

# Christmas Day service

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let me wish you a very, very happy Christmas. In this Christmas message, I want to do really one thing.! I want you to believe the impossible.

! It's a miracle.

I want you to believe this morning the impossible. Because, firstly, you cannot conceive of the Christmas story without understanding that there is a miracle, a miraculous conception for the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you've got a Bible, make no mistake about it. Look at verse 19 of Matthew chapter 1. It's on, I don't know what page it's on, but you can find it. Matthew chapter 1, and right at the start of verse 18, it says, Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And from the very first verse, describing the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's telling you and I that Christmas is about a miracle.

[ 1 : 21 ] A true miracle where the ordinary cause and effect of nature has been suspended by the deity, by God. And it's called supernature.

Or supernatural. And thus it is with the Christmas event. And there is no way that you can even begin to understand Christmas or Christianity until your mind is open to the miraculous.

We all know, don't we, that there are things that are very difficult to believe. If you're a golf fan, you might remember the Ryder Cup, where there was the miracle of Medina.

If you're a Liverpool Football Club fan, you'll remember that they were 3-0 down in the Champions League final against Istanbul. Against, no, who was it? Against AC Milan, isn't it? And they came back and they managed to win.

And it's called the miracle of Istanbul. And you might have seen the film Sully. The miracle on the Hudson River. Where a pilot, Sully, lands a plane of 150 passengers and five crew on a river.

[ 2 : 31 ] They all survive miraculously. There are, aren't there, unusual natural events. I was in the post office on Greenford Avenue this week.

There was a big queue and somebody was there for a Christmas parcel. It was all very fraught and very tense. They'd been in a number of times for their Christmas parcel and hadn't got it. It wasn't their first visit.

There was lots of frustrations and tears and a fair bit of anger. The postmistress, in a slightly exasperated tone, said, I will look one more time. She disappeared into what was a vortex of parcels.

And she returns with the said parcel. Much to the joy of the woman. Cue more tears and exasperation. The man in the queue turns to me and said, It's a Christmas miracle.

We all know, don't we, that very unlikely things happen. Things that are difficult to believe. But when it comes to the conception of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible to believe because it is an impossible event.

[ 3 : 46 ] That a woman could get pregnant without the benefit of a man. Here is a real miracle that the Bible is wanting you to accept.

And what we are dealing with here is, it's not just a one-off, but actually when it comes to Christianity, there are many miracles that you must believe in order to be a follower of the Lord Jesus.

If you discount the miraculous, you will not be able to know the Lord Jesus, and you will certainly not be able to walk with him. Because you will not believe the heart of the Christian faith.

Earlier in the service, we just confessed part of the Nicene Creed. It's 1,700 years old this year. And it is a summary of Christian belief. What Christians, every Christian has believed down through the

ages.

And it talks about the essentials of the Christian faith. And they are all, almost all of them, miracles. What do we believe about God?

[ 4 : 50 ] We believe that God is three in one. Tri-unity, or we call it Trinity. We believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin.

We believe that Jesus Christ died a substitutionary, he took the place atoning death on Calvary's cross. We believe that Jesus Christ miraculously paid for my sin, my wrongdoing on the cross. How can that be? It is a miracle. And on the third day, this Jesus who died, and he was dead, cold in the tomb, three days later, he rose from the dead.

That is a miracle. He rose from the dead, and anyone who wants to follow the Lord Jesus Christ must believe in that bodily resurrection of Jesus. But not only that, 40 days after that, he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and he is seated at God's right hand, and he rules over the universe, and the Lord Jesus controls every blade of grass, and every falling leaf from a tree, and everything, and every human being.

That is a miracle. And not only that, but the Bible tells us that he's coming back, and he's going to bring perfect peace, he's going to bring the world that we all long for.

[ 6 : 14 ] And he'll deliver us from all evil. And that is a miracle. And so can you see with me that every plank of Christianity, all the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, they are miraculous.

And so verse 19, that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of a virgin, it fits. What a mystery that God intervened.

If you believe in a God, if you believe in God, and I assume you do, that's why you're here this morning, if you believe in God, surely it's not too difficult, is it? It's not too much to believe that the same God who made the world can act in his creation.

But it's more than that. What it's telling us is that God enters into creation in the person of his son, but why? Why?

Well, it tells us, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Every single one of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are under his wrath and condemnation.

[ 7 : 30 ] We have no way of earning our way into his presence and to heaven. We've lost that opportunity. And so God sent his perfect son, his only son, who is very God of very God.

And because he is God, his sacrifice of himself is of infinite value, and can cover your sin and mine. And his righteous life is of infinite value.

And so he can take his perfect record and give it to us. And we enter into heaven because of his miraculous substitution.

His atonement, it is the wonderful grace of God in giving us his one and only son. It begins with a miracle. But then secondly, there's the problem with miracles, isn't there?

Verse 20, even good people, kind people, just people like Joseph have a really hard time with miracles. Joseph had a hard time with miracles. When Joseph heard, he was a just man, he was a kind man.

[ 8 : 41 ] When he heard that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, it says this, it says that he was a just man and unwilling to put it in shame, he resolved to divorce her quietly.

Engagement then was different to engagement now. Engagement then was something that you needed a divorce to take a break from. A biblical engagement required a divorce to break.

And so Joseph, who's made this promise to Mary, and Mary with her father has named that promise to Joseph, she seems to have broken it, doesn't she, by being unfaithful to him.

Joseph doesn't want to put her to public shame. He decides rather than doing it publicly, rather than going to court and embarrassing her, he will do it in a kind of amicable agreement that won't embarrass her publicly.

He's a good man, he's a kind man, but he's going to divorce her. It doesn't take, does it, a genius of logic to figure out that Mary has been messing around, she's been sleeping about.

[ 9 : 50 ] Unless, of course, you believe in miracles. And verse 21, if you look there, Joseph is immediately challenged with the miracle of Christmas. We'll see whether he believes the miracle by what he does after he gets word.

But that night, in a dream, an angel comes to him, again, miraculous, and explains to him, and says to him, Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid, don't fear, to take Mary as your wife, for what is

conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Again, it's really clear, isn't it? A virgin conception, a virgin birth, and she will bear a son, she's going to have a baby, and you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

You'll call his name Jesus because his very name means that God saves. He will save his people from their sins. And so, Joseph, you are to take Mary home, and you are to adopt Jesus, and you are to rear him as your son, and in his circumcision, you are to give him his name.

And I'm giving you the name. You're the name in Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. It's some dream, isn't it? And he is told that this child is going to fulfill what was promised centuries before.

[11:08] Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. So, Joseph has the dream.

He has the word of God. And Joseph is faced with this great dilemma. What will he do? And so, the miracle, the problem with the miracle, and then the deeper question is this.

Will Joseph believe it? And then the question for you and I this morning is will you and I believe it? And you can tell, can't you, if Joseph is going to believe it because he'll behave one way or the other.

If he doesn't believe the dream, if he doesn't believe the angel, well, he'll divorce her quietly. But if he believes the mystery of the incarnation, if he believes this miracle, he will obey the angel.

In verse 24, we're giving the answer. Look at verse 24. And when Joseph woke from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

[12:15] And he took his wife, but he knew her not, he didn't sleep with her, until she'd given birth to a son. And he called his name, Jesus. Joseph believed the miracle.

So let me ask you, do you believe in the miraculous? Do you believe that God, in his perfect will and purposes, suspends the cause and effect that we know in nature in order to accomplish his deepest and greatest purpose?

Do you believe that God acted directly in his world on your behalf? Because he wants you to be present with him for all eternity.

That God sent his one and only son to be conceived in the womb of a sinful woman, to live a perfect life that you can ever live, and to lay down his life on the cross for you.

And to be raised from the dead for you and to ascend into heaven to prepare a place for you. And if you believe that, well that's going to affect your life, isn't it?

[13:37] It's going to affect my life. It's a beautiful thing, isn't it? Joseph woke up. He did as the angel commanded. And you can tell this morning, whether you believe this or not.

How can you tell whether you believe it? Well, you will be one of the ones who seek to obey the word of God. Not perfectly, none of us do it perfectly, Joseph didn't do it perfectly.

But repentantly and seriously, we seek to do what the Lord commands. We seek to do it in our financial lives, in our sexual lives, in our relationships. We seek to forgive those who've sinned against us because the Lord has forgiven us so much.

And we believe in the miracle of the incarnation. We seek to honour the authorities that God has put in our lives because God has put those authorities there. and we believe in the miracle of God's undeserved favour to us.

And so it goes into every relationship and every opportunity like water on concrete. It gets into every crack. So the grace of God and the kindness of God and the miracles of God go into every kind of corner of our lives in every relationship and every opportunity to obey him.

[15:00] And those who believe in the miraculous rise up and do his will because they know God. And they know that God has sent his son in order to save them from their sins. Do you believe in miracles?

Do you believe in the Lord? I wonder whether this morning this Christmas day you've suddenly realised that Christianity is not about asking you to try harder and asking you to do your best. It is about God intervening in history and in your life and in mine. And maybe you've been considering it for a while maybe you've been in church all your life but maybe today is the very day when he says to you come to me because I am the miraculous Lord who can deliver you from your sins.

And so bring all your heartache and bring all your rebellion and bring all your sorrow and bring your struggles and bring your confusion and bring your rebellion and bring the things that you can't live

with yourself anymore and bring all your regrets and come to him and give them to him.  
because the Lord Jesus who came as a baby says to you this morning come to me and trust me  
trust me like Joseph did many centuries ago and because of this Jesus was taken because Joseph  
trusted he was taken to Bethlehem in the womb of his mother he was born in a humble stable and  
the angels cried out glory to God in the highest and peace to those on whom his favour rests and to  
know that to know that peace of God to know the miraculous that is the greatest Christmas of all  
and the best book I've read this year is written by a guy called Rob Parsons there's an article on him  
on the BBC I want to recommend it to you it was put up this morning and Rob and Diane Parsons  
lived in Cardiff and it was 1976 and on Christmas Eve in 1976 a man knocked on their door  
[17:18] Ronnie Lockwood he was a homeless man and Ronnie Lockwood on that night asked to  
come in he stayed until 2021 from 1976 to 2021 a homeless man they'd live with it's an amazing  
story you'll cry your eyes out if you read the book it's just beautiful but it's a beautiful picture of what  
God has done it's a beautiful picture of the gospel and that in the miracle of the incarnation what  
God has done is he's opened up his home to you and he says to you today come in come in Jesus  
says come to me come to me and you will find rest rest come to me and you will find hope all  
because of the miracle of Jesus Christ let's pray God bless you  
God bless you! God bless you!