John 1:1-14

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 December 2024

Preacher: Reuben Hunter

[0:00] Well, it's the most wonderful time of the year. Andy Williams told us that back in 1963.! And he reminds us of that fact every single year since then.

! Because of the parties that we host, the marshmallows we toast, and the caroling out in the snow. The reason that we really celebrate Christmas is because it marks the time when the God who made the world and made each one of us entered into that world.
He came to us in the person of his Son. I've been told for some time that God has no place in our contemporary life, in our culture.
The author Francis Ward says this, And a carol service at Christmas. Because we're here. We've come out this evening.
And Richard Dawkins would agree with us. In an interview on LBC earlier this year, the country's most decorated atheist said this, quote, Dawkins in the interview went on to describe how he likes what Christian faith has bequeathed him in its carols and its hymns, but he doesn't want any more to do with it than that.
[1:53] But I wonder why you gave time this evening to come out here. I wonder why you gave time to come to something that so many people in our culture tell us we should have left behind years ago.

Well, I suspect many of you, like me, simply see this as another opportunity to come out and celebrate the wonder of God becoming man. I suspect some of you have been invited by friends or family and you didn't feel able to say no.
Well, don't worry. I won't keep you long. But I do have good news for you. Some of you belong to a generation who have grown up with absolutely no exposure to the Christian faith.
Your parents didn't believe. And so they didn't bother with church for you. And the Bible is no longer part of your school experience. But you've begun to question the purely secular view of the world that you have imbibed.
You're wondering, is there maybe more to it than I've been told this thing called life? Maybe this is the journey that the fleet foxes describe in the opening verse of their song, Helplessness Blues.
[3:05] I was raised up believing I was somehow unique, like a snowflake, distinct among snowflakes, unique in each way you can see. And now, after some thinking, I'd say I'd rather be a functioning cog in some great machinery serving something beyond me.

But I don't know what that will be. I'll get back to you someday soon. You will see. You're thinking, maybe actually you're not the measure of all things. And there is something or someone beyond you, beyond the secular worldview that you've grown up with.
Maybe there is something to this Christian story. Some of you, on the other hand, are a bit older. And you know the carols. And you know the truth that they tell. There's a familiarity there. But the reality is they belong to a life that you left behind.
The promises of the good life that the culture held out to you, they've taken you down another path. But you've begun to notice that that pursuit has led you to a place that you didn't really want it to. The promises that the culture has made to you has taken you to a place that you actually don't like. Why is everyone so angry all the time? Why is there so much anxiety around all the time?
[4:25] Why am I like that? I have plenty of the things that are supposed to make me happy. But I keep finding myself climbing the wall of worry.

Maybe it's time to revisit the promises that Christmas holds out. Well, whatever your reason for coming this evening, I'm glad that you're here. And I'm glad because the Christmas story has answers to those questions.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-12 21:21:48

And I want to suggest that if you follow the story to where it leads, it offers real hope and it promises lasting joy. Not just in a generic sense, but for you.
Whatever your reason for being here, the Christmas story, if you follow to where it leads, offers you hope and joy. In this brief time together, I want to focus on one verse from the last reading we had. John 1. It's on page 10 of the handout. If you can turn back there. Verse 14, right at the end. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory.
[5:28] Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. In that verse, we have a tightly packed summary of what is happening with the birth of Jesus Christ. And it tells us that Christmas, the Christmas story is a story about three things.

It's a story about many things, but there are three things I want us to see. And the first is this. Christmas is a story about reality. Let's be honest. Christmas can feel like a bit of a fairy tale. From the ancient images of the baby in the manger that we have, perhaps on Christmas cards. The images, the art that goes with the Christmas story. From there to the school nativity plays.
Even to the adverts and the films that all have a happy ending. It can all feel a bit distant from reality, can't it? From the grime and grit of our experience of life.
And again, to be honest, the claim that this verse makes sounds quite far-fetched in itself. John tells us that the word, that is, the word who we're told up in verse 1 of that reading, the word is God, his ultimate self-expression, that God became flesh and dwelt among us.
[6:40] The verse is saying, he's saying that Jesus, the one born in the manger, is the divine Son of God, who has stepped into history. No ordinary birth, no ordinary child.

Which is why what he says next in verse 14 is so important. We have seen his glory. That is, John who wrote this, and those who were with him, have seen this glory with their own eyes.
These men have spent time with Jesus, they have talked with him, and they have watched him up close. One of the things that we've seen emerge in recent years is the idea of the deep fake. Deep fake, where AI is used to create fake images or fake audio to misrepresent someone and to mislead other people. So we can see things that we think are real, but they're not, they're fake.
The only way to know if something is real, if you weren't actually present at the event, is to speak to the eyewitnesses. The Gospels, from which we've had most of our readings this evening, are all eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus Christ.
[7:50] The Word who became flesh. And the earliest records, the earliest Gospel records, were actually written down within the lifetime of people who were present. So what that means is, if those things had been made up, if these Gospel accounts had been made up, there were people who were there who could have said, I was there, that's not what happened.

And if they'd done that, the whole thing would never have got off the ground. Here we are, two thousand odd years later, after the event, it all would have ended, right at the beginning, if these eyewitness accounts had not happened as they were recorded.
John saw his glory. Christmas is about reality. Secondly, it is a story, here's our second point, it is a story about relationship.
Here we're getting into the reason behind Jesus' coming. The Word became flesh, John says, and dwelt among us. The Christmas story tells us that God broke into our world.
He didn't just set the world in motion and then leave us to it, but He entered into our world to take up residence here and bring us into a relationship with Him. This is a remarkable thing.
[9:01] The God of the Bible is not an individual. The God of the Bible is a trinity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who have known and loved each other from all eternity.

Now you'll know, if you're in a love relationship, a real relationship of love, you don't really need anyone else because you're happy. So, if you have Father, Son, and Spirit enjoying perfect love for all eternity, why would you create a world filled with other personal beings?
The answer is to share your joy with them. There is no other good reason. If you're perfectly fulfilled, perfectly content, there is no other good reason.
You already have absolutely everything you need. And then, having done that, having created that world with those people, why would you then go to the trouble of coming into their world at Christmas, if you're already perfectly happy?
The answer is to draw them into relationship with you so that they can share that goodness. And the Christian claim is that that relationship is something that our hearts actually long for, that our hearts were created for.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-12 21:21:48

[10:18] It's interesting, as the ancient virtues of commitment and loyalty seem to be in decline in our culture, and as social media seems to lower the bar for what constitutes a relationship, and we're told also that being free from restraints is the only authentic way to live, as those narratives grow and grow, we're actually seeing some pushback.

A while back I saw an article in Vanity Fair magazine titled, Tinder and the Dawn of the Dating Apocalypse. Now, what happened, the way the author did the article, they had interviewed a host of people who used the Tinder app.
Alongside then the bravado of some people who said they used the app and thought it was a great thing, no strings attached and everything else, it was clear that others realized that this had turned them into a commodity, and they spoke of it making them more and more insecure.
The freedom that this thing promised them was actually enslaving them. What was supposed to promise freedom and no ties actually created a deeper longing for something much more meaningful.
And the Bible tells us the reason for this is because we were created for a relationship that runs deeper than any human relationship, a relationship with our Creator God.
[11:42] And that is what Jesus came to bring at Christmas. See, Christmas isn't just about reality. The Christmas story is about a relationship that will not let you down.

One that can't be dismissed with a swipe. One that endures no matter what our circumstances may bring. Jesus came at Christmas to bring us into a relationship with the living God.
Which means, our third point, the Christmas story is also about rescue. It's about reality. It's about relationship.
It's about rescue. You see, we can't just stroll into that relationship with God. Because by nature, we have turned our backs on Him. We have sinned against Him.
And that separates us. Now, I realize that lots of people hear that word sin, and it's just a bit of a meaningless word nowadays. Hearing about sin used to get under our skin.
[12:39] But for most people in London nowadays, it's just a bit of an irrelevant term. It's a term that an advertiser might use to kind of give their product a bit of a naughty edge. Think, oh, my product is this box of chocolates.

Do you want to sin and enjoy the chocolate? Ooh, they're a bit naughty. That's the way we think about it. But the truth is, sin runs much, much deeper than that. It has been described as a kind of soul sickness.
That is something that goes to the heart of who we are. Something that underlies all of our deepest problems. The reason why we struggle for satisfaction and peace in any deep and lasting way. Because the truth of the matter is, our deepest problems aren't down to what we have or what we don't have. They're down to a sickness of the soul that comes from our having turned away from God.
We have wronged Him. And so if we will have this relationship that He has come to bring, if that will be restored, He must put it right. And that is the whole point of Christmas.
[13:48] When John says that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, he's being very deliberate there in the choice of His words. He could have chosen a number of different words, but the one that he chose literally means tabernacled.

The word became flesh and tabernacled among us. It's an Old Testament word. It's an old word that he was alluding to as it related to the history of the story of God and His people.
In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was where people's sins were dealt with. That problem at the heart of all of our lives, where that was dealt with. And what that means is that when John says this, he's saying that the place where God now deals with sin is in this Jesus, the one who was born at Christmas.
God has taken the initiative. And His coming at Christmas is ultimately a rescue mission. Because even from His birth, we see Jesus is looking forward to His death where He will deal with our sin in order to reconcile us to God.
This is why He is described as full of grace as well as truth. You see, like any rescue, a rescue is something that you need and you can't do anything yourself to achieve.
[15:09] You need someone else to come and rescue you. And that rescue by definition is a gift. You've done nothing to earn it. Someone else has taken the initiative.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-12 21:21:48

They've come to you and they've taken you out of danger. And they've done it quite apart from anything that you could have done yourself. God comes into our world at Christmas to rescue us. And that rescue is a gift. The John Lewis Christmas ad this year, at the end of the advert, it comes up on the screen. The secret to finding the perfect gift is knowing where to look.
The secret to finding the perfect gift is knowing where to look. How true, John Lewis. The gift is God's rescue. And the place to look is the Lord Jesus.
My question to you this evening is, would you do that? Would you do that? Would you look into Jesus? Perhaps it means going back to Him. Would you go back to Him?
[16:15] Look again at who He is and what He has come to do. Many of us give something up for January. Well, can I encourage you to also take something up this January.

Take up coming to church on Sundays and consider what you hear. You would be very welcome here. You can slip in at the back. People would be very friendly and glad to see you. We would love to see you back.
Take up coming to church and consider what it is you hear. Christmas tells us that God came into the world to save us. Can you afford to pass up on that without being absolutely sure?
Another option might be coming along to Hope Explored. These flyers are on your seat. All the information you need on there. Three weeks, three evenings, we come together to look more deeply into the one who came at Christmas full of grace and truth.
We'd love to see you. Why not come along? The God who made you has come to rescue you for a relationship of love.
[17:25] That is why Christmas really is the most wonderful time of the year. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-12 21:21:48