

The 12 words of Christmas

“A Saviour has been born for you, He is Christ the Lord.”

Christmas is such a fun time of the year that most people look forward to in so many ways. We have expectations, dreams, hopes and we try to do things as well as we can for our families. Now if this Christmas eve everything is going really well for you, you have your whole family together, the decorations are done just right, you have picked the perfect presents for your family. Maybe you are newly wed and you are celebrating your first Christmas as a couple. If this Christmas eve things are perfect I am really happy for you and I praise God for the way things have come together. I want to see you blessed.

But if this Christmas isn't perfect, maybe you have less income this year or the bills have mounted up. Maybe you won't be celebrating Christmas with your whole family because some of your family have died or don't get along. Maybe this Christmas you know your hopes and dreams will not be fulfilled. If that is you. I want to tell you that the first Christmas was so far from perfect. It was a mess and yet the message the angel gave the shepherds is the same message that God wants to give you this Christmas “A Saviour has been born for you, He is Christ the Lord.”

And as I retell the story this Christmas eve of the first Christmas eve, I pray that you will let those twelve words of Christmas change everything in you life. “A Saviour has been born for you, he is Christ the Lord.”

How messed up was that first Christmas eve.

Picture this, two teenagers probably around 15 yrs of age. The girl Mary living under a scandal. She claimed that God has come upon and been birthed in her womb. People didn't get it and didn't understand it and they were talking. They were saying horrible things. Slut. Liar. Horrible things. 700 years earlier the prophet Isaiah had said 7:14 A virgin would conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Immanuel – which means God with us, but people didn't understand. They said cruel things to Mary and about Mary behind her back.

The other teenager, Joseph was a really poor guy, he worked as a carpenter, his body was probably pretty buff from all the hard physical work, his hands were calloused and probably his face pretty weathered for a teenager. All his mates were telling him that he was an idiot for marrying a girl who was already pregnant.

400 years earlier the prophet Micah 5:2 had said that when God would be born and add to His divinity humanity he would be born in Bethlehem. Now the greedy emperor Caesar Augustus had decreed that everyone had to go back to the town of their families origins so records could be kept

and tax raised against them so he could build a bigger army and more roads and bigger buildings.

And so now Mary and Joseph have to travel about 140kms along stony windy roads to register for tax day.

Kids ask your mum one day, what would it be like to walk and ride a donkey for 140kms along a bumpy rough road when you are about to give birth. Rugged, awful.

And when they get to Bethlehem, you would expect a young mum about to give birth to be put up in the best motel or hospital with the best mid wife's around her to look after her. She has never had a baby before. She hasn't got her mum there for support. And what happens? There is no room in the motels and they end up having to bed down in a cave on the edge of a hill where animals would take shelter from the bad weather.

An animal shelter. How perfect is that. Flies. Livestock. Cow dung.

Insects. Nothing is clean. And yet God chooses to begin his human experience in such a place as this.

Nothing was perfect that first Christmas eve, except the baby.

For four hundred years there has not been a prophetic voice or a miracle in Israel and now, on that first Christmas eve, two ridiculed teenagers, in an animal shelter under a cliff and a bunch of poor shepherds hear the voice of God for the first time in 400 years - its not a shout, its not a earth shaking voice they hear but the voice of a little baby crying as he comes into the world and wants his mum.

The prophet Isaiah said one of the names for God the son would be Immanuel which means God is with us physically. God, in the second person of the Trinity left heaven and chose to be born at this time in that place to those struggling teenagers. Immanuel – God has moved into our neighbourhood.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the time was right, God sent (meaning he already pre-existed) His Son, and a woman give birth to Him. His Son obeyed the Law (that means he lived a perfect/ sinless life) so He could set us free from the Law, and we could become God's children.

That first Christmas was a mess, yes all the prophecies were fulfilled but wow, how hard was it for Mary and Joseph. How difficult was that first Christmas eve that split history from BC to AD 2010 years ago.

I would love everyone's Christmas to be perfect this year and if it is I am happy and I want you to hear the angel's words to you

“A Saviour has been born for you, He is Christ the Lord.”

But if this Christmas eve things aren't perfect, you are going to be missing some of your family. The income, the presents, the food is not quite what you had wished for. If this Christmas eve things are a little like that first Christmas eve, I want you too, to hear the angels message.

“A Saviour has bee born for you, He is Christ the Lord.”

God added to His divinity our humanity that first Christmas, he was humanly born in awful conditions under extreme stress. But He was born, for you. He moved into our neighbourhood physically. And he is not some random concept or feeling – He is Christ the Lord.

He is Immanuel – God with us.

He understands us, and he wants to move into your life this Christmas. His presence in your life is the only thing that will ever truly satisfy you and deal with that empty feeling you carry.

“A Saviour has been born for you, He is Christ the Lord.”

When I was 16 I realized the truth of those twelve words of Christmas and I have experienced, Immanuel, God with me ever since. Like everyone else I have faced sickness and bereavement and stress and pressure and yet always God is with me, fulfilling me, keeping me close to Him, filling me with His joy and purposes. I wouldn't give that up for anything in the universe.

That first Christmas eve a Saviour was born for you – and I would be so happy if you took time these holidays to discover that those twelve words are absolutely true and life changing. He wants to move into your life, your neighbourhood again today!

Lydia and Esther are going to do a worshipful dance to the carol “O Holy Night” At the end of the dance/ carol, I will close the service off in prayer and we will begin to move out to the car park for the fireworks display. I want to invite you at the close of this service to come and help yourself to some information that will help you experience the truths of those twelve words for yourself.

Booklets for children, teens and adults and free bibles. Just help yourself.

Dance.

Prayer.