
O Holy Night¹

1. An Extraordinary Night

- Two weeks ago Coldplay arrived in Sydney to play at SFS
- They were welcomed by 50,000 excited fans
- And it's no wonder ...
- One journalist described them as "The best stadium performers of our generation"
- But as extraordinary as that is ... there are a 1000 concerts with various bands happening like that around the world every year

- When our movie stars arrive at the Oscars each year ... how are they welcomed?
 - Spot lights lighting up the sky and the whole precinct
 - Red carpet
 - TV cameras > media clamouring for interviews
 - Paparazzi snapping off photo after photo after photo
- But again ... the Oscars happen year after year and it's the same old programme ... the only thing that changes is who wins best actor

- But when Jesus was arrived on earth 2000 years ago ... he had none of that
 - No crowds, no paparazzi, no red carpet, no spot lights, no media interviews, no fanfare
 - Just a stable with Mary & Joseph watching on

- But despite the simplicity of his birth ... the very first Christmas was an extraordinary night
 - The song we just listened to described it as a holy night
 - Because when Jesus arrived ... instead of the usual fanfare that we associate with the arrival of the pop stars and movie stars of today
 - An angel ... a messenger from God appeared in the sky to announce that Jesus had been born
- The arrival of this little boy ...
 - born to a teenage bride from the back blocks of Galilee ...
 - born in a stable without anyone else aware of his coming
 - was so extraordinary ... that God announced it to the world with a messenger from heaven

¹ <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/42454/o-holy-night>

- And if that wasn't enough ...
 - Luke tells us in v13 there was a great **multitude** of angels ... a heavenly army who appeared to declare the arrival of this child

- When Coldplay arrives in town; or
- When Brad Pitt arrives at the Oscars
 - History doesn't record there being angels appearing in the sky to announce to the world what was happening
- But when Jesus was born 2,000 yrs ago ... that's exactly what happened

- And so we see this extraordinary night was utterly unique
- Never before has something like this happened in the history of mankind
 - God was announcing to the world that this night was special
 - God was telling the world that this arrival was significant
 - God was making it clear that this was a holy night

2. An Extraordinary Child

- Why?
 - Why would God go to such extraordinary lengths to make this night the most unique in world history?
- The reason for this extraordinary night was that an extraordinary child had been born
 - God the Son had humbled himself ... left his heavenly throne and come into the world
 - The Christ had arrived

- But what made Jesus so extraordinary is he was born with an extraordinary purpose
- Some people are born with a purpose in life
 - Prince Charles ... raised and destined to be king
 - Serena Williams ... father trained her from a young age to be a #1 tennis player
 - Harry Potter – destined to overcome 'he who cannot be named'
- Likewise Jesus was born with a purpose
 - But it would be a purpose that would affect our entire world and our entire lives

- And we get a clue of just how extraordinary this child would be in Luke 2:11

- *Today in the town of David a **Saviour** has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*
- The angel says Jesus is a saviour and that this is good news for all mankind
- And if there is one thing that is obvious from looking at the world around us it's that we need a saviour
 - While there's much about our world and culture that is good and pleasurable and wonderful
 - There is also much that shows our world is broken and undesirable
- But of course ... it's not just the world that is broken and in desperate need of saving
 - It's us ... the people who make up the world ... who though capable of good, are deeply flawed and selfish
 - If you think that's unfair or an exaggeration ... you don't know your own heart
- Martin Luther says human nature is '*Incurvatus in se*' which is the Latin phrase for saying - *our hearts are curved in on itself*
 - We're so radically self-absorbed and self-centred we often don't even know how self-centred we truly are
- And it's because we're deeply flawed and broken and this is exemplified in the darkness of our own hearts
- We see this in
 - Pain we bring upon others in domestic violence
 - Passive aggressive way we respond to those who upset us
 - Reason why some of us here today are in struggling marriages
 - The way greed drives us to gamble and stash our wealth
- It's the heart that is the source of all these things
- How would this extraordinary child be saviour of the world?
- We see the pattern of it in his birth
- What do we see about his birth?
- He came in humility
 - Mary & Joseph weren't rich ... they were poor
 - Like new married couple trying to buy property in Sydney today ... they had nothing
- Joseph didn't have the money or connections to get a room ...
 - All he could manage was a stable and a feed trough
 - This is no birthing suite a St George Private

- It wasn't like all the Christmas cards
 - with the cows all smiling
 - Mary looking like she's had two weeks at a spa retreat
- Jesus came in humility and in poverty and it was raw and real and rough

- The other thing we see from Luke's account of Jesus birth is he's rejected
 - He's rejected by the inn keeper and the world
 - If Jesus had come as a general or a philosopher or a prince ... the red carpet would have been rolled out and he would've got the royal treatment
 - But he doesn't
 - He's not born in a palace > he's forced to be born in a stable
 - God comes on straw

- Why would Jesus come to earth in such a manner as the saviour
 - Surely if God is going to save the world from its brokenness
 - Surely if God was going to transform our dark hearts ...
 - Then he would have done it with someone a little more spectacular
 - Someone like a king with a sword and spear and a sceptre and destroy all evil?

- Bu if Jesus Christ had come the first time to destroy all the sources of evil ... there would've been nobody left
- If Jesus Christ came the first time to destroy all the sources of evil in the world ... none of us would be left

- And therefore, Jesus Christ came the first time to be rejected not to be accepted
 - To be destroyed and killed ... not to be crowned
 - He came not to bring judgment ... he came to bear judgement
- Why?
 - He came to bear judgment for our self-centredness, our wrong doing, our sin ... so that one day he can return and end evil without ending us

- Buddha and Muhammed both say that you can find salvation
- However Buddha and Muhammed don't agree on how to **find** salvation
 - Buddha sees salvation as enlightenment
 - Muhammed sees salvation as submission to the will of God ... obedience
 - However they both agree that you can find salvation yourself ... if you try hard enough

- You can seek it, you can find, you can earn it
- That's not what Christianity says
 - Christianity says the darkness in your heart is so great that you'll never fix it
 - And therefore Jesus Christ had to come ... not to call the obedient ones into war against the disobedient ones
 - Not to say to those who are good "Come with me, flock to my banner and we'll condemn and deal with the bad people"
- No! Because the darkness is all of us
 - And therefore by coming into the world as saviour, Jesus Christ says to us
 - "You can't save yourself"
 - "I didn't come to show you how you can save yourself"
 - "I came to save you"
 - "I've come to do what you want to do but can't"
 - "I've come to take the penalty for your sins"
- So here in beginning ... we see the pattern in this extraordinary child - humility and rejection
 - Here ... he's put in a wooden feed trough ... then he will be nailed to a wooden cross
 - Here ... he's rejected by an innkeeper ... later the whole population will yell crucify him
 - Here ... he's wrapped in old clothes ... then he will be stripped naked
 - Here he's rejected by the world ... on cross he's rejected by his own Father ... and in doing so he gets what we deserve
- Jesus Christ was rejected so we could be accepted
- There was no room for him ... so we could have a room in the house of the Lord forever

3. An Extraordinary Effect

- Of course Christ coming as our saviour
 - Brings forgiveness
 - Restores us to our creator
 - Saves us out of the darkness
 - It's wonderful, wonderful news
 - it's the heart of the Christmas message
- This is why we sing Joy to the world

- This is why we rejoice > this is why we celebrate
 - This extraordinary child came to earth ... and was rejected so we could be accepted

- But you might say ... what about now?
 - How does Christmas help me right now?
 - What does Christmas mean for me now?
- Well it means lots of things ... but I want to focus one ... and it's this
 - Christmas takes away your fear [repeat]

- Let me show you what I mean
- In Luke 2:9 we read
 - *An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*
 - The word there for terrified in Greek = *megaphobic*
 - phobia = fear
 - mega = great
 - Greatly fearful
 - So afraid
- But **Luke 2:10** ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid."
 - You don't need to be afraid if you look at what I am showing and telling you

- This shows us that when God shows up ... people are terrified
- Why?
- This reminds us of the Garden of Eden
 - Reminds us of first time God showed up in all his glory and people were terrified
- Adam & Eve were originally put in paradise in garden of Eden ...
 - And because they had a perfect relationship with God they had no fear in their life at all

- But when Adam & Eve turned away from God and decided to be their own masters ...
 - Almost immediately ... they fear
- You know why?
 - It was the lie of the serpent
 - "You need to be in charge of your own life"
 - "You need to call the shots"

- "Don't let anyone else be in charge of your life ... because if anyone else is in charge of your life ... you won't be happy"
- "You must be your own captain"
- "You must be the master of your own fate"

- That lie has gone down into every human heart ...
 - And it's one of the great foundations of the broken world we live in and the brokenness in our own lives
- As a result it creates fear in our lives
 - But if you had a perfect relationship with God [like A&E did in the beginning] ... you'd have no fear in your life at all either
 - But we do ... so often we are afraid
- You say "No I'm not! I'm not afraid! What are you talking about?"

- You know what we're afraid of?
 - We're afraid of rejection
 - We're afraid of failure
 - because we have to earn our self worth
 - because we have to earn people's love
 - And if we're not constantly getting affirmation and love from other people ... we fall in a heap
- As a result
 - We're slaves to what people think of us
 - We're slaves to our performance ... because we're driven by fear
- But if you had a relationship with God ... you wouldn't care about that > you wouldn't be afraid of failure and rejection ... because you know of his great love for you in Jesus

- What else are we afraid of?
 - We're afraid of bad things happening to us and those we love
 - We're afraid of what the future holds
 - We're afraid of death

- Like Adam & Eve ... we're seeking to be masters of our own destiny
 - But deep down we know we can't control the future ...
 - We know we can't control our own destiny
 - We can't control history > we can't control life

- But if you had a perfect relationship with God ... and you knew he was in control ... you would trust him and you'd have no need to fear those things

- So you see ... if we had a perfect relationship with God,
 - Wouldn't be afraid of rejection
 - Wouldn't be afraid of failure
 - Wouldn't be afraid of circumstances
 - Wouldn't be afraid of the future
 - Wouldn't even be afraid of death
- But the reason we worry ... the reason we're scared ... the reason we're afraid ... is because we don't trust him with these things

- Now what's interesting is when God comes to the Garden of Eden ... Adam & Eve are **even more** afraid
 - Everywhere in the Bible where God shows up and his glory is revealed ... like he does with the shepherds ... people are terrified
- Why is that?
 - Why is that when we're far from God we're afraid ...
 - And when God comes near we're even more afraid?

- **Illustrations**
- Like how you might feel if ...
 - Impersonating police officer and real one comes toward you
 - Sprouting your knowledge on history and a professor of history walks up and joins your circle ... fills with dread you'll be exposed
 - Dress up for party to look glamorous and beautiful ... then a catwalk model comes into the room ... fearful of being shown up

- Little glimpse of what it is like when God comes into our presence
 - We get shown up / exposed
 - We think we can be masters of our own destiny ...
 - But when the one who **is** in control turns up ...
 - we melt with fear ...
 - we're exposed
 - light gets shone on our failures and inabilities and shortcomings

- So when we're far from God > we fear others and other things
- When we're near God ... fear him and our own failings

- And in Luke 2 ... the angel turns up and says ... "I have the solution ... Christmas!"
 - v10 - Do not be afraid ... for I have good news

- Why can he say that?
 - Because a **saviour** has been born ... and he is Christ the Lord
- If you want to get over your fear of rejection ...
 - You want to get over your fear of failure ...
 - You want to be filled with his love
 - You want to be completely forgiven
 - You want to be freed from being a slave to your fears
 - You have to rest in the saviour who was born at Christmas
 - You have to stop trying to save yourself
- To the degree that you get this good news
- To the degree you see Christmas as something to rejoice in
- To the degree you believe what the angel has to say
 - These fears will be undermined
- How?
- How can Jesus help us overcome our fears?
- Answer is that the baby born in the manger is the **Lord**
 - Back in time just before Jesus ... the Jews translated the Old Testament scriptures which had originally been written in Hebrew ... translated them into Greek ... common language of the day
 - Every time they got to Yahweh ... which is the Old Testament word for God ... they translated it with the Greek word LORD
- What this means is that the baby born in the manger isn't just
 - A cute metaphor for us to ponder over
 - A wise one who would teach us how to live
 - He is God himself
 - And if God would come to earth and do this ... you can trust him
- You see ... the claim of Christmas is that
 - God looked at the world he created and
 - He looked at us and
 - He saw the brokenness and messiness of our world and our lives, and
 - He wrote himself into the story of our lives
 - ... He came into our world in Jesus Christ
- And he didn't just come to fix up our world ... he came to die for us
 - That's why he was born

- He lost his glory ... so we could have glory forever
- He lost his peace ... so we could have peace with God forever
- He left his place in heaven ... so we could dwell in the house of the Lord forever

- Look at what he did for you!
- Won't you trust someone who dies for you?
 - Won't you trust him with your future?
 - Won't you trust him with your life?
- If he did all that for you you **can** trust him

- You want to stop being a slave to all your fears ...
- Don't be afraid ... a saviour has been born ... he is Christ the Lord
 - to the degree you get this ...
 - to the degree you grasp this ...
 - to the degree you treasure and ponder it in your heart
 - to that degree those fears will begin to diminish

- It was an extraordinary night
- For he was an extraordinary child
- If we trust him ... he will have an extraordinary effect on your life

PRAY

VIDEO REFLECTION – BORN

http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/56569/born?utm_source=whmsite&utm_medium=banner&utm_content=born&utm_campaign=1PL