is good news.*

WORTH RESPONDING TO | 응답할 가치가 있는 부르심입니다

News **WORTH RESPONDING TO.**

When I was *just* a little kid, I remember fondly that on the odd occasion, like Christmas, family friends would take my brother and I along to church. Maybe someone has brought you along today! I wasn't yet a Christian, but I remember that whilst a few things seemed a bit strange and unfamiliar to me, I loved the sense of belonging but the story of Christmas at that stage — was just a story to me.

But later I came to realise something extraordinary.
Christmas isn't just recounting things that have happened.
This was good news I was invited into.

- Was it surprising? Yes!
Revealing about the world and me? Most certainly!
But if true: worthy of my attention? *How could it not be?*
- Is it worthy of yours?
- The news that Jesus IS Lord and Saviour isn't just news.
It is good news *for me and for you.* / God exists. He wants us to know him.
- His first arrival led him to the cross *for us.*
When he arrives again, he'll bring all of that work to completion.
- And as we live between those arrivals *now* — he's inviting us to respond. /

- When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, there was little space for them.
There was no room available for the King of the Universe.
- The question really at the heart of Christmas is:
How about you? Can you make room for God in your life?

Mary responded in faith.

Joseph responded in faith.

The Shepherds showed up.

The Maji — wise men — made the trek.

- And they went away proclaiming that all that they had been told was true.