

Christmas Day, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

One of things we do as Christians (especially at Christmas time!) is sing. Not always in tune. But we do know how to make a joyful noise don't we. One of the best known of all the songs we sing at Christmas is the one taken from Psalm 98 "Joy to the World, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her king..."

The psalm is expanding, like when you drop a stone into a pool of water and it creates expanding waves. It starts with Israel (vv. 1-3) but then it moves to all people everywhere (v. 4-6) who are called to worship Israel's God. And then it's the whole of creation singing for joy (vv. 7-8). It gets louder and louder! Won't you join in the celebration. Let's sing Joy to the World.

Carol – Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love

Joy to the Earth, the Saviour reigns
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Bible Reading – Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7

Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Announcements 24-25/12/22

Welcome. We are so glad that you found the time to join us this Christmas so that we can all concentrate on the Christ of Christmas. As a Church we want to encourage people to get to the heart of Christmas which means looking past the presents, the food, the family and the fatigue so that we can find Jesus. Thanks for giving us this hour and our prayer is that this will be a time where the GIFTS of Christmas might fade into the background and the GIVER of all good gifts, our great God might become front and centre for us all.

Christmas Services

- **Sat 24/12** Christmas Eve service – 6pm
- **Sun 25/12** Christmas Day service – 8am (Swansea) and 9:30am (Charlestown)

If You're Getting To Know Our Church

Our Church is made up of three distinct congregations

- **Swansea – 8am** is our traditional service. We meet each week to sing older hymns, hear God's word preached to us and enjoy warm fellowship.
- **Charlestown – 9:45am** is a more contemporary service. It still has God's word at its heart plus we add some contemporary songs and a message for the kids all done with a real desire to connect to people within our community.
- **Sunday@6 – 6pm** is a mixture of teenagers, uni students, and some who are a little older who like more modern music, a more informal setting, and yet still desire to learn from God's word.

Our Church also has programmes aimed at all ages

Preschool	Sparklers playgroup every Thursday morning Crèche during Charlestown AM services
Primary School	Kids' Church Every Sunday Family socials once a month
High School	Year 7-8 Bible Study every Sunday AM IMPACT Youth on Friday nights Senior Youth Bible Study for Years 10-12
Uni Students	Young Adult Fellowship every Sunday night Tuesday Home Group
Adults	Home Groups most days Weekly prayer group Dedicated Women's and Men's events JOY (Just Older Youth) monthly get togethers

On top of this we also run...

- A short-term mission to Vanuatu each January
- Evangelistic events in men's, women's and mixed environments.
- A weekend camp at Tahlee
- A marriage course that runs for 7 weeks
- A gala concert supporting local and international missions
- Active involvement in the Hunter Gospel Ministries conferences of RENEW, RECHARGE & RESOURCE

We have a Mission Partnership Network where we partner with five different groups.

- a) Our four link missionaries – Webbs (Broome), Parsons (Japan), Appleby's (Cambodia), Josh M (Power to Change, Melbourne)
- b) Vanuatu Communities of Hog Harbour, Santo and Walaha, Ambae
- c) Wee Waa Presbyterian Church
- d) Christian organisations working in the developing way in a holistic way TEAR/Compassion/Open Doors/Samaritans Purse
- e) A Roche Australia – Christian Creation Care

TEAR Fund. During the Christmas services we will have a retiring offering for the work of TEAR Fund. As a Church we believe that Christmas is a great time to think about those less fortunate than ourselves. TEAR Fund is a practical expression of a Christians love for the poor. Please support it as you are able.

School Holidays. Our school children are on holidays this week so that means the normal activities of the church will close down for the Summer School Holidays and will only start back after Australia Day 2023. There will be a basic Kids Church that will run each Sunday over that time. Over the summer we do hope that you are able to have a break from all your Church activities. Please come each Sunday but during the week we hope you take a well-earned break from everything else. Many thanks to those who have given of themselves this year to make the ministries of the church run so well.

Carol – O Come O Come Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. Refrain

3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain

4 O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain

5 O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode. Refrain

6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light. Refrain

7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace. Refrain

Christmas Prayer

Praise God that people like us who walked in darkness have seen a great light. At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Pray we would walk as children of the light, and discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Pray for the nations: Pray that nations living in darkness both morally and spiritually would have the light of Christ shine on them. Pray the Sun of Righteousness would rise and visit from on high and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. And he would guide our feet into the way of peace.

Pray for God's kingdom to come: Our dark world's only hope is the kingdom of Christ. We long for the way when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Then night will be no more. They will need no lamp or sun, for the Lord will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Bible Reading – Psalm 110:1-7 (NIV)

Of David. A psalm.

1
The Lord says to my lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”

2
The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from
Zion, saying,
“Rule in the midst of your enemies!”

Your troops will be willing
on your day of battle.
Arrayed in holy splendour,
your young men will come to you
like dew from the morning's womb.

4
The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

5
The Lord is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

6
He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

7
He will drink from a brook along the way,
and so he will lift his head high.

Sermon – A Christmas Cracker (Jon Brown)

This is a true story. It happened on the streets of London not so long ago . A young girl was riding her bike and fell off. Nothing unusual about that! It happens all the time. But the accident took place just as the late Queen Mother was driving past in her Rolls Royce. She ordered her chauffeur to stop the car and help the little girl to her feet. The Queen Mother then spoke to the young girl, who wasn't badly hurt, and asked her if she'd like a lift home. The little girl replied, “No thank you, I am not supposed to accept lifts from strangers”

That's the Christmas story, isn't it? “ He was in the world, and though the world was made by him, the world did not recognise him.” That's crazy, isn't it? Jesus did what only God could do. And they still didn't recognise him! He fulfilled all the prophecies - born in Bethlehem, grew up in Galilee, Virgin Birth, flight to Egypt, Wise men from the east, Descended from David. All predicted in the OT. And after his

resurrection, before his ascension, He told his disciples “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

So where better to look if you want to understand who Jesus is this Christmas - than in the Psalms. Especially in these so called “Messianic Psalms.” Today we’re going to look at Psalm 110, the most quoted of all the psalms in the NT. Jesus sees himself in this Psalm, and forcefully uses it in the gospels to press his claims upon his hearers. If we’re to recognise Jesus for who he is, we need to come to grips with this Psalm.

And seeing it’s Christmas, let me do something a little different. Let’s look at this Psalm as a kind of Christmas Cracker. I don’t know if you’re in the habit of pulling crackers at Christmas, but if you do, you know there are usually three things in a Christmas Cracker:

1. First there is a riddle...

Usually there’s a little slip of paper with a joke or a quote, or a riddle on it. Sometimes it a famous quote. Sometimes it’s a dad joke. But often it’s a riddle. A puzzle to solve. And this Psalm has a riddle in it. Notice in verse 1 - “The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand...” How many persons are in that statement? And who’s talking to who? It’s almost as if David’s overhearing a conversation. God talking to God. Literally Yahweh talking to Adonai. The LORD (capital letters i.e. *Yahweh*) says to my Lord - (*Adonai*). But who is David’s Lord? It’s a riddle, isn’t it?

And Jesus uses this riddle on the religious leaders of his day. For example in Matthew 22:41 “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asks them, “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” That’s a loaded question. Everybody knows the answer to that. He’s the Son of David. Well, says Jesus, “If he’s David’s Son, why does David call him Lord? And if David calls him ‘Lord’, how can he be his son?” That’s a riddle! Can you imagine David calling Solomon, Lord? That’s not the way it works. The father is greater than the son. So it’s odd that David should call his son, Lord. It’s supernaturally odd. Look at the words again - God - Yahweh, Lord invites Messiah, Adonai to sit at his right hand.

Do you know, the NT says more than 20 times that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father? So Jesus is making a statement about himself here. Jesus is the solution to the riddle, isn’t he? And now he is in the place of supreme authority and power at God’s right hand. Riddle solved. The identity is clear. The Messiah is Jesus - not only David’s Son but David’s Lord.

2. The second thing you find in a Christmas Cracker is a paper hat which is always in the shape of a crown. And you have to wear it while you eat your Christmas lunch. That’s what you have here in this Psalm too. Only it’s a real crown, not a paper one. Jesus is a real king. Not a pretend one. How can I be so sure?

Because he’s in the place of power. Look at verse 1 again, “The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” In the ancient near east that was symbolic of victory. So when Joshua defeated 5 Amorite kings in Joshua 10, he ordered his commanders, to place their feet on the neck of these kings. AND JESUS IS GOING TO THAT FOR US! He is going to defeat all the ancient enemies of the human race!!!! And those who believe in Him are going to share in the His victory. Romans 16:20 says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” Aren’t you looking forward to putting your foot on the neck of Satan? It’s only possible through Jesus!

His kingdom is advancing in the world - Look at verse 2 “The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of your enemies.” Isn’t that what’s happening right now? It’s 2022 AD, the year of our Lord. Jesus reigns!

Iran has the fastest growing evangelical church in the world. The second fastest growing church is Afghanistan, and Afghans are being reached in part by Iranians. He rules in the midst of his enemies....

He has a following, doesn't He? What is a king without followers? Look at verse 3 - "Your troops will be willing in the day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendour, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb." What kind of followers does King Jesus have? Willing followers! Literally free will offerings. You do it not because you have to, but because you want to. And that's how we are to see the Christian life - It's not "I've got to" but "I get to." Paul describes it for us in Romans 12:1 "I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship." Made willing. So when the rosters come around in the new year. And they need filling... What's your answer going to be? Are you going to groan and make excuses, and lay down conditions? Or will you smile and say, "I'd love to do that!"

So there is a Riddle and there is a Crown in this psalm. But there is also....

3. A surprise free gift. Look at verse 4, "the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." That is such good news, isn't it? Up until now we've been thinking of Jesus as King who will conquer his enemies. Just glance at verse 5-7? I won't read it. There are scenes in there that may disturb some viewers. It's scary to be on the wrong side of Jesus. What if you're one of his enemies?

"He will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth." What if you're an enemy of God? What if there's hostility in your heart towards him? IT'S NOT A KING YOU NEED BUT A PRIEST. It's not justice but mercy. That's true, isn't it? And that is the good news for you this Christmas. That is the gift in this Psalm for you. Jesus is not just a king who has total authority to smash all opposition. He is also a priest, who can provide complete forgiveness for all your sin. In the OT the office of king and priest were kept separate. But there is a precedent. A strange mysterious figure who was king in Jerusalem in the days of Abraham, and he was also Priest of the Most High. You can read about him in Genesis 14, his name was Melchizedek. And he prefigures Christ. Jesus is a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. And the writer of the Hebrews reminds us, because of that, "...he is able to save completely those who come to God through him. Because he always lives to interceded for them. Such a high priest truly meets our needs."

Twenty years ago, the Brazilian Government turned a prison over to two Christians, to run it on Christian principles. With the exception of two full-time staff, all the work is done by inmates. Families outside the prison adopt an inmate to work with during and after his term.

Chuck Colson, the founder of "Prison Fellowship", visited the prison and this is his report. When I visited this prison, I found the inmates smiling—particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gates and let me in. Wherever I walked I saw men at peace. I saw clean living areas. I saw people working industriously. The walls were decorated with motivational sayings and Scripture.

Humaita, a region in Brazil, has an astonishing record. Its re-offending rate for ex-prisoners is only 4 percent, compared to 75 percent in the rest of Brazil. How is that possible? I saw the answer when my inmate guide escorted me to the notorious cell once used for solitary punishment. Today, he told me, it always houses the same inmate. As we reached the end of the long concrete corridor and he put the key into the lock, he paused and asked, "Are you sure you want to go in? "Of course," I replied impatiently. "I've been in isolation cells all over the world." Slowly he swung open the massive door, and I saw the prisoner in that cell: a crucifix, beautifully carved—Jesus, hanging on the cross. "He's doing time for the rest of us," my guide said softly.

What a great story!...

There's only one thing wrong with it- it should be a cross not a crucifix. Because Jesus is not on the cross anymore! He went to the cross and he paid our debts but now he is risen from the dead, that cross is empty. And he is seated at God's right hand, interceding for us, in the power of an endless life.

It's a cracker of a Psalm, isn't it? It has within it a riddle, a crown, and a free gift. The free gift of eternal life to all who take Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. It is guaranteed - the Lord has sworn, he has put on oath. Here is God's gift to you this Christmas. Wrapped up in this cracker of a psalm. You don't always get what you want a Christmas. But what you need - another pair of socks. And God has given us just what we need. Not only a king but a priest. J-E-S-U-S - Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners.

Carol – Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"

Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Risen with healing in His wings

Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"

Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"
"Glory to the new-born king"

Closing Words: "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people: Today in the city of David a Saviour was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
Amen