INTRODUCTION – EMMANUEL Clip (1 min 53)

Song – Come on Ring those Bells

Introduction

Welcome to our Christmas Day service. It’s no accident you are here today on Christmas morning.

In the 21st Century we live in a visual society, movies and media dominate our days. Who’s going to see a movie this holiday? Perhaps Star Wars – The Last Jedi?

I said yesterday in my Christmas Eve message that Christmas is about Christ. And Christmas is about the story of God’s perfect gift of Jesus to this world. It was wonderful to hear Sophie Paladino on the TV Carols last night the gift of Jesus this Christmas.

I have a series of video clips intermingled amongst our songs of worship that help us not only hear but see the story of Christmas afresh this morning. Let’s watch the screen.
I was wondering this week what the Christmas Story might look like if Hollywood got a hold of it. I’m guessing that Hollywood would recast the Christmas story.

Joseph’s collar might be too blue. Mary is too green and inexperienced. The couple’s star power doesn’t match the bill. Too obscure? Too simple? The story warrants some headliners. Perhaps a square-jawed Joseph. Someone like Clooney. And Mary needs a beauty mark and glistening teeth. Angelina Jolie-ish. What about those shepherds – can they sing. Perhaps Hugh Jackman or U2 or Bono?

I wonder how Hollywood would re-cast and remake the humble story of Christmas?

They wouldn’t place the baby in the feed trough, the animals noses have there.

Perhaps move the birth to a bigger city – one that’s at least got some palaces and villas that would make a great backdrop. The Son of God deserves a royal entry. You know - a bit more pizzazz.

Forget about sheep and donkeys and camels – bring in world leaders in the royal jets and helicopters.

Get Moses and Adam & Eve and even Abraham to arrive and bow before the Alpha & Omega that Mary holds.

The lighting rig that would be required to light the entire set would be one of the most complex and expensive so that the star would be seen in every shot.

I wonder how Hollywood would portray and modify this humble story?

MEDIA CLIP – The Call of Christmas (Mary) (3 min 28)

MEDIA CLIP – The Call of Christmas (Joseph) (4 min 4)
Then there’s the shepherds. Not sure what Hollywood would do with these stinky guys.

**Song – God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen**

**MEDIA CLIP – Our Coming Saviour (Shepherds)** (4 min)

**Song – O Come all ye Faithful**

Forget about the Hollywood version. God made so little of his Son’s coming. He didn’t even circle the date on the calendar. How could this be. No exact date of birth. No hoopla at his birth. Is this a mistake?

Or is this the message?

Maybe your life resembles a Bethlehem stable. Crude in some spots, smelly in others. Not much glamour. Not always neat. You do your best to make the best of it, but try as you might, the roof still leaks, the wins still sneaks through the holes you cant seem to fix.

And you wonder if God has a place for a person like you.

The answer is found in the Bethlehem stable. It comes down to one thing – God loves us. The story of Christmas is God’s relentless love for us.

So my message this Christmas Day service is to let Him love you. The moment Mary touched God’s face in the manger is the moment that God made his case – there is no place he will not go. There is no person he will not love. No place is too common. No person is too hardened. No distance is too far. There is no person he cannot reach. There is no limit to his live.

Because when Christ was born, so was our hope.

This is why I love Christmas. It invites us to believe the wildest of promises – that God became one of us so we could be one with Him.
He did away with every barrier, every fence, every sin, every debt and every grave. Anything that would keep us away from him, he demolished. He only awaits our word to walk through the door.

Invite him in. Take him to the seat of honour in your life. Pull out the chair for him to sit on. Clear the table, clear the calendar. Call the kids and the neighbours.

Christmas is here. Christ is here.

One request from you and god will do again what he did then – scatter the night with everlasting light. He’ll be born in you!

Listen as God whispers, “No mess turns me back; no smell turns me off. I live to live a life like yours. Every heart can be a manger.

Every day can be a Christmas.

The Christmas miracle is a year long celebration.

May this prayer be yours.

Read “My Heart, Your Manger” (Pg 136 Because of Bethlehem by Max Lucado)

CONCLUSION – The Call of Christmas Anthem (2 mins 24)

Song – He made a way in a manger.

Let’s pray …
Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for Christmas where we remember the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Make a way in the manger of our hearts today and this year as we worship you. The real meaning of Christmas is Jesus. Christmas is here. Christ is here. The greatest gift has been given to us. Because of Bethlehem, we now have a saviour in heaven.

I pray that each one might have the courage to invite you in today, and to realise that our world needs Jesus. This Christmas may our thoughts and hearts be directed towards your great love through a baby, a baby who would make the difference in history for all of us. Thank you for loving us in this special way. Thank you for Christmas. Amen.
1 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 Saviour 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 favour 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.