

Christmas

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[0 : 00] Sharing. What will you be sharing in this Christmas? What will you be sharing in tomorrow?

! We want to share, don't we? We want to meet with loved ones, to gather around, to gather! to gather around the turkey or whatever it is that you're eating, to gather around the tree to give gifts. We love to do it, don't we? It's part of what makes us human.

To share. Seeing something, experiencing something, doing something is always better when it's shared with someone else. It's why phone companies make a lot of money out of the share function, isn't it, on your phones. The feeling of communion with others, we love that. Sometimes we need it. The old adage is true, a problem shared is a problem halved. Sometimes life is just overwhelming. We feel entrapped by our circumstances, we have nothing left to say to ourselves on our own. We're dried up. We just need someone. Someone to share in it with us. Someone to sit with us and to say, I know. I don't want to face things on my own. I want someone to share in it with me. We're going to finish off this little mini-series we've done on Hebrews chapter one and two this morning. And this is where it's all been heading at the end of chapter two. This word that we hear at Christmas time, the Son of God coming, God speaking in the incarnation.

The sound of Christmas is God saying, I am coming to share. Sharing in your human condition, in your struggles and in your sufferings. I'm not just going to give you some instructions or some good theology, although I will give you that. I am coming. Coming into your situation to be with you. To share. This section at the end of chapter two hangs on verses 14 and 15 if you look there. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook or shared of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil. I come to share with you. So that as we read earlier in the service, he says I can sympathise with you. So that I can deal gently with you. So that when you waver and when you wobble, I can say I know. I really do. I want to look at this sharing in these last few verses of chapter two this morning. And we're going to start sort of looking at it generally and then focus in on what this sharing means. First of all, God in Jesus shares in our everything.

In Jesus, God shares in our everything. Just don't look at verse 16 there. For surely it's not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect. In every respect. You know, there are some things that we'd rather not share, aren't there. There's an old joke. It's quite a bad joke, but I'll tell it anyway, about an elderly couple who went to McDonald's and they order one hamburger, one portion of fries and one drink.

[4 : 04] The old man unwraps the hamburger and then carefully cuts it in half perfectly. He places one half in front of his wife and he has one half. He then carefully counts all of the fries, divides them into two equal portions, giving one to his wife and he keeps the other one. He takes a sip of the drink and then she takes a sip. And as he begins to eat his burger, the people around them begin to stare and whisper, that poor old couple, all they can afford is one meal between the two of them. So eventually a young man goes over to the table and he politely offers to buy another meal for them. And the old man says, it's okay actually, we're used to sharing everything. This is just what we do. People notice though that the old lady hasn't eaten a bite yet. She sits there watching her husband. Again, the young man comes over and begs them to let him buy them another meal. But this time the old woman says, no, no, thank you.

We're used to sharing everything. But still the woman doesn't eat a thing. So the young man again, he comes over and asks the old lady, I'm sorry to be rude, but may I ask you why you're waiting to eat? And the old woman answers, I'm waiting for the teeth. There are some things we would rather not share, aren't there. When the son of God becomes a man in the incarnation, he doesn't squirm at sharing in our everything. Nothing in his sharing is off limits for him. He doesn't say, I won't share in that.

He is made like his brothers in every respect. And so God comes and lives a hard life. He lives a hard, hard life. He comes and shares in all the things we share in. The bread of life shares in our hunger.

He shares in our tiredness, seeking water at the well. He shares in our grief at the graveside of a friend.

He shares in our disappointments with the faithlessness of others. The loyal servant of God shares in knowing what it's like to be betrayed by his closest. The pure and holy God knows what it's like to share in our temptations. The loving Lord is hated. He shares in our overwhelming fear of pain. He gets to the end of his tether. He gets angry. He cracks the whip. He shares in our weeping. God sobs. He shares in our joys. Growing up as a boy, developing, learning, gaining friends, gaining popularity, enjoying work, enjoying life and food and friendship. He shares in our angst, numbed by loss. He shares in our flesh and in our blood. Have you ever thought about this question? If Jesus came to die, if that was his main mission, why couldn't he just do that straight away? Why couldn't he just die as a boy? If that was his only mission, that would work, wouldn't it? The sacrifice would still be infinitely valuable. He could pay for sin as a little boy, couldn't he? But that's not the only reason for the incarnation. The reason for the incarnation was that God could share with us is that God could share with us so that he could say,

[8 : 07] I know, I really do. So that he could speak about his people in the most intimate of ways so that he might call us brothers and sisters. He comes to share, to share with his family, to share in our everything.

So let's get a bit more specific. He comes to share in our everything, but he specifically comes to share in our sufferings. He comes to share in our sufferings. And this is where we get a bit more detailed here, isn't it? The pastor of the Hebrews tells us that his sharing was particularly to do with suffering. Just look at verse 10 in chapter 2. 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. Some sharing is transformative. Some sharing is life-saving. I don't know if you saw earlier this year in the news about the father who died, saving his 11-year-old girl from rough sea earlier this summer.

They were on a beach in Italy. His name was Simon Pearson. And she got caught in deep water. She was in trouble. She was perishing. He saw her. And so from the comfort of the warm sand and the sun lounger and his drink, he was overwhelmed with love. And a paternal instinct took over. There was no room, was there, to think of his own luxury at that point. For this was his own daughter. So he plunged himself into the same deep, dark water he shared with her in her suffering. But do you see how that sharing wasn't just for moral support? It wasn't just so that he could put his arm around her and say, it's okay, I know what you're going through. No, it was to put his arm around her for a rescue.

The sharing was that he might transform the situation for her. That he might rescue her. Reports say about that incident that as he fought to save her, he did, he urged her saying, hold my hand. And in the same way, Jesus comes, not just to share and say, I know what it's like, but in his sharing, but in his sharing, to transform. His situation had to be made like our situation. So he could get us out of it. And so it was fitting, he says there, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect to be a faithful and merciful high priest. He had to be, there was no other way. So it was appropriate that he suffered. His experience as a rescuer had to correspond with our experience as the rescued, as captives. This is what he means in verse 10 by how he was made perfect as the founder of our salvation. It's a funny phrase that, isn't it? It's not that Jesus was made morally perfect. No, he's always been that. That's never changed. But that he is perfected as our liberator, as our saviour. He is perfected in that role. He is perfected, he is qualified because he has come into the water. Staying on the beach. He would have still been morally perfect, wouldn't he? But useless as a saviour, the son of God. But in his sufferings, he is able now to rescue because he has shared with us. He's able to comprehend the human condition. He's able to appreciate our problems. Yes, he's able to sympathise with them. But more than that, he's able to get us out of them. He shares with us to rescue us.

Let's get more specific. What does he come to rescue us from? What are we enslaved to? What is the prison that he's come to rescue us from? Just drop your eye down to verse 14. Again, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death 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. That's the rub, isn't it, right there.

[13:16] He comes to rescue us from fear of death and the work of the devil. The fear of death, whether we admit it or not, we sort of ignore it, don't we, a lot of the time.

The fear of death hangs around our necks, weighing us down. This is the prison. The novelist Peter Schaeffer wrote, I'm going to die, and the thought of that dark has for years rotted everything for me.

It's the thought that haunts me. It's this, death. This is now, but that is then. And this prison, it holds us to ransom, subjects us to lifelong slavery. Even the young and the free, even the healthy and the rich, are running wild in the world, enjoying themselves, whilst all the while running round behind bars. Paul says that the wages of sin is death. It's our missing the moral mark that feeds this death. And the devil, this real being, not a cartoon character, this evil being, uses sin and death as a threat. He brings accusations against us. He waves our sin in front of us. He taunts us with our death. And the one God in Trinity looks at his children and he's overwhelmed, isn't he, with paternal instinct and he dives in. So God the Father sends his Son and God the Son comes. And God the Spirit anoints the Son and gives him the power

God the Son and gives him the power of God. And the Lord, he says, God the Son and gives him the power of God. Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Go and be with them in their prison.

It is a staggering verse that we heard earlier on in chapter 5 in verse 7. He shares with us in our everything. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his reverence.

[15:51] What is going on there? These are the loud cries of God in the prison. This is God crying out behind the bars of death, sharing in the death that we've earned.

Crying deep tears of anguish here, contemplating this death, saying, not my will but yours be done. Sharing in the rot and in the dark dungeon.

And so death was a fierce beast, but Jesus has muzzled death. As a kid, I used to visit a friend who lived on a farm.

And it was a proper farm. A real farm. Like, not what we see in London. But they had a dog. A German shepherd. It was a really, really big dog. Or I was just really small.

And it was always waiting when we got there to his farm. The only way you could walk past the dog was not to look at the dog.

[17:00] Otherwise you wouldn't. But to look at the stake that it was tied to. To look at the chain around its neck. The stake was a great comfort.

The chain was a great comfort. As soon as he pays for death. Pays for sin in his death. Death itself is tamed, isn't it?

Death sinks its teeth into Jesus. And now its bark is worse than its bite. Paul says that the sting of death is sin.

But now that Jesus has purified us from our sin. He's dealt with our sin. The devil is bereft of his ability to threaten us.

The devil, he fumbles around with the keys to the prison, doesn't he? But the doors have been blown off. It was an inside job. Without sin, purified by this liberator.

[17:58] The high priest who is the sacrifice of sin himself. Death has lost its bite. He comes to share. And he comes to take the lion's share of our suffering, doesn't he?

All of it focused on him. In our prison. In our rut. To get us out of it. So he urges us. Hold my hand. The word in verse 16. He helps the offspring of Abraham. It's not strong enough, that word. Helps. It means to take hold of.

To seize. To grasp. C.S. Lewis pictures a diver. First reducing down through green and warm water into black and cold water.

Down through increasing pressure into the death-like region ooze and slime and old decay. Then up again. Holding in his hand the dripping precious thing that he went down to recover.

[19:00] He shares in our everything. He shares in our everything. That he might share in our suffering and relieve us and release us from it. So that thirdly and lastly, we can share in his glory.

So that we can share in his glory. This is the wonder of Christmas, isn't it? That God in Christ comes to share with us with what we are.

To share with us what he has. To share in all the Father gives him. He becomes ours and dwells within us.

And he is one with us. And he comes to join himself to us. To build a family with us. That we might enjoy royal family benefits with him, the son.

Oneness with us in our prison means oneness with him in his royal palace. It's an intriguing verse in verse 11 of chapter 2.

[20 : 04] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. What does that mean? He's talking there about an affiliation between the sanctifier and those sanctified.

The union between Jesus and his people, I think. And I think he's saying there that it is because of Jesus sharing with us. That God the Son and his people now have a oneness in source in God the Father.

The Son of God brings many other sons to glory. Meaning the Son of God and us, the sons of God, have God as their Father.

But in different and complementary ways. We now share in all that the Father gives us. And there is no clearer way of expressing this relationship than Jesus identifying us as part of the family.

He calls us brothers. The quotes at the end of chapter 2 are from Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8. And they show, don't they, that the incarnation was preparation for a cosmic family get-together.

[21 : 19] Where the Son would unite himself with his family. To raise them up, to bring them home. Isaiah 53 says, When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

And he shall prolong his days. God the Son was being a family man, wasn't he? This was the point of the incarnation. Sharing with new family, with new brothers.

Opening up his royal lineage. Sharing in his inheritance with us. As Lewis puts it, The Son of God became man, that men might become sons of God.

But I wonder, this morning, do we recognise ourselves as royal? Do you recognise yourself as this person? Do you know this is who you are in Christ?

The story goes of a group of tourists who'd spent hours looking for a missing female in Iceland, one of the group. Only to find out she was actually among the search party.

[22 : 35] The group were travelling through Iceland on a bus. And they stopped near this volcanic canyon on a break. And one of the women got off to change her clothes.

And when she got back, her mates didn't recognise her on the bus. Words quickly spread of a missing passenger. And amazingly, the woman did not recognise her own description.

And happily joined the search. Nearly 50 people searched the terrain in vehicles and on foot. And the Coast Guard even brought in a helicopter. However, the search was called off at 3am.

When it was obvious that the missing woman had in fact been searching for herself. She couldn't recognise herself. And that's often, isn't it, the problem in the Christian life.

We can't recognise ourselves. Children of God. Brothers. Sharing with the Son of God in the royal family of God.

[23 : 39] If you want to know how the royals spend Christmas, just come to church tomorrow. Now wherever the sun goes, the other children go. Who sanctifier and sanctified.

All have one source. One Father. There is a list in this church. I was going to bring it with me. I forgot. There's a list of church members.

People who are members of this church. Can I say, if you're a member of this church. Or you're visiting from another church. And you're a member there. There is no greater list.

There is no other list that is more important in this world. No other VIP list. No other greater group to be part of.

No other group that comes even close. Than the group with the list with the names written on it. In God's royal family. In God's church.

[24 : 40] This place. This church. Is here by royal appointment. So do you recognise yourself? When we started this little series in Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 1. Five weeks ago. We heard, didn't we? The sound of Christmas. We heard that God speaks in his son. God speaks to his son then.

Doesn't he? Comparing him with the angels. Declaring him greater than the angels. But this. Here at the end of chapter 2. Is where the son himself speaks.

Isn't it? We hear the voice of Jesus speak for the first time here. Directly speaking to us. And what are the words that we hear?

They are the words that we long to hear from him. Saying. Brothers. Here I am. Sharing with you.
[25 : 40] My family. Sharing with you at Christmas time. And sharing with you forever. At your best.
And at your worst.

I know. I really do. So come and hold my hand. Come and hold my hand. This transforming.
Sharing saviour.

And come and share in his glory. The glory to come. Because he has shared. In our everything.
Let's pray.