

Christmas Day Service

Welcome and lighting candles

Brief opening prayer

Carol: Once in Royal David's City

The longest journey?

Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Talk Part 1: Unpacking a suitcase to discover what Jesus did when he came

Song: You Laid Aside Your Majesty

Jesus came because God the Father loves us

Show and tell gifts

Talk Part 2: Opening the gift - Jesus came to give us the gift of becoming a child of God. (John 1:12-13)

Song: The Canticle of the Gift (<https://youtu.be/2kBa0u6cedY>)

The shepherds were chosen to go and see Jesus - meditation

Prayer

Carol: Unto Us a Boy is Born

Blessing



Happy Christmas

Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on December 25th 2021, Christmas Day at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.



Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Tim is leading our service today, and after he has welcomed us all he lights our Christmas candles, the 4 candles of Advent already burning. (He doesn't completely extinguish the match and is in danger of burning his fingers before being alerted by the congregation!)

As he lights the candle he says:

"As we celebrate the birth of Jesus and rejoice in his coming to us, we light the Christ candle. Jesus Christ is our hope. He is our peace. Jesus Christ is our joy. He is love. Whoever believes in him will never perish but have eternal life. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Tim prays: We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you were willing to come into our world, that you were willing to step down from heaven and to come to be with us. That's so special. We thank you that you are indeed our hope, our peace, our joy and that you loved us so much you were prepared to do that for us. We pray that you will help us to be together this morning, to celebrate you, and to wonder anew and afresh at what you've done for us in coming to this world. Thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

We sing our first carol, and Tim on the piano is joined by Ellie playing the flute:

Once in Royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor, and mean, and lowly, lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood he would honour and obey,
love and watch the lowly maiden, in whose gentle arms he lay:
christian children all must be mild, obedient, good as he.

For he is our childhood's pattern; day by day, like us he grew;
Hh was little, weak and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew;
and he feeleth for our sadness, and he shareth in our gladness.

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

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high;
where like stars his children crowned all in white shall wait around.

CF Alexander
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Tim continues: The Longest Journey

Who has made the longest journey to be here today? (Most of us hadn't travelled very far, but Rachel came from Leeds and Ellie from Cambridge!) The longest journey was made when God's Son Jesus came down from heaven and came to earth. John 1: 14 (Message):

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Let's hear a bit more about the journey of Jesus to be here as we hear the story from Luke. Tim, Debbie and Ellie read together, based on **Luke 2: 1-20**

Joseph: I am Joseph and this is my wife, Mary. We are here to tell you the amazing story of what happened on the very first Christmas.

Mary: Joseph and I were engaged to be married and one day an angel visited me and told me that I was going to have God's baby. You can imagine that Joseph found it hard to believe me until an angel told him in a dream that it really was the truth.

Joseph: A little while later a Roman official came to our town of Nazareth. He told us that Caesar Augustus had ordered that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world and that we all had to travel to our home towns to register.

Mary: So we packed up our things and travelled up to Bethlehem as Joseph was a descendant of David. While we were there it was time for my baby to be born.

Joseph: The family guest room was full so Mary and I had to stay in the place where the animals were kept, which was where baby Jesus was born.

Mary: I wrapped the baby up in cloths and placed him in an animal's feeding trough and then tried to get some rest.

Shepherd: But Mary didn't get much rest that night. We shepherds put a stop to that! It seemed like any other evening, sitting in the fields together, looking after our sheep when suddenly we got the shock of our lives. An angel of the Lord appeared right in front of us and light surrounded him. He told us not to be afraid as he was bringing us good news for everybody living on earth. This good news was that a Saviour had just been born in Bethlehem and this Saviour was Christ the Lord. We were told that we were to look for a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. A whole load more angels then joined him and they all sang this beautiful song: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." After the angels had gone we decided that we had to go to Bethlehem and see what had happened.

Joseph: I couldn't believe it when a bunch of shepherds came into the place where Mary and I were staying.

Shepherd: It was wonderful to see baby Jesus; Christ the Lord, lying in the manger, just as the angel had told us. We then went off and told everybody what we had seen. We were so excited that we couldn't stop praising God for what he had done in sending his Son to earth.

Mary: That was a very special Christmas; the very first Christmas of all when God came to earth.

Tim shares his Talk Part 1:

What an incredible journey God's Son Jesus made that first Christmas, coming all the way from heaven to earth to be with us.

When people come to stay with us... to be with us... they will often bring a suitcase with them with all of the things that they will need for their stay. (Show suitcase). Shall we see what is inside this suitcase?

Look at this. (Pull out jacket or dress) This is very smart. It looks like this person has brought something special to wear to join in with the Christmas celebrations. It might be their best jacket. But when Jesus came to earth for that very first Christmas, he didn't come wearing his best clothes... his kingly robes. Jesus took off his kingly robes (Philippians 2:7) and came to earth clothed in human flesh, being born as a baby to live among us. Isn't that incredible?

What else is in the suitcase? (Pull out a box of luxury mince pies) A box of luxury mince pies. It looks like this person has brought something to add to the Christmas feast. But when Jesus came to earth there was no big celebration. He was born in humble circumstances; in a room where animals had been kept, and where his bed was an animal feeding trough. (Luke 2: 7)

What else is in the suitcase? (Pull out a pair of slippers) A pair of comfy old slippers. It looks like this person has come to relax... to put their feet up and enjoy somebody else serving them for a few days. When Jesus came, he didn't come expecting us to serve him, but he said that he had come to serve us. (Matthew 20:28)

And what is the last thing in the suitcase? (Pull out a couple of wrapped gifts) A couple of gifts. It looks like this person has brought some gifts to give to the people that they have come to be with. When Jesus came, he came with a special gift for each one of us, which we will find out more about soon. (2 Corinthians 9:15)

What an incredible journey Jesus, God's Son, made from the glory of heaven to the darkness of earth. Coming to be with us as a baby, coming to be with us in poverty, coming to be with us to serve and coming to give us a special gift.

We sing again, not a traditional Christmas song, but one that is very appropriate

You laid aside your majesty, gave up everything for me,
suffered at the hands of those You had created.
You took all my guilt and shame when You died and rose again,
now today You reign and heaven and earth exalt You.
I really want to worship You, my Lord,
You have won my heart and I am Yours forever and ever, I will love You
You are the only one who died for me,
gave Your life to set me free so I lift my voice to You in adoration

Noel Richards
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Tim continues his talk, part 2: **Jesus Came Because God the Father Loves Us**

So why did Jesus come? He came partly for the same reason your guests might have travelled to see you... because they love you. Jesus came because God the Father LOVES us. Each one of us is deeply precious to God and he loves us with an unconditional love... a love that is not dependent on what we do or don't do. When people love each other, one of the ways that they show it is by giving each other gifts. Because Father God loves us so much, he sent Jesus to give us a precious gift, which this parcel reminds us of. Who would like to come and open this gift? (a volunteer comes forward - Irene with her daughter) This gift says that it is for all people... Let's open it. (They open the box and pull out a photograph album). Look at that... it is a photograph album. What is that all about? On the outside of the album is a label that says, 'John 1:12-13'. (shown on the screen) Who would like to come and read out those verses for us? (Irene reads out John 1:12-13).

This photograph album has pictures of our children in it. It is here today to remind us of what Jesus came to give us on the very first Christmas. Jesus came to give you and me the precious gift of becoming a CHILD OF GOD.

God's Son has come close to us; making the big journey from heaven to earth so that we can come close to him. We're invited to become members of his family and enjoy a life-giving and satisfying relationship with him that begins now and goes on for all eternity.

Really, it's mind-blowing and hard to take in that God loves us so much that he wants us to be close to him; so close that we become his beloved children, but it's the truth and it's why we celebrate Christmas.

When Jesus grew up and became a man, he served us in the most amazing way to make that possible for us. He willingly gave up his life; being nailed to a cross for crimes that he hadn't committed; rising from the dead three days later. Jesus did this because it was the only way that sinful people could come close to a holy God. Jesus willingly came to earth to give you and me a gift that we cannot earn ourselves; the gift of becoming a child of God.

Because God loves us and has come close to us, we can come close to him. What an amazing gift. Let's worship him today.

This of us at the Chapel watch a video of a song: **The Canticle of the Gift**. Unfortunately the words are under copyright so can't be printed here. This is a folksy type song which talks about Christ, his birth and his death, and is sometimes used as a communion song. It has been sung by The Fisherfolk - some may remember them!

Tim continues:

The Shepherds Were Chosen to Go and See Jesus

On the first Christmas night somebody else also had to make a journey, a much shorter journey than Jesus made, but a journey, nonetheless. The shepherds, looking after their sheep in the hills surrounding Bethlehem were visited by some angels who told them that God's Son had been born in Bethlehem. They were chosen to go and see Jesus for themselves.

We, like the shepherds, are invited to come and see Jesus for ourselves and receive the gift that he has come to bring us. We will not find Jesus lying as a baby in a manger, for he is now with his Father in heaven. However, his presence is with us now and if we turn to him by faith and put our trust in him, we will receive the gift of becoming a child of God. The Bible invites us to 'come near to God and He will come near to you' (James 4:6).

As we look at our candles burning at the front... a little light shining... we are reminded of Jesus who came to earth as a baby... God coming close to us on the first Christmas so that we might come close to him. As we imagine the warmth of the flame, we are reminded that Jesus came because God the Father loves us - and we

are precious to him. As we look at the light of the flame, we are reminded that Jesus came to deal with the darkness of our sin by dying for us on a cross, but then rising from the dead three days later. As we turn to Jesus, believing and trusting in him, so we receive his gift of becoming a child of God and the Holy Spirit comes to live within us... God's light now lives in us.

Let's pray. "Thank you, Jesus, that you came close to us so that we might live in close relationship with you. Amen."

After the shepherds had seen Jesus they returned to their sheep, glorifying and praising God for what he had done. So let us now give glory and praise to God for what he has done for us as we sing our final carol. We can see the words for this, and again Tim and Ellie play:

Unto Us A Boy Is Born, King of all creation:
cradled in a stall was he, the Lord of every nation,

Cradled in a stall was he with sleepy cows and asses;
but the very beasts could see that he all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled: 'A prince', he said, 'In Jewry!'
All little boys be killed at Bethl'em in his fury.

Now may Mary's Son, who came so long ago to love us,
lead us all with hearts aflame unto the joys above us.

Omega and Alpha He! Let the organ thunder,
while the choir with peals of glee doth rend the air asunder.

(Translated from Latin, public domain, CCL No 5664)

Tim closes our service:

As we come to the end of the service today, go out rejoicing that God loves you so much that he has come close to you so that you might live in close relationship with him... and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.

(Any gifts received today will go to the work of Tearfund.)