

# Carol Service Talk

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to start tonight where I normally end in the cow series.! I'm going to start with you witnesses.

And it always amazes me. The number of people who reject Christianity out of hand. And they dismiss it. They won't give it a second thought. But they've never actually engaged with the first hand sources.

We wouldn't do that with anything else. But people will dismiss the Lord Jesus. Without having read the people who were there at the time. And we've got loads of these gospels.

They're on a table. With a sign saying please take one. So you won't miss it. And we'd love you to take one and read it. Don't take my word for it. Tonight you go home. You read it. You engage with the sources.

And then you'll also find in the little grey pockets. And by your seats. You'll find contact cards. If you want to find out more about our church. We'd love to tell you. About what we do. Or maybe you're interested in finding out more about Christianity.

[ 1 : 24 ] And we run a course imaginatively called Christianity Explorers. Lord. And it's a chance for you to look at one of these gospels. And to ask any questions you like.

It's six sessions. Or maybe it's that you just want to meet up with someone. Over a coffee. But anyway. Do fill in a card. We'll even give you a pen. And drop it in the box. At the back.

On your way out. And we'll be in touch. So do stick them in there. And fill them out. And my message tonight is a really simple one. And the title for the talk is a simple one.

Okay. Here it is. The title of my talk tonight is this. Don't believe in fairy tales. Don't believe in fairy tales.

I've got three reasons why I want to say that to you tonight. First of all. Don't believe in fairy tales. Because they. Because of the way they start.

[ 2 : 26 ] And how do fairy tales start? Children. How do fairy tales start? How do they start? Noah. Is that right? Are you going to say that right? Once upon a time.

That's how they start. Once upon a time. And it's not real. It's a fictional beginning isn't it? Fairy tales are a fictional world.

Where people believe in mythical beings. Beginnings. Never allowed. Myth. The magic of Christmas. Don't believe in fairy tales because of the way they start.

Of course the Christmas story. Which is why we're here tonight. Is completely different. Let me give you. What the New Testament writers. Particularly Luke do when they speak about Jesus.

They ground it in history. So let me read to you. The first four verses. Of Luke's gospel. This is how he begins. He says. Inasmuch as many have undertaken.

[ 3 : 29 ] To compile a narrative. Of the things that have accomplished among us. Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses. And ministers of the word have delivered them to us.

It seemed good to me. And here's the key. Having followed all things closely for some times past. To write an. A usele account. For you.

Most excellent Theophilus. That you may have certainty concerning the things. That you've been taught. And then in verse 5. He says. In the days. Of Herod the king of Judea.

And a little bit later. In the chapter. In verse 16. He says. In the sixth month. In verse 39. He says. In those days. In verse 57. He says. Now the time came.

Chapter 2. Verse 1. He says. In those days. A decree. Went out. From Caesar Augustus. He wants to make it. Very. Very clear. To you. That the Christmas story.

[ 4 : 28 ] Isn't. Nostalgic. It isn't myth. It isn't a fairy tale. It is grounded in history. And as you go through the New Testament.

You'll find that. Each of the writers. From the New Testament. Want to point this out to you. So Romans 5 says. At just the right time. The letters of the Galatians. Later on in the New Testament. It says. In the fullness of time. And so. In a certain time. In a certain place. At a certain point. In a certain time. There was a child who was born.

Jesus of Nazareth. Was born. And if you had been alive at the time. You could have met him. You could have shaken his hand. You could have talked to his mother.

But. The claim of Christianity of course. Is that this child. Is God. Who became man. The Christmas story.

[ 5 : 26 ] Is not a fairy tale. It is not once upon a time. It is at one point. In time. God entered.

His world. It's history. Don't believe in fairy tales. Because of how they begin. But secondly. Don't believe in fairy tales. Because of what they are.

Don't believe in fairy tales. Because of what they are. What are fairy tales? They're great aren't they? But they're escapists. They are escapists. Escapism. The words.

That start every fairy tale. Once upon a time. Tell us. That what is about to come. Is not fact. Fact. But fiction. You turn on the news. And Hugh Edwards.

On the news at ten. He doesn't begin. Does he. And say. Once upon a time. He doesn't. Because we know. That those words. Tell us. That what we're about to read. Is fiction.

[ 6 : 24 ] It's a warning. That we're about to enter a world. A magical world. Of tall tales. And the unbelievable. In deepest winter. And fairy tales.

Are to be read. And to be enjoyed. And they take you. Into another world. By their very nature. There are other worlds. There are other. There are elves. There are goblins. There are talking beasts.

There are fairies. There are mermaids. Another world. A world. A world that does not. Exist. And you know it.

But the Christmas story. Isn't like that. The Christmas story. Is about a God. Who entered. This world. And the Bible. Describes.

The Lord Jesus. As a man. Of sorrows. And acquainted. Familiar with grief. And so Jesus knew. What it was to be lonely. He knew what it was.

[ 7 : 20 ] To be heartbroken. Jesus knew. What it was. To sob. At the grave. Of friends. Jesus knew.

What it was. To be misunderstood. Completely. Jesus knew. What it was. To have family issues. He knew. The joy. Of family too. He knew. The deep pleasure.

Of friendship. But also. The pain. Of when it breaks down. He knew. What it was. To be betrayed. He knew. What it was. To be let down. He knew. What it was. To look. And have compassion.

On people. He knew. What it was. To be hungry. He knew. Exactly. What it was like. To have no time. For yourself. And to have people. Disturb you. All the time.

The Christmas story. And Christianity. Is not escapist. In fact. It's the exact opposite. It's not. Otherworldly. It is the God.

[ 8 : 15 ] Who made this world. Entering. Into this world. Entering. Fully. Into our humanity. It is the God. Who gave.

The law. Living. Under the law. He knew. What it was. To live. In this world. With all its pain. And all its.

Suffering. And all its frustration. The Christmas story. Is not a fairy tale. It is not escapist. It is. About a real baby. Who became.

A real man. Who lived. In a real world. It's about a God. Who cares. It's not a God. Who has entered. Into our pain.

Who has entered. Into this world. His world. And so. Don't believe in fairy tales. Because of how they begin. And don't believe in fairy tales.

[ 9 : 10 ] Because of what they are. But thirdly. Don't believe in fairy tales. Because of how they end. Because how do fairy tales end. How do fairy tales end.

Ethan. Say that again. They all live. Don't they. Happily ever after. Everything's perfect. The baddies.

Defeated. The hero triumphs. He gets the grill. They ride off. In the sunset. And they all live. Happily ever after. But the Christmas story.

Isn't like that. The Bible. Again and again. Gives you the reason. For his coming. The angels. Tell Joseph.

They say. You shall call his name. Jesus. For he will. Save his people. From their sins. The angels. Tell the shepherds. Fear not.

[10:10] For behold. I bring you good news. Of great joy. That will be for all people. For unto you is born. This day. In the city. Of David. A saviour. A rescuer. Who is Christ the Lord.

Jesus himself says. That the reason he came. Was not. To be served. But to serve. And to give his life.

Away. As a ransom for money. If. The Apostle Paul says. Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save. Sinners. That is.

The reason. Why he came. He came. He. God. Became. A man. And he became. Man. In order to die. And so.

His birth. Points. For us. To his death. He was literally. Born to die. The story. You may know it.

[11:09] It culminates. The climax. Of each of the gospels. Is. Jesus Christ. The man. The God man. Hanging. On a Roman cross.

Being executed. Publicly. And the question. Is why. It's not just. The story. The Bible. Says. That the Lord Jesus.

Loved men. And women. And boys. And girls. So much. That he. Entered. Into this world. Into time. And space. He took on. Human flesh. To deal with. Our biggest problem. Which is sin.

And sin. You don't like the word. But the reality. Behind the world. That we live in. Is that we've lived. In defiance. Of God. Maybe you've not even. Realised it.

You've not even. Thought about it. You thought that sin. Was terrible things. You know. Abuse. And murder. And lust. And theft.

[12:05] But the alarming. Reality. The dark side. Behind Christmas. Is that sin. Is actually. Not loving God. And not living.

For him. In his world. Sin. And sin. Is a falling short. Of what you and I. Were meant to be. It is. Active rebellion.

Against God. Saying no. I want to be in charge. Of my life. But maybe tonight. It's time to admit. And to acknowledge.

That the guilt. That your conscience. Sometimes feels. Is right. And that there is. Something wrong. And that you and I. Don't just need.

A helping hand. And don't just need. To be better organised. But actually. What I need. And what you need. Is rescue. And we can't.

[13:05] Help ourselves. You see. The Christmas story. Isn't a fairy tale. It is about a moment. In history. When God. Entered into the world. He created. It's not sentimental.

It is earth. In reality. Read his life. Look at how he lived. It's not all about. A happy ending. It's a rescue story.

With God. As the rescuer. And you. As the one. Need a rescue. I don't know.

If you read. The story. Of Rob Howes. Last year. Rob Howes. Was a British tourist. In New Zealand. And he went. Swimming. In the sea. Off the North Island. Of New Zealand.

He went into the water. With his daughter. Nicky. And two of her friends. And as Rob Howes. And his daughter. Nicky. And two of her friends. Were swimming.

[13:59] Off the North Sea. In the North Island. In New Zealand. And dolphins. Suddenly appeared. It was the most magical. And remarkable experience. He said.

And we thought the mammals. Were just being playful. And the dolphins. Started to herd us. They pushed the four of us. Together. The dolphins. Swam around us.

In tight circles. Rob tried to drift away. From the group. But two of the bigger dolphins. Herded him back. And it was when he got back.

To the beach. That he found out. That the dolphins. Were actually protecting him. From a great white shark. Rob Howes. Thought.

That what he was having. In the sea. Was just a magical. Experience. But on second. Look. It turned out.

[14:54] To be. A life saving rescue. There's going to be people. In this room tonight. And you think Christmas. Is just a magic experience. Just like swimming.

With dolphins. Some kind of. Otherworldly. Fairy time. The magic. Of Christmas. When all the time. Christmas. Is a life saving rescue. And so. Take a gospel. We'd love you to do that. Fill out a card. And find out more.

Bend your knee. And cry out to God. And ask him. To rescue you. From your rebellion. Against him.  
But don't believe in fairy tales.  
This Christmas. Let's pray. Let's pray.