

2025 Christmas Eve Service

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[0 : 0 0] Hey guys, thanks for listening to our Calvary Chapel Charlotte podcast. If you want to learn more about us, head over to cccharlotte.org. We are really excited for the work that God is doing in Charlotte.

If you're ever in the area and want to come check us out, our teaching is expository going chapter by chapter and verse by verse through the books of the Bible. Our prayer is that you are encouraged in your spiritual growth and equipped to change this world for Jesus.

Hopefully we will see you soon. In the meantime, grab your Bibles and enjoy this teaching. I will walk by faith and not by sight.

Well, Merry Christmas. I remember, you know, growing up, we didn't do a lot on Christmas Eve. It wasn't like a big family thing that was Christmas, but we would go up the road to my grandma's church every Christmas Eve.

And I loved it. It was just great. And it's such a blessing to just do these kind of like one-off things throughout the year. That just like they punctuate our lives. And the whole idea is what?

[1 : 1 2] To just stop and to kind of reflect and remember like, and this is what it's all about. It's all about what he has done for us. From the start to the end, it's all Jesus.

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke chapter 2. I'm going to put everything up on the screens as well, all the text. Hopefully it will be readable. But we'll go through some of Luke chapter 2, some of the account of Jesus' birth.

You know, I was looking at some statistics regarding Christmas. And there's a lot of people that they're not quite as prepared for Christmas necessarily as maybe they'd like to be.

Does anybody have any shopping left to do? Oh, I hope not. I hope that was an oh because no. You know, I know some people, they wait until the last minute to shop.

There's 79% of shoppers that says wait until the last two weeks of Christmas to do their shopping. 159 million Americans will wait until the last Saturday. It's called Super Saturday this year.

[2 : 1 7] It was a record high. 159 millions plan to wait and shop on this past Saturday. So if you're out this past Saturday, that's pretty crazy. I mean, you know, then there's the Christmas music people.

A majority of people, 60%, they start playing or listening to Christmas music before December. I know there's a few that don't do it before December. And then it says, I read a statistic that said, while a precise percentage of people who listen to Christmas music in July is not universally tracked in public data, information from streaming services indicates that a small but notable number of diehard fans listen during the summer months.

So you're not alone. There's at least two or three of you out there. So, but how prepared are we? And, you know, we usually, you know, we usually think of that as a question like we were talking about surrounding, like, do I have my tree up?

Am I prepared? Have I shopped or whatever? But how prepared are we? And thankfully, another statistic, 71% of Americans will celebrate Christmas Eve. And I hope that means they'll celebrate like this, not just that they get together.

But the question that we kind of want to look at tonight as we go through this text is, are you prepared? Not just for, am I prepared that I've got my tree up and all of that, and I got everything that I've shopped for and the food's ready.

[3 : 3 7] But are we prepared? Are we prepared in a way that is something beyond just the material, right? All right, so if you're in Luke chapter two, we'll just start reading. Luke chapter two and verse one, it says, and it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

And Caesar Augustus, he was the first Caesar that kind of unified Rome. And he wanted to establish the fact that this was his people and he was ruling. And so he sent out essentially a census to say, hey, everybody, you're under my rule.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. You know, the Bible is not just a fairy tale. It's not just a collection of stories.

There are facts and dates and historical archaeological proofs that we have. We have a faith that isn't based upon, it's not based upon someone's philosophy.

It's based in historical fact. And it's off of that, that we believe these things happen, that this person came, that he said these things and he is who he is. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.

[4 : 47] And so they were to go back to their hometown, their town of their birth. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, into the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

To be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so Mary, at this point, if we go into the backstory, we know that Mary is pregnant. Her and Joseph, they have been a spouse, but they've not yet come together as a married couple.

He's going to put her away privately, say, hey, I'm going to just divorce her quietly, thinking that something must have happened to this poor girl, that she was impregnated. And now she's going around and telling people that God did it.

But then an angel comes to him and says, no, no, no, no, Joseph. Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. This is of God, Joseph. And now it seems like he's taken her in and under his wing, because if you think her family at that time, would they have accepted her?

Would they have rejected her? Well, consider where they're going right now. Where are they going back to? To Joseph's hometown. Do you think he probably has some family there? I think he's probably got a whole lot of family that's coming in.

[5 : 57] In fact, everybody of his lineage is going where? To Bethlehem. Mom, dad, if he's got siblings, aunts, uncles, they're all there right now. And so he goes.

And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

Those of you women who have had children, that's probably a very nice way of saying that.

It was accomplished. The time of my deliverance is now accomplished. But it's not quite so more easily said than easily done. But her days were accomplished.

This young girl. All alone. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them.

And in the King James, it says in the inn. But in the Greek, that word just means dining room, upper room or guest chambers. The same one when Jesus says to his disciples, hey, go and prepare the upper room for me.

[6 : 54] So in the house at the time, they would have the essentially the where the family was, the upper room. And then there was a lower portion where like the cattle was, the animals, the garage. So Mary and Joseph, were they welcomed in with the rest of the family?

Was there a place for them? Was there a place prepared for them as she shows up with child?

Well, it seems like they end up in the garage is what we would we would term it.

Now, whether it is, you know, however you want to picture that, if it's a barn, if it's a stable, if it's a just going off of what it says here. It's some type of guest chamber or upper room, some place that would have been and should have been prepared for them under the right circumstances is now not available to them.

So there's no room for Jesus. And there is none who are expecting Jesus. There's no room for Jesus. And there was no room for the few who were expecting Jesus.

No one was prepared to receive the soon coming Jesus. Nobody. And those that were, they thought they were crazy. If we turn over to Matthew chapter two, you don't have to turn there if you don't want to.

[8 : 05] I'm going to put it on the screen here. A couple of years later, Mary, Joseph and Jesus have been born or living in Bethlehem. At the time of his birth, there are these men in the east, what we would call wise men.

These kings, these rulers of the east, and they see the star appear in the sky. And so they set out to come and to see Jesus, to come and to meet this king.

And by the time they come, Jesus seems to be a toddler, a few years old. And when they get there, they first go to Herod, who is the ruler at the time over this province. And they think, well, of course, if some king was born, the ruling government's going to know about it.

What a silly thing to look for Jesus in the government. Jesus is there in the government. Because Jesus's people are there.

But it says that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews?

[9 : 09] Were any of you prepared for him, Herod? I mean, did he come? We saw his star. Were you ready? For we have seen his star in the east, and we are come to worship him.

When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. We're going to find out here that the shepherds, when the angels appear to the shepherds, and the shepherds go, and they tell this to everybody, it doesn't seem like it gained much traction.

It doesn't seem like by this time that these wise men have come here, or the rulers of the east. It doesn't seem like it's gotten around too much that Jesus has come. And he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. So what does he do? He says, okay, he brings in the chief priests and the scribes, the ones who should know, the ones who should be what?

Prepared. They should be ready for him. And they said unto him, well, he would come to Bethlehem. Where would Christ be born? In Bethlehem of Judea.

[10 : 12] For thus it is written by the prophet, that you Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least among the princes of Judah. For out of you shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.

What do they do? They quote it right off. They got it right on the tip. We know Jesus is going to come. We know where Messiah will come. We know where Christ will come. He's going to come to Bethlehem. They knew.

They'd heard it. Even to a certain extent, I guess, believed it. But they weren't prepared for it. And Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, he inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

He said, hey, when exactly was that? What his birth was? And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, go and search diligently for the young child. And when you found him, bring me word again that I may come and worship him also.

Said the old fox. What's going to happen? They're going to go and they're going to worship him. And then they're going to be warned in a dream as well. They say, hey, go a different way back home.

[11 : 13] Herod gets so mad. And then what does he do? He kills all the males at what age? Two and under. Because concerning when this time of the star appeared, it would indicate that, hey, whenever he was born, it was within the last couple of years by the time these guys get here.

So Jesus comes. Jesus comes in a way that was unlooked for. Unprepared for, unexpected, and unbelieved. Even by those who should have believed.

It wasn't looked for. Nobody's looking for this. Nobody was prepared for it. Even when he's there and ready to literally pop out, to spring out, they still were like, no, this is unexpected.

This is unbelievable. This can't be true. However, a lack of preparedness did not stop Jesus from coming, did it? We look for Jesus today.

We look for his soon return. And our lack of preparedness, a lack of preparedness in this world, a lack of preparedness among those who maybe know God's word, will not stop him from coming.

[12 : 18] You know, I think it reminds me a little bit in, you know, how the Grinch stole Christmas, right? And then he sees that Christmas still comes. And he says, how could it be so? It came without ribbons.

It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags. But it came. Christmas still came. No matter how prepared or unprepared, it's going to come.

And unless the Lord wraps everything up tonight, Christmas is going to come tomorrow, whether we're prepared or not.

And yet Jesus came what? Jesus came right on time. Came right on time. He wasn't late. He wasn't early.

He was exactly when he said he was going to come. He came without much warning. And he came after birth pains, didn't he? 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul writes in verse 1 and says, But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you.

[13:19] For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. We should be prepared. We should be ready. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail, as birth pains upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

They, but not us. Not us. We're prepared. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Jesus came right on time, without a lot of warning, but after birth pains.

1 Corinthians 15, 51 and 52. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Jesus will come right on time. And without much warning, guys, Jesus is coming. Are we prepared? Are we prepared for him? Jesus speaks of the birth pains as well.

In John chapter 16, he says, A woman, when she is in birth pains, in travail with sorrow, because her hour has come, but after, but as soon as she has delivered the child, she remembers no more.

[14:36] The anguish for joy, that a man is born into the world. Guys, there are times in our lives right now that seem very troubling, that seem like a lot of sorrow, but Jesus is coming.

And when that man appears, no longer as a child, we will forget all of our anguish. And you know, and you now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again. And your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.

Jesus is saying this to his apostles before he is crucified. I will see you again, because I'm going to rise again. But I think he's referring to something a little more as well. Just with what he's saying here, he says, I will see you again.

Remember guys, what I told you in John 14. Well, it wasn't John 14 at that time. He's like, guys, remember what I told you in John 14? Turn in your Bibles. No, he's like, remember what I told you just a little bit ago.

Because this is all the same time he's saying this, all in the upper room, in the kataluma, in the upper room, in the inn. He says, hey, I'm, I'll see you again.

[15:41] And he had just said, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions, many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, I go to what?

Prepare a place for you. Jesus is preparing and he's going to come and he's going to come right on time without much warning. But he is preparing a place.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am, there you may be also. Jesus came just like with the Grinch.

He came. Didn't matter how prepared, how ready, how unexpected, how unlooked for, whether people believed it or not. Jesus came the first time and Jesus says, I'm coming back the second time.

I'm preparing a place for you. Prepare for me. Prepare to receive me. Back to Luke chapter 2 in verse 8. Mary and Joseph are there and Mary's just given birth to Jesus.

[16:48] Jesus has come into the world. And at the same time, there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. Who did the, who was it revealed to? It was revealed to who? Those who were tending sheep.

Those who were shepherding sheep. Those who were about the sheep. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, says Jesus. And lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.

The fact that they didn't run is amazing. And the angel said unto them, fear not, they're probably about to run. Wait, wait, wait. Wait a minute, guys. Don't be afraid. Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. They weren't prepared for it. They weren't looking for it. It was unexpected. And yet he came.

[17 : 56] And yet Jesus came. Imagine the joy to realize that it happened. It happened in their lifetime. They've been hearing about it for how many years? Their parents told them about it for decades.

And they heard he was going to come and maybe it'll be at this time and maybe it'll be under this person. Maybe it'll be this circumstances. And then it came in their lifetime to realize he came. And this shall be a sign unto you.

You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Not exactly the next thing they're expecting to hear. They'd say, what? Why would he be in a manger?

Who would put a king in a manger? It doesn't make any sense. The Savior? And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts. They were just like, come on, hurry up, Gabriel, or whoever.

Hurry up and finish saying what you're saying. We're just waiting. Yes. We've been waiting forever for this. And the angel, a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

[18 : 57] Think how excited those angels were to be able to actually give that message. And yet think how excited Jesus is to be released to come and get his bride, to come and get the ones he's preparing a place for.

Those prepared to meet Jesus, how were they prepared? They were prepared. They were prepared by God's heavenly, glorious, joyful message of good news.

What do we call that? Call that the gospel. God's heavenly, glorious, joyful message of good news. That prepared them. It totally changed their perspective.

It changed their whole lives. They were just living their life and then all of a sudden, this heavenly, glorious, joyful message of good news comes into their lives and now all of a sudden they're prepared to meet Jesus.

And I dare say, I hope that that's why we're here because a heavenly, glorious, joyful message of good news came into our lives and now we met Jesus and now we are prepared to meet him face to face someday.

[20 : 03] Those who were prepared for Jesus, they did not take lightly the message of his coming. They didn't take it lightly. They were afraid, right?

It wasn't just like, well, that was interesting. Huh. I wonder if I should compare that with all the other religions of the world, how that, they didn't take it lightly that God would press into their lives like this and share this truth with them.

Proverbs 9.10 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. It says they were sore afraid. Yeah, I think they were shocked and afraid, but there's a fear that is beyond just being shocked and it's a reverence.

It's a, I know who I am in relation to this thing, right? There's the terror of being face to face with a charging grizzly bear, right? Not because he looks so, he looks cute and cuddly, right?

But you know who you are before that thing, right? And so there's a reverence, which then leads to the terror and the fear and that's why you run. But the fear of the Lord, the reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

[21 : 10] You know, 2 Peter says that there are those in the last days, what are the last days? We talk about this a lot on Wednesday night going through Revelation. The last days just mean there are no other days after this that need fulfilling for the end to come.

There's no other Messiah coming like to this earth to die and rise again. Jesus did it. That last days, the prophets were, prophecies were fulfilled. Jesus came, he died, he rose.

There's nothing left that's needed for salvation, for redemption, to wrap this up. So we are in the last days, the days in which there's nothing left that's needed to be done.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own desires and saying, where is the promise of his coming?

For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. scoffers that will come in the last days. Why? Because they don't reverence the Lord.

[22 : 12] The beginning of wisdom, wisdom starts with reverencing God. And if we reverence God, we reverence God's word. And the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

And as we gain knowledge of the Lord, we gain understanding. We can understand and we can look and say, hey, you know what? The first time Jesus came, they weren't expecting him, they weren't prepared for him and they didn't believe.

So if I'm living in days where the people are saying, oh, we're not expecting him, we're not prepared for him, we don't believe, maybe it's sooner than I think. And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, well, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's take a little PTO and time off and leave the sheep and go and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and they found the babe lying in a manger.

Those prepared to meet Jesus, they found him. They found him in a place very unexpected. How many of you found Jesus in a very unexpected place when Jesus met you and Jesus came to you? [23 : 25] They found him in a way that was very unexpected. Now, this wasn't just like, hey, how you doing? I'd like to come and introduce you to Jesus over here. This was a way that was way unexpected.

At a time unexpected. And they found him where? They found him among those unexpected. They didn't expect him to find him there. This young girl and Joseph and in a manger.

They found him among those unexpected. Guys, I dare say if you look around, maybe these weren't the people you expected to find Jesus among. I think sometimes we have this idea that it's not the shepherds.

Oh, no, no, no. It's the wise men. It's the, yes, they come too. But Paul says not many wise and not mighty mighty. That is the foolish things of the world, guys.

Most of us are the shepherds. Most of us are those that are just abiding in our fields and watching over our flocks by night, just doing the next thing. And what happens?

[24 : 29] God presses into our world in a way unexpected that we were not looking for. And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

Those prepared for Jesus received something that affected both heaven and earth. Glory to God in the highest on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

There were a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God. This is affecting heaven and earth. Those prepared for Jesus, they received something that affected both the seen and the unseen.

It's affecting what they can't see and it's affecting what they can see. They received something that glorified God, that brings peace into an unpeaceful world, and reveals that God's will for man is good, is good.

These men who were prepared to receive Jesus, they knew now that God's will for them was good. We know that. As Jesus has come unexpectedly into our lives and prepared us to receive him and we have, we realize God's will for me is good.

[25 : 45] He's not out to get me. He doesn't hate me. He's not mad at me. He's not condemning me. Are we prepared for Jesus?

Prepared to meet him, prepared to receive him, and prepared to dwell with him. You know, Jesus came as a baby, right? He was born into this world.

We celebrate what God did in preparing for this new birth that involved Jesus. A new birth involving Jesus that involved the seen and the unseen. Well, this same Jesus wouldn't stay a baby.

He would grow and be a man and he would at one point say to one of these rulers of Israel 30 years later to Nicodemus, truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jesus was born but he didn't stay a baby. For you and I, we need to receive a birth. We need to receive a new birth that involves Jesus, not a physical one because Nicodemus will say, how can a man enter back into his mother's womb and be born again?

[26 : 53] And Jesus says, man, aren't you the teacher of Israel? I mean, you got podcasts, you got YouTube, you got everything and you don't know this? This is pretty basic. You must be born spiritually.

How much effort did you have in your birth? Not much. You were just there. How much choice did you have? You didn't have any choice. Now, we are given a choice to receive or not.

We are given a choice to enter into something that God must do in and through us. We can't do it. I can't born myself spiritually but I can enter into a new birth. But I think a lot of us, what happens is

we still stay with the baby Jesus.

We're still with the birth. It's like, hey, man, Jesus has been born into my heart, into my life. I've been born again. What? 20 years ago. Well, what's happened since then? I've been born again. That's wonderful but where are you now? You see, Jesus was born but he didn't just stay there. It wasn't like that everybody just came through and kept looking at the manger over and over and over. No, he grew and he mature and he became a man to die and to rise again.

[28 : 01] And God doesn't want us to stay there either. We celebrate Christmas because of birth but that's because it led to something so much greater. Are we letting God prepare us?

Not just for the birth. and not just for the return but are we letting God prepare us for living a life with Jesus in the seen and the unseen?

Am I prepared for that? Or am I just like, well, I've been born and I will go. And in between, yeah, what's that matter? It does matter. Are we prepared for Jesus in a way that will affect not only our future heavenly experience but our current earthly one?

Am I prepared for that? A lack of preparedness, guys, it did not stop Jesus from coming to us and it doesn't stop him. He said, I will never leave you or forsake you but it may stop us from coming to him and I don't mean coming to him when he comes and receives his own.

Thankfully, Paul says, hey, whether we wake or sleep, we will go. We will be with him. But I mean here. I mean in this life. I wonder if my lack of preparedness keeps me from coming to this Jesus who says, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest because God's will for man is good.

[29 : 24] God's will is that we be at rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.

Jesus came into this world. It was bright and exciting and loud to the shepherds. But when Jesus was born, it was painful and difficult for Mary.

But how did he come? Did he come as a conquering king? No, he came gently. He came peacefully. He came vulnerably. He came as a child. Are we prepared for Jesus even if it means meeting him in a place unexpected, in a way unexpected and among people we wouldn't expect? Am I prepared for that? You see, in Christ, in Christ, God has prepared something wonderful for you. Tonight, we can let him prepare us to receive that because he has prepared something wonderful for us.

It's unexpected. Much of the things God does in our, the things that God will do in our lives are very unexpected. I think I'm going to go this way and it's going to work out. Like that verse we read in 1 Peter, all things continue as they were.

[30 : 43] You see, we don't know the future, but we base it off of the past because of the patterns and track record that has happened in the past. That has no bearing whatsoever on what will happen necessarily in our future.

We base it off God's word and what he's told us. The sun rose and will continue to rise and set and Israel will be a nation until God wraps this thing up. But I don't know.

Paul says, let us not say we will go here and go there tomorrow, but I say if the Lord wills. So I can't tell you. I can't tell you what tomorrow or next year is going to bring or next month.

I can't tell you it's going to be easy. I can't tell you you might not experience what Jesus experienced and Mary experienced and Joseph experienced that the people that should have welcomed you, that should have given you a place and a space at their table said, no, you go out there.

You go out. You go out there. We don't want Jesus in here. You go out there with Jesus. You know what? Hebrews tells us we should say, okay, I'm going to go outside the camp to be with Jesus.

[31 : 44] I'll go in the garage and hang with Jesus. I'll go out and be with Jesus. And Christ, God has prepared something wonderful for us and tonight we can let him prepare us to receive that.

He's come into this world and we celebrate that and he's coming back to this world. But while we live in this world, we can believe because of his word that he is good and his will for us is good.

Jeremiah 29, 11, for I know the thoughts that I think towards you, sayeth the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. That's what he's preparing for us.

Ultimately, yes, when we will go and we will dwell with him where he says that there will be a kingdom wherein dwells righteousness. Praise God. Wonderful. But these are the thoughts that he thinks towards us now.

They are thoughts of peace and not of evil. As the angel said, behold, I give you, bring you good tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord. [32 : 49] our present and future hope is Jesus. It's Jesus. And we have such a wonderful opportunity to come together at times like this and just be reminded of that.

God prepared everything for his son to come into this world and so few people were prepared for him. You know, God has prepared everything in our lives today. Everything is prepared for Jesus. That's what he's doing in our lives. And God, would you prepare me for my next job? Would you prepare me for my spouse? Would you prepare me for this? Would you prepare me for this great work I want to do for you? And God is preparing you for all of those things.

But he's ultimately, he's preparing us for Jesus. Jesus has entered into our world. He's entered into our lives through a birth. And God now wants to dwell with us, in us, and through us.

He's prepared. Am I prepared? And I think a lot of times I'm not because I don't believe this. I don't believe that God's thinking these thoughts towards me.

[33 : 54] You see, I'm not prepared to come to him and receive what he has for me. So we're going to worship. We're going to do some more Christmas songs and you can all light your lights, light your candles.

Jesus says that he is the light of the world. If any man follows me, he will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. That's wonderful.

But does it stop there? No, because then what does he do? Does it stop at birth? No, because then what does he say? Hey, you are the light of the world. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus, we thank you. We love you and we thank you, Lord, for coming, whether we were prepared or not, for coming and entering into each one of our lives individually, Lord.

You loved us first. We love you because you first loved us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Lord, you came and we were unprepared and it was unexpected and it was a glorious, heavenly, joyful message of goodwill.

[35 : 08] and we believed it. And Lord, we believe that today as we celebrate and remember that and then as we look forward into this new year, Lord, we look forward knowing that your work is not just in the past and your work is not just for the future, but it's for now.

And you have prepared us right now at this time, in this space. This is not an accident. Even if it's unexpected, you have brought us here now because you have prepared us to receive Jesus.

If there's anyone who's never yet received Jesus the first time, it's very simple. It's just receiving a new birth that only God can do. Believing that Jesus and Jesus alone has overcome sin, death, grave, the grave, and he alone can give us a life, a birth that will last beyond this life and into the one to come.

And for those of us who've received that, Lord, I know you've prepared us as you prepare us daily if we're willing to receive it, to receive more and more of Jesus. as you entered into this world as a baby so many years ago, Lord, would you enter afresh into our lives, Lord?

You come gently. You come vulnerably. Lord, we don't have to draw back and we don't have to be afraid. And like those shepherds who are afraid, you didn't send an angel to give us the good news.

[36 : 43] You came yourself. And I thank you for that. We love you. Thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Have a Merry Christmas.

Jesus says, further down in John 14 to his disciples, he says, Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives.

Give I unto you. Not as the world gives. It's gifts. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid. No matter how unprepared we are.

No matter how many things we come across that are unexpected. We can leave with his peace.

Amen. God bless you. Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you! Thank you