

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on John 1:1-18, 29**  
**Theme: “The *Who* and *Why* of Christmas”**  
**“Follow *Jesus* in your life”**

\* ***“Christmas according to the Gospel writers: John (No. 2)***

---

***Introduction:***

Like Mark in his gospel, *which some of us looked at last week*, John has no Christmas story in his account of the life of Jesus. Only Luke and Matthew tells us the *How* of Jesus' birth....

John doesn't give us the *How* of Christmas, but *like Mark* he does give us the *Who* and *Why* of Christmas.... And that's what we are going to look at this morning....

***Part 1: The “Who” of Christmas***

Well, firstly the *Who* of Christmas.... As we think about the *Who* of Christmas in John's Gospel, let me first tell you a story. It's a story that the young people who are here today to confirm their faith had in the very first get-together that we had. It's a story called “Carl's Crusade”:

**Carl loved bugs. He really loved them. Carl hoped to be an entomologist, *a person who studies insects*, when he grew up. He already knew more about bugs than anyone he knew, including Mr. Carson, the biology teacher. From when he was a little boy, Carl always had jars of bugs in his room. His mum was not happy about this, but she said *that* it was OK as long as he followed two rules: Don't kill or hurt the bugs. *And* Don't let them out of the jars in the house.**

Well, Carl studied his bugs to find out what they needed in the way of food and shelter, and made sure he took care of them. Leaving them in the jar was another matter.

Carl wasn't just interested in bugs in jars. He spent hours and hours out in the garden or in the bush watching bugs as they went about their daily lives.

One day, Carl watched a procession of ants. He watched them go down the side of the tree, across the cement driveway, under a log, up a fencepost, across the top of the fence, right onto the honey mixed with poison *that* Mrs Parsons had put down to kill the ants before they got to her house. One by one, the ants walked into the poison, staggered around for a minute, and then died.

Carl watched as the procession of ants kept on coming. He wanted to stop the ants from dying. He tried calling to them, but of course the ants didn't hear or understand him. He tried putting up a barrier, but the ants just went around it. And they kept on dying.

Carl realised that, as a 13-year-old boy, he couldn't do anything to help those ants. So he crossed his fingers, closed his eyes, puffed up his cheeks, and turned himself into an ant.

As an ant, Carl was able to save the ants. Now he could tell them what the danger was. Now he could *rescue them and* lead them to a safer way (*On the Road, Jesus, p. 7*).

It's a parable which reminds us what God did for us at the

first Christmas. At the first Christmas, God became an ordinary human being for our sake.

You know, the ultimate confession of a follower of Jesus is that Jesus is “God become a human being for our sake”.

Let me explain. When you first read one of the Gospels, you start to think:

**“Wow!! This Jesus is a great Teacher!”** (e.g. *Matthew 5-7*).

As you think about him a bit more, you start thinking that maybe Jesus was more than a great human being: that maybe he was God’s promised King and the Son of God as *he claimed he was (cf. Matt 16:16)*.

You know, the miracles that Jesus did *by God’s power* was God’s way of saying that Jesus was who he said way....

And God’s raising of Jesus from the dead was the icing on the cake, so far as God confirming to us that Jesus was who he said he was....

How can we not accept what Jesus said about himself when God Himself has confirmed it to be true!!

The final confession about Jesus that you come to, *as you listen to him and watch him in your mind’s eye (hold up my Bible), and as you see him raised from the dead*, is that one that Thomas came to when he saw the risen Jesus. Thomas fell at Jesus’ feet and said:

**“My Lord and my God!”** (*John 20:28*).

It was the only way that Thomas, and the early Christians, could make sense of Jesus: that Jesus was God himself

among them....

At the start of John's Gospel, John emphasised this about Jesus. Listen again to what John says at the start of his Gospel:

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....**

**And the Word became a human being (*Lit. "flesh"*) and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son....**

**Out of the fullness of his grace, he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another. God gave the Law through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known (*John 1:1-18*).**

Do you hear what John is saying? God, in the person of the Son, became a human being for us when Jesus Christ was born. What happened was much like Carl wished could happen with regard to him and the ants. Carl wanted to turn himself into an ant so that he could communicate with the ants, to make himself "known" to ants, *and to rescue the ants*.

## ***Part 2: The "Why" of Christmas***

...Which leads us onto the why of Christmas.

Why did God become an ordinary human being for us? To tell us how much He loves us, *and to rescue us!*

That's why Carl imagined that he could become an ant: so that he could rescue the ants from the honey mixed with poison that Mrs Parson had put down in order to kill the them before they got to her house.

You know, that's exactly *why* God became a human being for us: in order to rescue us!

Remember what John the Baptist said in John's Gospel when he saw Jesus coming:

**“There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (*John 1:29; cf. Vic Pfitzner, John: “the sacrifice of lambs was part of regular temple ritual”, p. 48; plus slide from H. Wendt’s PARABLES re the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*).

God became a human being in order “to take away the sin of the world”, as he suffered and died for us on a cross.

God became a human being in order “to take away” your sin and my sin, and the consequences that we deserve. God, in the person of His Son, Jesus, “took the rap” for us, when he suffered and died on the cross (*cf. my story of my class room teacher taking the rap for me: namely the cane that I deserved from the headmaster*”).

And how do we receive *for ourselves* what Jesus did for everyone on the cross? Listen to what Jesus says a bit later on in John's Gospel:

**For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him may not be lost** (*Lit. “perish”*) **but have eternal life** (*John 3:16*).

It is through “believing” in Jesus as our Saviour, *trusting that he took our punishment on the cross*, that we receive for ourselves what Jesus did for everyone on the cross.

That's how we receive for ourselves the benefits of what Jesus did for everyone: namely, God's ongoing forgiveness and eternal life....

The young people *who are going to confirm their faith today* have looked at something that speaks about all this: Martin Luther's explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed.

This is how it goes:

**I believe that Jesus Christ – true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary – is my Lord.**

That's the *Who* of Christmas! And then follows an explanation of the *Why* of Christmas:

**At great cost He has saved and redeemed (“rescued”) me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil -- not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and his innocent suffering and death....**

I love this description of the *Why* of Christmas: God became a human being in order to rescue you and me, *just like Carl imagined turning himself into an ant to rescue the ants from dying.*

Well, where does all this leave you and me *as we approach Christmas?* Well in the same position that the young people out the front here are in: deciding for ourselves who the baby in the manger is, and whether we want to trust in Jesus as *our Saviour, our Rescuer*, and follow Jesus in our life as *our Lord.*

### ***Conclusion:***

I love the words of the song that we going to sing next, the song “Lord, I lift your name of high:

**Lord I lift Your name on high  
Lord I love to sing Your praises  
I'm so glad You're in my life  
I'm so glad You came to save us**

**You came from heaven to earth to show the way  
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay  
From the cross to the grave, from the grave  
to the sky  
Lord I lift Your name on high.**

What a wonderful God He is!! May He bless us as we rejoice this Christmas and always that God “came from heaven to earth”, “to show us the way”, and “our debt to pay”.