

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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[0 : 00] Good morning, and this morning we are reading from Hebrews chapter 2, and starting in verse 5 we read, 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?

You made him for a little while lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he 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 honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

[1 : 21] 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 source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of 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 therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, 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 angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

[2 : 53] 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 also able to help those who are being tempted. This is the word of God.

Great. Thanks so much, Florence. Yeah, we're not doing a series on Hebrews. We're looking at a few famous carols. But why don't we pray first before we start?

Let's start. Father, thank you so much for Christmas. Thank you for the miracle of your son coming down, becoming, taking on a human nature for us.

We pray that as we think about that today, you would fill our hearts with joy. Please, whatever week we've had, yeah, do that work by your spirit deep inside us. In Jesus' name.

[4 : 00] Amen. Great. Yeah. Carols. And I'm great that I can preach on some of my favorites. I mean, carols are such a great thing.

Now, I don't know about you, Christmas is really here in Hong Kong, right? Everywhere you see Christmas trees, maybe you have them at home, and you go on the streets, and there's kind of tinsel, and you go to Nong Ping, and there's fake snow, and those kind of things.

And you hear songs everywhere, right? You go to the shopping center, and there's all this music. And, of course, there's jingle bells, and there's Last Christmas, but actually lots of carols as well.

Even last Friday, I was kind of, I was in a shopping center, I was queuing in the toilet, and they played Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Now, I don't know, but the thing is, right, we just think it's Christmas music.

It just makes you feel festive and warm. But actually, these are rich hymns of worship to Jesus, right? And they're playing it in the toilet. That's the kind of weird thing about it, right?

[5 : 04] We just often don't think about the words. It's just Christmas music. I mean, and that's for Christians. How about everyone around us? Many of them don't even think about it.

This came home to me one time very strongly. When I had just become a Christian, my first Christmas as a Christian, I went home to see my parents. Now, my parents aren't Christians, but, you know, what we did in my hometown, every Christmas Eve, people would go carol singing on the town square.

So thousands of people gathered, and no saying that maybe it's traditional, they would sing carols together, right? And my parents used to go there, and I thought, well, I love carols.

I'll go there as well and enjoy that. But actually, I really hated it when I was there. Why? Well, there were all these people here, but most of them were drunk from the parties they went to.

There was fighting. There was cursing. It just wasn't worship, right? These people, they just sang these beautiful hymns about Jesus for fun.

[6 : 07] And for me, it was so dishonoring, and so after two songs, I just couldn't stand it. I went back to the car and just waited there for my mom. Right?

And it's interesting. When she came, I mean, it was a bit of a sensitive time because I'd just become a Christian, and they didn't like it. But, yeah, so why didn't you stay?

And, well, look at these songs. And actually, she just never looked at it, right? And so she read these words like, Glory to the newborn king. Come, let us adore him.

And, no, Jesus, he was just a human. He's dead. I'm not going to adore him. And she hasn't been back since. She just never thought, What are we actually singing?

Right? And so, yeah, I want that to change. Certainly for us, right? When we hear Hark the Herald, we don't just have a warm, fuzzy feeling with Christmas trees and stuff.

[7 : 02] Actually, I want us to feel these carols, feel these songs, so that they're worship for us. And they do something for our soul, for our hearts. I mean, so, yeah, so I think this is a great series.

Partly we need to understand them because they were written so long ago, right? Hark the Herald, 18th century. Many things we just don't actually know what they mean. Like, Hark.

What does that word mean? When I was young, I thought it's the sound that angels make, like a bird. Hark! Hark! I don't know. Right? They've got wings, right?

Don't they? No, seriously. Right? It's just Old English. Does anyone know? What does Hark mean? Yeah, hear.

Listen. Listen. So, listen. The angels are singing, right? Listen. The Herald angels sing. That is what it means. Hark. Yeah, listen. The angels sing. That's, you know, that's the word they used back then.

[8 : 02] We don't use it anymore. But, yeah. Listen. The angels are singing, right? So, the first verse, yeah, it's really, well, you know the scene, right? It's the singing angels.

Hark! The Herald angels sing. So, Luke, Luke chapter 2, right? And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, right? Hear them sing.

And what are they saying? Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased. Those three things, right? Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth for people whom he is pleased with.

That's what we sing, right? What did the angels sing? Glory to the newborn king, peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled, right? It's just the writer, he's imagining this kind of scene with the shepherds and the angels appearing.

And not just those lines, the next lines as well, right? Because before the choir of angels, there was this first one. And the angel said to the shepherds, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

[9 : 10] And for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. That is, yeah, well, what the angel said. And of course, yeah, great joy for all the people.

So, joyful, all you nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies. Proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem. So, yeah. So, it's basically Luke chapter 2, right?

The shepherds and the angels that we're kind of imagining here. But why I love this carol, though, it's actually, it's not the first verse. What I love about Hark the Herald is the second and third.

Because actually, the second and third, we leave Christmas behind in a way. No angels, no donkeys, no shepherds, no manger. It's just pure theology.

Actually, what really happened? What really happened at Christmas? Who really is Jesus? Why did he come? And that's, yeah, such wonderful truths. And it's, we shouldn't just sing it at Christmas.

[10 : 10] It's such a wonderful gospel hymn. Well, what do we sing then? Well, the second verse is all about this miracle that God took on flesh.

God took on flesh. That's the big thing, right? It starts, yeah, with who Jesus really is. This guy is really God, right? Christ by highest heavens adored.

Christ the everlasting Lord, right? That's who he is. The eternal God, the eternal creator. But late in time, not that he was late, but recently.

Late in time, behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb. He was God, but he came here. He came down. And he became, yeah, a human.

That's the weird thing, right? Veiled in flesh. The Godhead see. Hail the incarnate deity. Here is God, but he is veiled in flesh.

[11 : 07] It's weird, right? You can see God, but you can't see him. You see him because Jesus is walking around, but yet you can't see him because he's kind of veiled, right? His glory is hidden.

That's the amazing thing. The eternal God coming here down to earth. We had this Bible passage read from Hebrews because I think it's such a good, yeah, it's such a Christmassy passage.

Again, no shepherds, no manger, but, you know, the incarnation. You know, gee, God taking on flesh. What an amazing thing that is. What an amazing step. So, as we turn to Hebrews, yeah, this thing was an incredible thing.

I mean, of course, this passage is about the incarnation. It doesn't tell you who Jesus is, was before that. For that, we need to look at chapter 1. But, you know, this is what, yeah, who Jesus was.

It really was not just a man. Chapter 1, verse 2. It's just crazy, right?

[12 : 30] That this baby made the universe. And even as he was lying there, held the whole universe together so that it wouldn't fall apart. That's who we're talking about.

That's, you know, that's God. But he became a human. So, in chapter 2, well, we, yeah, we go to this Psalm 8.

And Psalm 8 is all about humanity, what we're like. And actually, what a privilege it is to be human. Let me read those verses from chapter 2, 6 to 8, from Psalm 8.

What is man that you are 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 have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

That talks about us being in the image of God as people, right? We are a little lower than the angels. Animals, which actually is a very positive thing, right? You know, we live in a world where humans are just animals, right?

[13 : 33] Animals with bigger brains. You know, we're just cells that have evolved. No, we're very special. We are in the image of God. We're a little lower than the angels. But, for us, that's like, wow, positive.

Think about it from Jesus' perspective. Jesus became a little lower than the angels. Now, maybe, I don't know how that sounds to you, a little lower than the angels. It reminded me of this quote from a guy called A.W. Tozer, a writer from the 20th century.

He said this. It's often how we often think. We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God.

Right? That's how we often think, right? You have these beings, and God is kind of at the top. Well, no. Forever God stands apart in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar.

For the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. Right?

[14 : 49] This is God. God is so high above an archangel, you know, because the archangel is just a creature. He was made. He had a beginning. Right?

This is what, if Jesus would become the super archangel, everyone would think, what a humility. Wow. Right? For God to become an archangel. But that is who Jesus was.

Right? Such a step down. But the thing is, Jesus didn't become an archangel. Right? The passage constantly says, well, it wasn't about angels. You know? He doesn't help angels. No. He became even lower.

A human. Right? It all talks about, yeah, how he joined. He became a family. It's what we sing, right? Pleased as man with man to dwell. Jesus our Emmanuel.

Just to say, this is before the kind of inclusive language. As man with man. It's about as human with human. Right? It's not that he doesn't like women. It's as human with human to dwell. But he became human.

[15 : 51] And we read that constantly in chapter 2. Right? Right? Verse 14. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things.

He took on flesh and blood. Verse 17. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect. Verse 11. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.

They are one. The NIV says one family. Right? The language of brothers and sisters. He became our brother. He became our family. And that's not just a kind of an order of being.

I mean, think about the human race. Look at the news. Look at ourselves. Aren't we the most dysfunctional family in history? And yet Jesus joins our family.

He decided to become one of us. Isn't that amazing for him to be willing to step down to join our family? What a love and grace.

[16 : 51] And it's not just temporary. That his commitment to us, his coming to us. And so sometimes I compare, you know, who talks about their one.

I think about marriage, right? We talk about marriage that it's, you know, marriage is permanent union between husband and wife. Right? That it's for the rest of you.

It's forever. Actually, marriage is not forever. Right? Marriage is only till death do us part. The world record for marriage is 86 years.

Okay? There was this couple in the 1920s. And they were married for 86 years. But that's the maximum, right? Your marriage, you may think it's forever.

It's not. It's only maximum 80 years. I once was talking about that at a Bible camp. I was, we're talking about church relationship versus marriage. And, you know, church is forever, but marriage isn't.

[17 : 48] You know, I said, you know, your marriage will last at most 80 years. And it was this woman in the front row who said, oh, thank God. I don't know what her husband thought.

But it's true, right? Your marriage is at most 80 years. I mean, 80 years is a long time. You know, be very careful who you marry. Make sure you marry the right person.

But even if it turns out to be the wrong person, hey, it's only 80 years. Right? Only 80 years of suffering, and then you're free for all eternity. It's okay. But Jesus didn't come for just 80 years.

Jesus didn't become a human for just 33 years. He became a human permanently. It's not that the father said to the son that, okay, we want to save these humans.

But you have to become, you have to take on the human nature. Oh, man, that's only for 33 years. Don't worry. It's not like that. It's now 2,000 years since Christmas.

[18 : 51] Jesus is still human. 10 billion years from now, Jesus is still human. When he joined our family, that was permanent. You know, doesn't that show his, and given who we are, doesn't that show his grace, his commitment, his love for us, that he became one of us forever?

And he's still fully God, but now fully man, forever. I think that's so amazing, right? Christmas. But, of course, it's not just that Jesus was born.

That's already amazing. But the thing is, why did Jesus do that? Why did Jesus actually took on a human nature? Well, for that, in a moment, we'll go to the third verse. But I want us to first, if you have the bulletin, can you please turn it over so you're looking at Hebrews?

Okay? Don't look at the caribou. Please look at Hebrews. Okay? If you have it. Because I want to do a little quiz. Because the third verse, it starts with, Hail the heaven-born prince of peace.

Hail the son of righteousness. Now, people are often confused. What does it actually say? Does it talk about the son of righteousness, S-U-N? Or the son of righteousness, S-O-N?

[20 : 11] Okay? A little quiz. Okay. Who thinks it's S-U-N, son of righteousness? Okay? I see two hands. Who thinks it's son of righteousness?

S-O-N. Okay? That's, yeah, that's more hands. About 15 hands. And the rest have no idea. Wow. Okay. Well, this surprises a lot of people.

Actually, Jesus is talking about the son of righteousness. S-U-N. Jesus is the son of righteousness. All right? Hail the son of righteousness.

Light and life to all he brings. Risen with healings in its wings. Now, you may wonder where that comes from. It's actually another Old Testament prophecy. Sorry, it's a bit late.

But it's from Malachi chapter 4. This was the last book written before Christmas. The last book of the Old Testament. Oh, yeah, there it is. Sorry.

[21 : 08] I made it too low. But, you know, the people were suffering. They were in exile. But God kept promising, I'm going to be there. Jesus will come. And so he said, but for you who fear my name, the son of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

And you shall go out as calves leaping from the stall. The son of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. Now, wings, there's just a King James version. It's just a literal translation of the Hebrew.

It means healing in its wings. But anyway. But the thing is, what is the point of the sun? The sun is, of course, bright and glorious. But the sun does something, right?

The sun, it brings warmth. It brings light and life. That's the point, right? Jesus came to bring something, right?

I mean, the sun. The thing is, when we think about the light of Christmas, we think of this kind of picture. We think of, you know, everything is dark, but there's the manger with a bit of light.

[22 : 13] And then there's light and light has come into the world. Light in the darkness. And that's a beautiful picture of Christmas. Christmas. The only thing is, it's only the beginning. What is the end?

Well, the sun will rise, right? And the sun will bring light and life everywhere. I mean, this is Hong Kong, right? Yeah. Next picture.

Yeah. The sun brings, I mean, this is Hong Kong, right? In the summer. And the sun shines. And it is just so hot everywhere, right? And it's so bright that you can't go outside.

You know, it's just inescapable. Well, that is what Jesus came to do. He came, his life and his love are just inescapable. There's just no place for the darkness.

No place for the cold. No place. It's all gone because the sun of righteousness has risen, right? That's the picture. It's wonderful. But what is that life?

[23 : 10] Well, Jesus came, I think, to save us from death. To save us from death. Those last few lines. Mild he lays his glory by. Right?

Why? Well, born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth. Born to give us second birth. It's all about death, right? Born that we no more may die.

But also born to raise the sons of earth, right? To raise us from the dead. Born to give them second birth. I mean, what's the opposite of birth? Death, right? So it's all about how he came to save us from death.

Life is the opposite of death, right? That's what he came to do. And it's the same in Hebrews. So in Hebrews 2, verse 14. Let me read it again.

Why did he take on flesh? Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death.

[24 : 11] That is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. I mean, flesh and blood, suffering, temptation.

But ultimately, the problem in this passage is that we will die. And it describes humans and just, you know, slavery to the fear of death.

But it's true, right? I mean, yes, we live comfortable lives. Because, actually, death is just hanging over us everywhere. I mean, it starts when you're a baby, right? If you're a parent and you have young children, well, what do you do?

Well, you try to stop them not dying. That's parenting, right? Don't eat that. Don't put your hands there. Don't cross the road. Basically, that's parenting, right? Getting your child not to die.

I don't know. It feels like that, right? So much can go wrong. So you're just constantly looking after your child. And even when your children grow up, you know, taking care of your children.

[25 : 12] That's what you do. Getting your child not to die. So, Henrique, parenting advice. That's what you need to do. And then, yeah, basically, right?

There's so many ways that kids can die. And as a parent, you take care of them. And then later, you get older, of course. Now, I need to watch my cholesterol. And I need to watch my heart rate so that I don't get a heart attack, right?

Those kind of things. We get older. But, yeah, we're afraid of death, right? So much of life is just trying not to die. Other little things.

So I used to live in Wukaisa. Very remote area. Well, not that remote, but compared to here. Anyway, one late evening, I was walking home from the station in a subway.

And then behind me, I suddenly heard this woman scream. Ah! Ah! What was it? Well, no, not a cockroach.

[26 : 07] Actually, I have a picture. A snake. Bamboo pit viper. Very common venomous snake in Hong Kong. But, yeah, she saw this snake on the ground and she just freaked out.

But that is true, right? If the snake bites you and you're the wrong person, it may kill you. You know? Hong Kong is not safe. I mean, I make a bit of fun of it.

But actually, it's true, right? I mean, these are the little things. How about COVID? I mean, right now, we know Omicron. Unless you're really old and unvaccinated, it doesn't do very much.

But I remember a few years ago, right? The empty shopping centers. We went ice skating in Kowloon Tong, a festival walk. And we were the only family on the ice rink.

Because everyone else was just afraid and didn't come out because of COVID, right? So many people still, they're doing the lift with the... Right? So many... Fear of death.

[27 : 06] Right? Well, it doesn't work. That's the problem, right? Yeah, we might be able to live for 80 years. Maybe a bit longer, but actually, all the people who first heard this carol are dead.

And a hundred years from now, all of us will be dead, right? Ultimately, we don't have the power over death. I mean, who has the power here? It's the devil, right?

2 verse 14. The one who has the power of death. That is, the devil. And now, of course, the devil doesn't have any real power. God has the power. Why does the devil here have the power?

Well, because we joined his side. Adam and Eve sinned. You know, they... The serpent tempted them, and they listened to him. They chose his side. And yeah, of course, when you sin, you will die.

And that's the way it works in God's world. And so, in a way, because Satan gets us to sin, that's how he has the power of death. And it's funny.

[28 : 07] We always think we live our own way. Actually, we live Satan's way when we sin. But the thing is, Jesus came to save us from death. Yes, we are in this world, right, under the power of Satan, the power of death.

But Jesus came to save us from death. It's like he entered this world as the founder of their salvation. Other translations, the captain, like the hero who came to deal with this tyrant.

He came to deal with the one with the power of death and destroy him. That's the idea here. Jesus came as our champion to liberate us, to get rid of the bad guy.

Although the amazing thing is, how did he do that? How did Jesus beat the bad guy? Well, through death. It says in verse 14. Or verse 9. Right?

That because he was crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. So that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone. He saved us by dying on the cross.

[29 : 11] Because we had to die. We just as had to be served. But he took that for us. He took our punishment. He took our death. So we can be free.

We can... We're now free. Right? No more... I mean, you can still die. Don't cross the road without looking. But actually, the fear of death is gone.

Right? Even if you die. Even if you get COVID badly. You know? What will happen? You know? Born to raise us from the earth. Right? You'll be raised from the dead.

And the next thing you'll see is Jesus. It's okay. Right? No more fear of death. What a good news. Right? And not just life to a little bit.

Right? Real life. But when the sun of righteousness will shine. Right? That's when you'll wake up. When there's light and life everywhere. One day when Jesus will come. I don't know if you've ever had a staycation in a really good hotel with really good blackout curtains.

[30 : 09] And it's like 10 a.m. It's still pitch dark in your room. And then you open the curtains. And... Right? That is what Jesus will do. One day, in a blink of an eye, death will be completely gone.

Death will happen. But to do that, he had to die. And if you're the transcendent creator, you can't take a human place.

So he had to become human. And if you're immortal, you can't die. So he took on flesh. So he could die in our place. And that's what this carol celebrates.

And isn't that such wonderful news? Ultimately, it's not about Jesus' birth. His birth was just so he could die. To save us from death. Right? And, you know, the sentence is gone.

And isn't it so wonderful that some fear is taken away? I mean, Hong Kong is a place of fear, right? Fear in school that you don't study hard enough. And fear in the workplace that you don't work hard enough and might lose your job.

[31 : 09] And then there's political fears. And, you know, at the moment, economic fears. And, you know, for some people, climate fears. What will happen? Right? Kids are just brought up with fear.

They need to fear everything. Well, here is the biggest thing. Death. Death. And we don't need to fear it anymore. That's what Jesus came to do. Isn't that wonderful?

Doesn't it bring you joy? Right? If you just sing these lines. Right? Born that I no more may die. Born to raise me from the earth. Isn't that wonderful?

You know, next time you're in a toilet standing there and you hear that song, don't you want to sing? Right? Isn't this such wonderful? Maybe not out loud. But, you know, but seriously, right?

Isn't singing really good for your soul? You know, all these songs we sing on Sunday, if you just sing them on the way to work, just hum. Remember the lyrics. About one and a half years ago, I started doing that.

- [32 : 06] You know, all the great songs I used to sing when I was in my first church. And it always gives me joy. And isn't this such a great one to know and sing?
- You know, people may even ask you about it. Why do you always sing? Well, why is Christmas so special? Well, because Jesus was born that I no more may die. Right? Well, who is Jesus?
- Wasn't he just a good teacher? No, no, no, no. Failed in flesh to God, has he. You know, he's the incarnate deity. You can use this song to just explain the gospel to people, right? Because it makes it so clear.
- Yeah, wouldn't it be wonderful? Now, it's great to do evangelism. But actually, if I think about Christmas, if I think how I feel, how many of us feel, yes, we can sing this for others.
- But shall we sing this for our own soul, for our own hearts? Because, you know, Christmas should bring such joy. Now, I know last week I talked about lamenting.
- [33 : 06] And true, right? Jesus isn't here that we, you know, there's a longing awaiting. But at the same time, because Jesus has come, we should be full of joy. And, you know, one day, what will it be like?
- Well, we heard it in Malachi, right? When the sun of righteousness will shine, you'll be leaping like calves from the stall. And the thing is, the Old Testament was written to farmers.
- And we're not farmers, so maybe we have no idea. So I thought, let's have a little video. This is a, where it is? This is a calf straight from the stall. It has been locked up all winter.
- And now they're kind of hopping around like a puppy, right? Seriously, have you ever thought about that?
- That, you know, these are cows. But they're just jumping around for joy. Like kids going to the Disneyland for the first time after lockdown. You know, it's kind of all this joy.
- [34 : 02] But in a way, that's what Christians should be, right? If you just think that Jesus came down to die for us and, you know, save us from death. In a way, it should give us joy. But the only thing is that that's not what we're like, right?
- What are we like? Well, this is Hong Kong, right? So it's just pressure and deadlines. And December is the busiest time because the end of the year is coming up. And we have pressure this and financial this and the parties at work even.
- You know, we're just too busy, right? We just don't think about Christmas enough. It's just, yeah, yeah, yeah, Jesus raising me. That's too distant. I don't have time to think about it now. I've got so much to worry about here for my work.
- Isn't that so sad? Or even Christmas itself. I don't know how you feel about Christmas. I was praying with a friend of mine who was a pastor. He says he really hates Christmas because it's just so busy.
- There's all the stuff with the kids and presents and the tree and decoration and stuff at church and inviting and preparing and hosting. And Christmas, you know, that's the thing, right?
- [35 : 08] Christmas, it becomes all about what we have to do. And it tires us out. Actually, Christmas is about what Jesus has already done for us. And we just lose sight of it.
- And it takes away our joy. And we just go through December. And we're looking more forward to Boxing Day than to Christmas Day. And that's just sad, right? So, this Christmas, let's work on our joy.
- Do the Advent devotions. But let's sing these carols. I've been singing this one all week. O Come Emmanuel the week before. It's been great for my soul. Let's sing.

Let's get that joy. Yes, let's invite for the carols by Candlelight. Let's prepare. Let's do missional justice. They're all great things to do. And hopefully serving will give us joy.

But ultimately, right, let's remember the gospel. Let's, yeah, work on our hearts. So, let me just give a moment of quiet. And then I'll pray. And then the music team will lead us to sing.

[36 : 12] Let's take a moment of quiet now. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you just so much for Christmas. It's such an incredible truth that we see here that we'll sing about in a moment. How you loved us so much that you came down.

That you took on a human nature for us to be our family. And then to die in our place. To save us from death. It's such wonderful truth. And forgive us when we forget it.

When we seek our joy in other things. When we're just too busy. When we don't have any joy. While we have all this in you. Please, Holy Spirit, be at work in our hearts.

As we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Would we make melody in our hearts. To our Father. Please, would it be a Christmas of joy. Would it not be just activity.

[37 : 46] Would it not just be us doing things. Would it not just be ruined by life in Hong Kong. But rather, would we find joy in the midst of this. Please do that work in us. Today.

And the rest of this Christmas time. And indeed, all of next year. In Jesus' name. Amen.