



05C CHRISTMAS DAY 2021

Pondering Celebration

Abstract

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:8-12 (NIV)

Jim de Jong
jim@dejongs.id.au

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Pauline Kennedy
For Mari Orton

As I stand gazing through the window looking out to the pines,
the snow is gently falling - glistening pure and white,
children with their lanterns will be carolling tonight.
Upstairs they will slowly climb, trying to take a peak
at presents mum has made,
and fruit from rations she has saved, that might even last a week.
In this England a "White Christmas" is so pretty - sitting by the fire to toast,
the chestnuts will be lovely when we throw them in to roast.

As I stand gazing through the window looking out to the pines,
the sun is hot already and through the window shines.
A salad with cold meat sounds good, under lovely shady trees,
but not us Aussies, it's roast turkey and plum pud,
New bikes and even swimming pools, "Barbie" dolls and dad's tools too,
Santa would have been in trouble getting down the flue.
Santa has been good again flying across the Aussie plains,
with all the food that is left for him he never once complains.

I'm glad I've lived two different Christmas',
twelve thousand miles apart,
it is very special to remember and to share,
but when it's thirty-five degrees, I just wish I could be over there.
It really doesn't matter where you are at Christmas,
in your heart it is family and friends
and each year is a book of memories
and the story of Jesus that never ends.

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GOSPEL*Luke 2:1–20*

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. ⁱ

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

05C Christmas Day 2021 Pondering Celebration

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2021 | CHRISTMAS | CHRISTMAS DAY—PROPER 2 | YEARS ABC

On the same date: Nativity of the Lord, Christmas Day—Proper 3

Old Testament Isaiah 62:6–12
Psalm Psalm 97
New Testament Titus 3:4–7
Gospel (Luke 2:1–7) 8–20ⁱⁱ

Jesus is born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger. Shepherds from the surrounding hills are summoned by angels to visit him. Amid the busyness of the angels celebrating and the shepherds hurrying to Bethlehem, we find Mary quietly pondering what Jesus' birth means. Taking time to ponder is something that Mary comes back to again and again throughout the stories of Jesus' life. Stories full of the ordinary and extraordinary together – as are our stories if we take time to ponder too.

This week we explore making sense of extraordinary moments.

	Pre-Service
	<p>Introit TIS #316 – “O Little Town of Bethlehem” Saint Louis V1</p>
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all</p> <p>and also with you</p>
	<p>Set the Theme</p> <p>Have you ever had a moment recently when you were ‘doing your thing’ Maybe you were at work, school, home, wherever And something happened – and it changed the whole day.</p> <p>The shepherds were outside Bethlehem just ‘doing their thing’, an ordinary night shift on an ordinary day.</p> <p>Then an extraordinary, unexpected and amazing event changed everything. What did it all mean? How do we make sense of extraordinary moments in our lives?</p>

	<p>We Gather Call to worship Shout for joy to God, all the earth, sing the glory of his name, and give him glorious praise! Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cowering. All the earth worships you and sings your praises; they sing praises to your name.'</p> <p>Acknowledgment of Country As we gather together in this place today, we acknowledge the Wadawurrung people who were, who are and who will always be the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time before remembering</p>
	<p>Lighting the Advent Wreath</p> <p><i>Light the fifth and central candle this week.</i></p> <p>As we light this Christmas candle, may its flame be for us a sign of Jesus' birth. Today – on this special day Lord – you remind us that you can use anyone and everyone for your purposes.</p> <p>We willingly offer you all that we are and all that we have, choosing to believe that who we are is enough to be used by you. We do this in Jesus' name. Amen.</p>
<p>Verse 1, Verse 2, Verse 3,</p>	<p>Hymn/song TIS # 268 – "Joy to the World"</p>
	<p>Welcome Have you had fun this morning. Some of you are going to see other family members later. But if you have family that is a long way away ... like my son Michael in Queensland. You need a map to find your way. But I have other family in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Most of us here are 2nd, 3rd or more generation immigrants. We still listen to "frosty the snowman" piped thru intercoms as we shop We remember an ancestry from another place.</p>
	<p>Poem (Mari Orton) Here is a poem by Pauline Kennedy, A Ballarat woman a migrant from England As she shares her thoughts of the conflict between a northern and southern hemisphere Christmas</p>

Welcome Cont

Really the world is not flat – it is a big ball in space
 So there is really no reason why it can be any way up we like.
 But most books show do show Australia at the bottom of the world
 But for most, where you live feels up on top.

This reminds me of Jesus.
 Something like this happened when he was born.
 It used to be that if you were rich and powerful
 people thought that God loved you – a lot.
 And if you were sick or poor – that God didn't love you as much.
 That wasn't correct and so God sent Jesus to be born.

When Jesus was born,
 God showed the world that God loved everybody.

I hope you have a good time with your family and friends today.
 And as you do I hope that you remember
 that not only does your family love you,
 but that God loves you and all people too.

A prayer of approach

Lord - thank you for sending Jesus into the world
 so that we can know that you love all people.
 Help us to be kind to others and show your love to them too.

God of wonder,
 with joy and celebration we gather today
 to welcome afresh the gift of the child born to be king;
 Emmanuel, God with us;
 light for the world and a beacon in the darkness.

Jesus Christ is born among us.
 Jesus Christ is born for us.
 Let us come to you and celebrate. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

We say Sorry

Generous, overwhelming God,
 in the excitement and joy of this day,
 we take a moment to reflect and ponder
 on the immensity of the gift given.

Forgive us if we have belittled the most precious gift of all.
 Forgive us if we have cast it aside,
 put it on the back burner,
 left it packed away since last Christmas with all the tinsel and trappings.

Forgive us for not pondering enough
 the depth of your giving and sacrifice for us.
 As you give to us, so we give to you our sorrow and confession
 for all that has not been worthy of your name. Amen.

	<p>Assurance of forgiveness God gives to us his Son, and to those who seek it, forgiveness for their sins. Go and share the gift, show the love and know the peace that God gives. Amen.</p>
<p>Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus, Verse 3, Chorus,</p>	<p>Hymn/song/video – Carol of the birds Written in 1948 by musician William James born in Ballarat and lyricist John Wheeler born in Colac, ‘Carol of the Birds’ is a significant shift away from European Christmas carols depicting scenes and features from cold European winters.</p> <p>Beautifully composed playful lyrics gives a more authentic picture of an Australian Christmas. The word ‘Orana’ in the chorus is from Aboriginal language and means ‘Welcome’.</p>
	<p>Readings</p> <p>Luke 2:1-20</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God</p>
<p>Verse 1, Verse 2, Verse 3, Verse 4, Verse 5, Verse 6,</p>	<p>Hymn/Song</p> <p>TIS #299 (AHB #223) – “While shepherds watched their flocks”</p>

Address

Just another day

2.1-14,(15-20)

I love this story:

A primary school class was putting on a Christmas play
which included the story of Mary and Joseph coming to the inn.
And was one little boy who wanted very much to be Joseph.
But when the parts were handed out, his biggest rival was given that part,
and he was asked to be the inn keeper instead.
This really hurt.

So during all the rehearsals
he kept plotting in his mind
what he might do the night of performance to get even
with his rival who was Joseph.

Finally, the night of the performance,
Mary and Joseph came walking across the stage.

They knocked on the door of the inn,
and the inn-keeper opened the door and asked them gruffly what they wanted.

Joseph answered,
"We'd like to have a room for the night."
Suddenly the inn-keeper threw the door open wide and said,
"Great, come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house."

For a few seconds poor little Joseph didn't know what to do,
and there was a long silence.
Finally though, Joseph looked in past the inn-keeper,
first to the left and then to the right and said,
"No wife of mine is going to stay in a dump like this.
Come on, Mary, let's go to the barn." And once again the play was back on course.^{iv} 🙌

Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus,
God promised that He would send a Messiah to save His people.
today we celebrate the greatest moment in the history of creation,
the moment when the Almighty God became Immanuel—God with us.

'It's just another day'.
How many times have you heard a 'bah humbug-er' say these words, or similar?
In one sense they are right.
It is an ordinary day.
One revolution of planet Earth
one of millions made and yet to be made.
But it is a day on which something extraordinary took place
or, at least, it is the day on which we celebrate that day.

We don't know exactly when that ordinary but so special day was,
and that adds to its mystery.
But we know it occurred.
We know Jesus was born.
And this is the day that we celebrate it.

Today is a special day and, for many, a very busy one,
with no time to breathe.
2,021 years ago, it was just another day,
although for Mary it was a special one and a very busy one.
Giving birth is demanding enough,
but then having to welcome all those visitors!

But Mary found the time to ponder
all that had happened in the last, well, less than a year:
the circumstances of her pregnancy;
the visit to Elizabeth a few months back;
the rush to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem;
the far from ideal conditions,
far from home, where she now found herself giving birth;
and all these visitors.

She was nervous, She was worried perhaps, She was certainly exhausted,
 but, also happy, even ecstatic – all at the same time.
 She mulled these things over, wondering, looking for meaning.

Because, even on an ordinary day
 there was – and there is – something extraordinary to be found.
 Where do we find the extraordinary in our lives?

The decade of the 2020s has had the most difficult of beginnings.
 Yet, deprived of the opportunity to celebrate
 birthdays, achievements, anniversaries and even the passing of loved ones
 with those we love,
 one thing we did have was the chance to think,
 to think about what really matters.
 And one of the things that matters in life and faith is celebration.

As we look to the future,
 what sort of celebrations will be important to us?
 What will we tell future generations,
 about our resilience, our adaptability, and our sense of community in isolation.

The birth of Christ is an extraordinary moment among the ordinary.
 An ordinary woman has an ordinary birth in an ordinary stable on an ordinary day.

Bethlehem is an ordinary, busy place,
 with everyone going about their ordinary business.
 But this is an extraordinary baby in their midst.

On the ordinary Christmas Day that is today,
 we all follow our usual ordinary Christmas plans
 that rarely differ from one year to the next.

But today we have not only to celebrate something extraordinary
 we have the chance to absorb that extraordinary-ness into our lives
 and make it ours.

This day we celebrate the greatest moment in the history of creation,
 the moment when the Almighty God became Immanuel—God with us.
 Is the extraordinary in your Christmas?

Amen

	Hymn/song 313 Good Christians all rejoice
	Offering OFFERTORY SENTENCE Light comes into the world when we live out the truth and grace we find in Christ. Let us be generous today, so that the light of Christ might shine everywhere.

	<p>OFFERTORY PRAYER Loving God, Let what we give today be light to the world, a beacon of truth and grace. May what we give today be an expression of love and gratitude for all we have. Amen.^v</p>
<p>Notices</p>	
<p>Prayers for all people</p> <p>Today, in all the demands, we pray for those who are facing a Christmas without someone they love. God of goodness, hear us and be with us.</p> <p>Today, in all the delights, we pray for those who are facing a Christmas alone. God of goodness hear us and be with us.</p> <p>Today, in all the celebration, we pray for those who are facing conflicts and violence. God of goodness hear us and be with us.</p> <p>Today, in all the celebration, we pray for those who are the morning of lost loved ones who face empty chairs at their celebrations. God of goodness hear us and be with us.</p> <p>Today, in all the time at all the tables, we pray for those who are hungry and the strength to ensure this scourge is eradicated in our community. God of goodness hear us and be with us. Amen.</p>	
<p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.</p> <p>Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN</p>	

<p>Verse 1, Chorus 1, Verse 2, Chorus 1, Verse 6, Chorus 1, Verse 7, Chorus 1,</p>	<p>Hymn/song TIS #304 (AHB #228) – “O come all ye faithful” v1267</p>
	<p>We are sent out</p> <p>Loving God, today, Christmas Day, help us to look upon the food we share with thanks, help us to take joy in the company of our friends and family, help us to be thankful for all the gifts with which you bless us.</p> <p>In the name of Jesus, who is born in hearts again today. Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace Amen</p>
<p>?? once thru</p>	<p>Benediction</p> <p>This probably isn't practical – maybe a carol instead maybe used as an introit??</p> <p>Happy Xmas (War Is Over) Songwriters: Anhoai / Yokoono / John Winstonlennon lyrics © Lenono Music, Chester Music, Ono Music</p> <p>So this is Christmas And what have you done Another year over And a new one just begun And so this is Christmas I hope you have fun The near and the dear ones The old and the young</p> <p>A very Merry Christmas And a Happy New Year Let's hope it's a good one Without any fear</p>
	<p>Thank you</p>

- ⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.
- ⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from Judy Hartwig's "Hey Kids Altogether" in Lay Leaders' Liturgy
- ^{iv} submitted by Brett Blair and staff
- ^v Words for worship

Elements of this service have been drawn from various sources, some remembered and some not. I have referenced those sources I am able to.

Biblical references, exegesis and readings are routinely drawn from

- [The New International Version](#). (2011). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
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- Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.