

Good News

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[0 : 0 0] Well, welcome everyone, and welcome to our new series, four-part series leading up to Christmas, and the series is why we can't cancel Christmas. Remember, we've been looking at the book of Mark, and we're hearing about the news, and we're going to continue that theme today. The gospel is such good news, we don't want to cancel it. It's got some important stuff for us to grab hold of, and so we want to look at that passage in Luke today. Well, it is Christmas time, and I wonder if you're getting that Christmassy feeling. I asked the earlier service, and they weren't too sure. There's a bit of humbuggy feelings about Christmas. The kids are gone now. The kids, you know, normally they're fine with Christmas, but you know, adults are a little bit more, got a different, slightly different perspective on Christmas time, but you know, the decorations are out, the fake snow is in the windows, and the Christmas movies are out, as well as the Christmas ads. Now, I wonder if you remember that, you know, in South Africa, I don't actually watch TV anymore, so I'm not actually sure if we've got Christmas, I mean, we do have Christmas ads. You hear them on the radio, but do you remember that famous one some years ago, it was on TV, we would have got it on YouTube, I guess, where Sainsbury's created, recreated that famous World War I ceasefire. Remember that one, where England and Germany were facing each other, and then someone started singing Silent Night in the German line, and then they started singing together, and they realized, you know, what are we actually fighting for? It was a beautiful advert, and they got out and played soccer based on a real event, and it's interesting, when you follow ads and movies, they all claim to say something about Christmas. This is the real message of Christmas, and I don't know if you've noticed, but what's the one thing that's often missing from all the adverts and all the movies? Well, it's the really, really real reason for Christmas, and so they don't often mention, if at all, Jesus. It's always about some nebulous, touchy-feely thing. Christmas is about sharing. Christmas is about family. Christmas is about love. Well, you know, the ads follow the culture of the times, and the latest set of ads that are coming out this year are all telling us that Christmas is about acceptance and inclusivity. Now, those are sort of trigger words for the modern position, and there's an advert from Norway advertising the

Norwegian Postal Service, and the title of the advert is When Harry Met Santa. The advert ends up with the dad in the advert making out with Father Christmas, and the byline is that it's in 2022, Norway is marking 50 years of being able to love whoever we want, and that's the true meaning of Christmas in Norway. Okay, so what does the Bible say Christmas is all about? If I say, what does the Bible say Christmas is all about? Adults, what's the real meaning of Christmas? It's all about Jesus, most of us will be able to say. But my question is, what about Jesus is important for us to get? And so, in this next series, over four weeks, we're going to look at just those few verses in Luke as to what we need to get about Jesus exactly, that this unpack. So just, if you're in your Bibles, have a look at Luke chapter 2 again. We're just going to look at verse 10 and 11 over these next few weeks, and sort of unpack that slowly for us. And so you've got the saying where the angel appears to the shepherds, and he says this, and they were terrified, hey? Not like in the movie, there's a snow angel appears. The angel scared people. Anyway, don't be afraid. And the angel says, I'll bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. The reason, today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. And so we're going to look at those four different things that are unpacked by the angel there, or said by the angel. We'll do the unpacking. And then this week, we're going to look at the whole concept of good news. So that's the first thing the angel says is, listen, I've got good news. Now, what we need to know straight away is that that, depending on your English translation, you might have gospel. In fact, probably not, because they're all translated good news. But you need to know that the word, the Greek word underlying good news is that we get the same word gospel. So good news and gospel is the same word. It's got the same meaning. Now, the thing, so what we must come to grips with is that the thing that kicks off the Christmas story is news. Good news, and it's gospel news. We've got to say gospel news. In the ancient world, you wouldn't have to say gospel news. That would be like saying, it's the news news. You know, they'd be like, yes, we know that. You've just said it's the news. So gospel means good news, just so that you've got that in our heads. And this news, there's a message.

It's a gospel message. Actually, a better translation isn't just good news, but good message. Or the ancient world would have heard, ooh, important message. We watch the TV for news. People don't actually do that anymore. But, you know, in the ancient world, they didn't have TV. And so if you wanted to get news, you would, you know, we'd have a town crier, and he would have a big bell. Bing, bing, bing. Okay, I've got news. I've got a gospel. The gospel has arrived. I've got a gospel for everyone. So this gospel was like, it was the news broadcast. So I've got a message. I've got, I've been told to tell you guys something. And so that's how you know what a message is going to happen. So the message is news. And we're going to look at that and pack that for us today.

Now the news we get here, just to look at it in context there, you know, it's amazing news. It's good news. It's amazing news. Because it's not just news. Do you notice it's news of great joy.

Not just nor, well, not ordinary joy we're talking about. Well, imagine, wouldn't it be so nice if our news items are, hey guys, we've got joyful news for you today. Petrol prices are going to drop. You're going to have electricity over Christmas and it's going to be cheaper than you thought.

[6 : 14] Hardly ever joyful news items. Maybe at the end, you know, where they're just trying to perk you up after throwing all that junk news at you. But this is news of great joy. It's not just for Mary and Joseph. They're going to get a little child. Everyone who's a parent here knows what it feels like when you get a child. Oh, it's fantastic news. Imagine you had an angel telling you, hey Adrian, you guys are expecting another child. Okay, it's not normal that angels come and tell you you're going to get a child. So there's something special about this child, obviously, just straight off the bat.

And the news, what makes it great is great joy. What makes it important is it's news for all the world. See that there? And then it's something about this person is going to be born and specifically he's going to be the Messiah. He's going to be the Lord. We're going to unpack that over the next few weeks. What we're going to look at today is about this question of news. So here's an interesting question for us to grapple with as we look at the good news about Christmas time, about Jesus.

What makes something news? I don't know if you've ever really thought about that. The gospel is good news. It's good news. Okay, so the good part you can understand vaguely. That needs to be unpacked anyway. But today I'm going to look at the news bit. Okay, the news. What makes the gospel news?

What's the message? What's it about? If someone had to come in here to our services and burst in, and we've had that earlier today, and when these new doors open and close, you might just happen.

Hey, I've got really important news. There's various criteria we would judge to say, okay, is this guy actually giving us news or is he just talking nonsense? Okay, so what is it that makes an announcement news or maybe perhaps newsworthy? Something that needs to grab our attention and we need to take, okay, this is actually important. I need to listen to this.

[8 : 09] Now, I'm going to analyze that from a person called N.T. Wright, who's a top-class Christian theologian and thinker. He's had a lot of thinking in this area about how the gospel is good news, what that means for how the church, how we should think about the gospel. And he gives us three little outlines to follow through. If you were in earlier, we did these book courses earlier in the year, and some of you might have been with Nick. He covered this, the Simply Good News, I think it was, the book. And so I'm just using that outline for us to look at because it's brilliant. Okay, so what N.T. Wright says is when you've got something that's news, you need three things to make it news, okay? First, it's got to be something that's happened. It can't be something that's made up because then it's not actually worth anything. Secondly, it's got to have something with a backstory. You can't just give me raw information. I need to put it into some sort of context for it to make sense. And then thirdly, with the news, it introduces a new, something new has opened up in this bigger story, and there's an intermediate period of waiting for the whole thing to come to fulfillment or fruition. So it's sort of a news about something that's going to happen. It's news that has, something has happened, but it's funny enough, it's also about something that's happened, and then you're caught in this in-between, but waiting for the whole thing to come together.

Just to give some examples, for example, first, the first point is, if something is news, it must be something that's happened. It needs to be true. So when I say something has happened, what I mean is it's true. It's happened, it's real. It's not just made up fairy tales, okay?

My sister's kid, okay, mom, I think I got this sorted. Christmas is about Jesus' birth. Easter is about his death. He's like, where do the tooth fairies come in? And so, okay, but you know, you've got to have something that's really real for it to make sense. So imagine someone burst in again and says, hey, I've got great news. This person has just won the lottery. Okay, great.

Or rather, let me put it this way. Let's say I play a prank on someone and say, hey, listen, you know, put some money on the lottery. You've just won the lottery. But I'm just joking. And they go off to work, tell their boss exactly what they think of them. And then afterwards, they say, oh, you know, actually, the news wasn't real. So news, for it to make sense, to do something, has to be real. That must actually have happened. And in just a word about, I'm going to use this lottery over the next few sort of examples. And I was reminded in the first service, I'm not saying you must go out and buy lotto tickets, okay? I'm just using this as an example of how news works, okay? For the gospel to be news, it must be about something that has really happened in history, in time and space. It's got to be true. Does that make sense? Okay. Second, news needs a backstory.

News doesn't just happen out of the blue. For something to be news, it's got to have a context, okay? We'll call it backstory. So imagine someone runs in and says, oh, oh, the numbers are 12, 6, 9, 23, and 7. Now, okay, I've primed us because I'm talking about the lottery. But imagine just out of the blue, someone starts running and starts shouting numbers at us, okay? Or is it the cricket score? Is it a rugby score? Have you lost weight? Have you gained weight? What's going on?

[11 : 37] No, no, no, no. It makes sense to the person with a lotto ticket. He's watching. Yay! He's won, okay? So that's the backstory. It makes sense in a larger context. Now, the gospel has a backstory, okay? The gospel occurs in the New Testament, but it doesn't start in the New Testament.

The gospel backstory is the whole of the Old Testament, okay? We'll see that in just a second, in a few minutes. And that's very important for us to grapple with. And then third, news introduces an intermediate period of waiting. Good news puts a new event into an old story.

The event points to a wonderful future that was, before this was completely out of reach, and introduces a new period into which, instead of living a hopeless life, people are now waiting with excitement for whatever they know is now on the way. So someone bursts in again to our service and says, yeah, I've got news, I've got news. So-and-so has just won the lottery, and they're donating it all to St. Mark's. Okay, that is good news. That'd be great news.

We'd start living in anticipation of having the money in our account. So you get the lotto, you know how it takes months for it to come through. And we would start planning things, wouldn't we? But we'd be, we'd receive the news that something has happened, but we'd be waiting in anticipation until the money actually lands in St. Mark's bank account. But in the meantime, whoo, ladies? Okay, guys? We'd all be doing a lot of, hey, we can do this, we can do that.

Okay, so that's what, that's how news works. Now, gospel kind of works in the same way, because of something that has happened in the past, we can look forward to something new. We would live our lives based on knowing that the past event is going to have a massive impact in our future. So then let's dig a little bit deeper into how the gospel works as news. So those three things, we're going to run the gospel through those three different criteria. First thing for us to grapple with is that the gospel is news about an event. That's the main thing for us to get, one of the main things I want us to get today. The gospel is about an event. It's really about a series of events, but it's about things that have taken place in time and space in history.

[13 : 54] If I were to ask you what the gospel news is all about, what is the gospel all about? And you get so many different answers, but it's important that we get the biblical answer. It's not that there's one answer, it's shaded, but there's a core to it that we need to get. Now, when we ask people, okay, well, where's the gospel? We get lots of different answers. Some will say, oh, the gospel is about how much God loves us. That's true, but that's not the core of the gospel. Some will say, it's about Jesus dying for me or paying for my sins. That's part of the gospel. Those are one of the events, but there's a bunch of other events that make up the gospel. Others would say it's about being on a journey of change and living a better life. But that takes the gospel from being good news to being good advice. Do this and you can live a better life. That's not the gospel message.

The gospel message is about something that has happened. Are you happy about that? That's what news is. News isn't, the news guys don't come on TV and then start telling you how to live.

They come on TV and say, hey, this has happened. The gospel message is the same thing. Hey, something has happened. This is not how the Bible, those examples I gave, is not how the Bible defines the gospel.

The gospel in Luke 2 is simply about the fact that Jesus has been born. It doesn't even mention Jesus, actually. It just says, hey, there's this kid on the way, and this kid, there's something amazingly important about this kid. So that's the gospel.

The event kicks off the good news announcement that has something to do with this little baby, Jesus, coming into the world. What's important for us to get here is that this is a real historical event.

[15 : 37] It actually happened. If you were there, you would have seen it. Some things to notice. The gospel is not about me and my problems. Very often when people, they start off with you. They say the gospel message, you've got a problem. No, no.

That's not an event. You're telling me about something about... The gospel is an event. It's about Jesus coming into the world. The gospel isn't about something I must do. The gospel is good news, not good advice. N.T. Wright talks about that.

What's more, the gospel is not only about Jesus dying on the cross. Notice what the good news is here in Luke chapter 2, if you've still got it there. The angel says, don't be afraid, I bring you gospel.

I bring you a gospel of great joy. What is the gospel? Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. Not, what is the gospel? Jesus died for your sins. Now, yes, Jesus died for our sins.

But we don't want to put... That's part of the gospel events that take place. But very often we sort of narrow it down to just, Jesus has died for my sins. The gospel here starts with the birth of Jesus.

[16 : 40] We need to take that into account in the way that we think about the gospel. Happy? That means the gospel is more than Jesus dying for my sins.

It's actually about who he is. We'll unpack that over the coming weeks because you'll see there's interesting things about this boy that's going to get born. Today in the town of David, that's important news.

A Savior has been born to you. That's important. What about the Savior that's important? Oh, he's Christ the Lord. Hmm, some very deep stuff there about Jesus that we need to unpack for us to get.

That sort of gets put into that gospel bucket, if you want. The gospel starts with the birth of Jesus. But that doesn't still quite give us the whole picture.

I mean, babies are born all the time. What's so special about this one? And so that brings us to the back story. So the first point is, the gospel is about something that's happened in time and space. Well, let's look at the back story.

- [17 : 37] The gospel here is, this baby has been born. So what's the back story? Why is that important? How do we get, what's important about that? Well, the back story of the gospel event in the New Testament is the whole of the Old Testament.

We're not going to go through it all today, no worry. But Luke gives us a clue. And so just, if you're just in Luke chapter 1, I don't even have to turn. It's right there next to where we are in chapter 2.

So I want to just look at Luke chapter 1, verse 68 to 75, because it unpacks a lot of some very Old Testament-y type stuff for us to grapple with. So I'm going to read from verse 68.

It's Zechariah speaking. God has told him he's also going to have a son, Zechariah. Is he the uncle? But anyway, he's cousin. John the Baptist is the cousin of Jesus.

Mary and John's mom were sisters. Am I right? I'm just going to be right for now. You can correct me later. Zechariah is talking.

- [18 : 32] He says, Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel. Oh, that's an Old Testament thing right there. The God of Israel. Because he has come to his people and redeemed them. Oh, he's going to do something. What is he going to do?

Well, he's raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Well, there's an Old Testament thing for us. Oh, as he said through his holy prophets of long ago. Well, there's another Old Testament thing for us to grapple with.

What has he told them? Well, he's going to bring salvation for my enemies. Someone born to the house of David. What does that make this person, by the way? If someone is born to the house of David, what does that make this person?

If I'm born to the house of Windsor, I tell you, Hello, I'm Mr. Windsor. Is it the house of Windsor? I'd be a king. A prince.

From England. Queen Elizabeth. To be born in the house of David means that this person is going to be a king. Got that? Salvation from our enemies, from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham.

- [19 : 40] There's a big Old Testament thing to grapple with. To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and enable us to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him all our days. And so, this tells us that the gospel is wrapped up with what God has said to Abraham, and to David, and the whole Old Testament.

The baby that we celebrate at Christmas is a really, really big deal. That's what this is telling us. And just look at all the cool stuff that's associated with him.

Just that section in Luke. Redemption. Strength. The horn. Salvation. Salvation. Royalty. He's going to protect people. There's victory language there. There's mercy language there.

There's covenant. There's oath making. There's blessings that are promised to Abraham. That's quite a legacy for someone to be born with. So, basically, the gospel then is about this epic story that is stretched through the eons.

If you go back to Abraham, you're going back 2,000 years before Jesus is born. So, there's a story that started 2,000 years before Christ got here, and it culminates with the birth of Jesus.

- [20 : 49] And it's about what God is going to do through that person to bring about those things that he's talking about in Luke into time and space, into our world.

Isn't that cool? That's something to celebrate at Christmastime. And then thirdly, the gospel, as news, introduces an intermediate period of waiting.

Now, waiting here is not waiting like, you know, we wait in line at the, going to renew your driver's license. It's terrible. It's not that kind of nonsense waiting.

Waiting here is more like looking forward, or it's actually being prepared. That's probably a better word. It introduces a period of being prepared for the next step that's going to happen.

It's not a, but now, what's important for us, in the way we understand how the gospel works, this is not a preparing or an anticipation to leave planet Earth. The gospel message shouldn't really be about Jesus died and saved us, and so that you can go be with him in heaven.

[21 : 56] That's not where the biblical gospel ends up. It's not anticipation to leave the world, but rather anticipation as we, who've heard the gospel and responded, prepare the world for Jesus to come back into the world, and that we get to be part of making the world all shiny and new again.

Can you see that that's a very different way of looking at the gospel? And hey, don't worry, when you die, you can go to heaven. Well, the Bible says, yeah, here's the gospel, and now you can start working at making the world good again, because Jesus is coming back.

Can you see the difference there? Now, that Old Testament reading we had in Isaiah also unpacks this a little bit. You don't have to turn there, but you can if you want to, Isaiah 61.

Notice, maybe I'll just point out that, Isaiah 61 verse 1, the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. There's the gospel word.

The whole section in Isaiah is about what the gospel does. And it tells us what the gospel accomplishes in the people connected to the Messiah.

[23 : 10] The gospel changes them. But it changes them for a reason, a purpose. And that reason is to get busy making the world into a better place, a place fit for its king.

Now, once the people of the Messiah have been healed, verse 1, verse 2, verse 3, He sent me to wind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom from captives, proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, comfort for those who mourn, crown of beauty, oil of gladness, garment of praise, oak of righteousness.

So you get healing, freedom, comfort. You're made beautiful. You're made strong. What is the purpose? To go away? Or to do something here? Well, have a look at verse 4. I'll have it on the screen.

Once this has happened to my people, once this gospel has done this work in my people, they will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated. They will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Isn't that interesting? They will rebuild. They will renew. They will restore. The gospel is the news that God's great renewal, God's great restoration, God's great rebuilding project has begun.

[24 : 24] You've heard us talk about that language here. It has begun because the person it's talking about, Jesus, has come into the world and has begun to change people. And that's why the gospel is good news.

Because it has this effect on people. It's just so lovely if you look at that Isaiah passage. And that Isaiah passage is picked up by Jesus in Luke, later on in Luke. It's the first sermon that he preaches.

He reads these words and he says, you know what boys? Today this is fulfilled in your hearing. I've come to do these things. Bind up the broken hearted find healing. Prisoners and captives find freedom.

Those who mourn receive comfort. And the shamed and the disgraced will find favor. Those who are touched by the Messiah will be made both beautiful and strong.

Isn't that a cool image to think about? Now isn't that news worth listening to and responding to? I think so. So now that we've got a better understanding of what it means that the gospel is good news, I just want to look at the contemporary world and look at some challenges to how that news could potentially be received or be rejected and why it would do so.

[25 : 37] And so we're going to look at some cultural challenges to the good news. It's sort of like, so here we've got the good news, but there's a lot of other narratives, there's a lot of other messages out there.

How do they interact with the news of Jesus? I want to look at two things in particular. One is fake news versus true news. You've heard about fake news doing the rounds recently.

And then the other one is cancel culture because that tells us that hey, I'm interested in your news, I want to shut your news down. You must listen to my news and you can't have your news. So let's have a quick look at fake news.

Now, one of the things about fake news is it tells you something that might be true but it puts a little bit of a twist on it and then you're not quite sure is it real or not.

So if I came and said, great news, you had another announcement of another news announcement, South Africa's won the World Cup. South Africa's won the World Cup, it is good news.

[26 : 33] And, oh, we've won the Dubai Sevens recently again. And, if you heard that news, what sort of cultural or sort of social box would you tend to put that news into?

Where do you go to, what do you do with sport? It's a sport box, which is kind of our entertainment box, isn't it, for us? If I said, hey, great news, we spoke earlier about Roe versus Wade, the abortion legislation in America has been overturned.

What box does that go into, do you think, in the modern world? Roe versus Wade, justice, politics, maybe ethics, because the two are sort of related.

If someone came to you and said, oh, I want to share with you the news about Jesus, I want to share the gospel with you, what box do we generally put that in? We would generally put it in the religion box.

But this is where the fake news bit comes in. We have bought into the fake news that the news about Jesus belongs to a religion box. And the problem with that is that in the modern world, the religion box is sealed off from all the other boxes.

[27 : 43] They're not allowed to touch each other. They're hermetically sealed. You know what that is? They can't touch each other. And the religion box falls into the private, personal, moral choice about how you live your life.

So you can live your life with your religion, but I want to live life by my religion. It's your opinion. That's my opinion. It's faith-based. There's no real reality there.

And that's how it's treated in the modern world. But if we believe this, we've been sold a dud. We've been sold fake news. The modern world loves to have religion, especially Christianity, sealed off from anything to do with social issues, anything to do with politics, anything to do with justice, anything to do with the public sphere at all, especially sexuality is the latest thing we've got to deal with.

So when we, as Christians, put the news about Jesus into the religion box, we are buying into the fake news narrative that you can have your religion just as long as we, as the rest of society, cannot see it, hear it, or have any way be challenged by it.

But the news that we've been describing, does that sound like it belongs into the private moral religion sphere? Actually. It's about an event that's happened, it's got a backstory that's been going on for 2,000 years, and it's got massive implications for how people live their lives.

[29 : 11] So the gospel is news about something that's happened, and then that fits into the world of everyday reality. If something has happened in everyday reality, in history, in time and space, then that's impacting me.

It impacts everyone. The gospel of Jesus takes place in the world of history, of facts, in the public space. And what's more, because it's news about a king, it has implications for politics as well, and for society as a whole.

Are you happy to see that we shouldn't just put it in a religion box? What about cancel culture? The other challenge to the gospel being heard, this is actually a challenge for the gospel to be not heard.

It's the cancel culture out there. Culture doesn't stand still. It grows and develops and changes. In fact, modern culture is changing so fast these days, but it's less and less tolerant of even allowing people to have their own personal views, especially if it contradicts what is considered to be the norm, especially online and with social media.

here's a definition of cancel culture. Cancel culture is called call-out culture, is a modern form of ostracism or taboo in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circle, whether it's online or social media or in person, and those subject to this ostracism are said to have been cancelled.

[30 : 38] And, you know, we can see it work in subtle ways. Just think about Christmas time. When you look at the adverts, do they mention even Christmas? Some do.

Many times they don't. And what do they replace it with? Happy holidays or festive season. Whatever you do, don't put Christmas in Christmas.

Happy season. I actually like to say, just say Christmas. You can say it. Christmas. Well done. Okay, but that's okay.

So they cancelled Christmas. You hardly ever see it anymore. It gets a little bit more serious when people start losing their jobs. So here is a story from the UK about a nurse that got bullied out of a job for wearing a crucifix around her neck.

And so the news report says this is in October in the UK. Devout Christian Mary Anawa. She's from Africa, by the way. African lady. Claims she was forced out of a job of 18 years at Croydon University Hospital because the crucifix was considered to be a health and safety risk.

[31 : 46] Not sad. she's fighting them and she could well win. Another example of cancel culture is Israel Folau, the seriously good Australian rugby player.

He's in the top three prize scores in their history. He lost a contract for millions after he was accused of a homophobic tweet but he actually just quoted the Bible. Rugby Australia, the governing body, said that his religious beliefs were quote, inconsistent with the values of the sport and described the language he used in the post as totally unacceptable.

Yet on the other hand, Rugby Australia supports what they call quote, the values of inclusion, respecting differences and diversity and that everyone has a right to their own beliefs.

Except of course if it's Christian and you share it in a public domain. And so, how we engage with modern culture is a good discussion to have but we must not let ourselves be cancelled or silenced.

The message we have is just too important to be stopped because if you cancel the gospel, you're cancelling the only real hope that people have in the world. Cancel culture says that the world knows better than God.

[33 : 07] That the creatures of the world know better than their creator as to how they should live their lives and they just don't want to listen. But when you look closely at how they live their lives, you'll notice that it's the polar opposite of what you find in Isaiah 61 of what the Messiah's people get.

What we've come out of. Captivity, darkness, broken heartedness, shame, disgrace. Ironically, the people who least want to hear it are the very ones who need it the most.

So here's a question for us. Do we have the courage and the conviction to engage with them so that they get a hearing, so that the gospel can get a hearing in their lives and that they get a chance at being changed?

Just to sum up then, Christmas is about the gospel, or rather, the gospel is about Christmas, really, or vice versa. The gospel is the announcement that the world has a new king, and this king is going to fill the world with peace and love and joy, in a word blessing, but real peace, actual peace that works in people's lives, love that makes a difference, joy for people who need it.

these things are ours if we've accepted this good news, if we've got Jesus as our king. Now, just so that we know, if your Christmas doesn't have any gospel in it, and there's visitors here, maybe you need to respond to this proclamation about Jesus.

[34 : 37] You need to do some soul searching. Hey, where do I stand with Jesus? How do I think of him? How do I relate to him? Maybe you've let, you know, we get a lot of visitors at Christmas time.

Maybe you've let slip coming to church over the year, you've sort of come and then you've dropped out a bit. Maybe you come a little bit more just to see what's going on with this message about this Jesus. Maybe I need to hear a bit more. Maybe your life is full of stories that don't make any sense.

You're just confused about how the world works. Or worse, your life is full of sort of half-truths that keep tripping you up. They're full of lies. You keep believing the lies that trip you up. You poison your happiness and your peace.

then Christmas time is the perfect time to do business with Jesus. The King has come. The world has changed. New life and new hope is available to those who follow him as their Lord.

And then lastly, maybe if you already follow Jesus as Lord, you know, fantastic. Good. Keep doing that. The King has come. The world has changed. The exciting thing for us is that we get to be part of that change process.

[35 : 43] We get Jesus' help to change us and then we get full access rights to his power to go and change the world. That's an ongoing process. It's not like it's not a waving magic wand and you change overnight and then you're 100% Christian.

In some sense, you are. Your status is changed. But how you live that out is a rough one. But we get full access to his power to change us and the world.

We do that by telling others about the message of him. We tell others about the good news so that those who still need to receive the same power that we've got can join us and together as we serve Jesus as our King, we can make all things new again and make our world the place that God always intended to be.

I think that's good news at Christmas time. I hope you agree. Let's close in prayer. Dear Lord Jesus, what a lovely reminder of who you are and that you're part of a story that's been going on for millennia and that story is changing the world that we live in.

Lord, thank you for calling us to be part of that change, to be part of your people, to follow you. And Lord, we ask for continuing outpourings of your power and your grace and your mercy in our lives.

[37 : 03] We are changed, Lord, but we constantly need more changing. And Lord, encourage us and strengthen us to speak and live out this truth, this gospel message boldly in our lives so that anyone who comes into contact with us will know that we've got a message to give and it's a good message.

Prepare hearts and minds to receive it, Lord, so that your kingdom can grow here on earth. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen.