

## Sermon Archive 565

Thursday 25 December, 2025

Knox Church, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Reflections for Christmas Day

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



### The first monologue of three - the Christmas people address Jesus

Kia ora Jesus, and happy birthday! We've celebrated it by seeing it in, being up at midnight to sing some carols - back in church now to sing some more. Bleary eyes for some, mingled with a gentle sense of "moment, how good it is to be at the feast of being alive. Later on we'll maybe have something nice for dinner, set the table a bit more specially than normal. I hope you'll find something special to do to mark the day - maybe turn some water into wine (could be useful), or have one of those "silence of eternity" moments, "interpreted by love". Some way of giving thanks for that life of yours that stretches still to at least as far as today. It *is* good to be alive.

Initially, Lord, it was also **complicated** to be alive - for you and your people, that is. You know, any plans that any diligent parent might have developed can be upset by a census. Yes, they'd had months to prepare; you weren't a surprise - well, yes, admittedly in the first days of the news, you were! Very much and most miraculously so; who expects a "Hail Mary, the Lord is with you"? As a response to an annunciation, "How can this be?" does indicate quite a surprise. But since the initial surprise, it's been a nine-month matter of putting things in place: shelter, clothing, cousins on standby because apparently it takes a village to raise a child. Does Joseph put in extra hours at work, so he's freer not to work when the birthday comes? It's good to have all these things in place?

Suddenly, though, ambitions to be ready and "calm for the day" surrender to compulsory trips to somewhere else. With a census announced, a heavily pregnant woman ends up on the road to a place without enough accommodation. Resourcefulness is required in finding somewhere for the baby. In the absence of a room, they find a stable. In the absence of a crib, they use a feeding trough. In the absence of the child-receiving village, a group of shepherds will have to do. They **tried** to be ready - and it may have been hard for them not to feel like you'd come too soon.

Even today, in this praying for your coming again, too soon. We'd hoped to have peace in place before you came. We'd hoped to have goodwill at hand.

We'd hoped to have the lion lying down with the lamb - for these are the things you deserve. But suddenly you were here. Whether we were ready (or ever will be ready) didn't hold much sway. Suddenly, already, in an over-fullness of time, you were in the world.

Later, thirty odd birthdays later from your first coming (first Christmas), you'd tell us the story of a new creation coming like a thief in the night. Later you'd spin a story of foolish virgins who'd not topped up their oil lamps. Where did all that time go? Today can't be the birthday! You came delightfully - but it felt like very much too soon!

For weeks now, we've been singing "bring in your new world" - like parents who have plans to be ready. And we've acknowledged that "no, we're not there yet"!

Be in our hearts and in our minds, we pray, that all that is not yet ready might fall into our prayers and practices - so we might find ourselves rejoicing in the new world already begun among us.

So, happy birthday Jesus - the new world already begun.

-ooOoo-

### **The second monologue of three - Jesus addresses his God**

Meri Kirihimete, God - that's how we express it down in this wonderful upside-down part of your creation - not that I can tell you anything about your creation that you don't already know. (Or maybe now I can, and maybe that's the "far shore" of this monologue.)

You know, of course, that before creation was, we were, I being what our inspired visionaries eventually would call the "eternal Word that was from the beginning". So, in so many ways, I'm as old as can be, and wise, and knowing. And you? Grandmas don't need youngsters to teach them to suck an egg. But Grandma **can** enjoy listening to the youngster talking like an expert. And rumour has it, doesn't it, that sometimes Grandma finds herself thinking "from the mouths of babes and sucklings"! There's something about naive perspective shared with the wise . . . that the really wise will pick up as "wisdom new".

Here's my Christmas naive perspective, dear God. Never before had I experienced being small and helpless, totally dependent on the care of two fallible people who were doing their best. Never before had I not been able to express myself, other than through cries and unformed sounds. Never before had I felt the arms that cradled me were the entire world. I'd known

the morning stars and planets sweeping cosmic course. I'd known the placing of boundaries on the earth and the seas, the commanding of the morning dwelling places of the light. I'd never known the stubbing of the toe, the bursting of the tears and the running into the arms of the comfort of Mum.

For me, these things of human perspective feel new. I should be old; but this incarnational thing presents me with "new". Everything around me feels very new. It's like the people sang: "bring in your new world".

I don't think that the newness of the world threw me. My parents, who'd done a few years already in the old world guided me through the new. In the best of all possible worlds, that's what parents do. "When I was a boy, Jesus", **he** said. "You'll see it differently when you're older" **she** said. Each spoke in love - and with what a child can only see as confidence (the young ones don't see the adults' insecurities). For me, beset as any child was with newness (first cry, first fear, first hope, first doubt) they ministered to the new.

As they shared their ministry, our ancestors' long story of faith was part of it. The planting of the garden, the snare of the serpent. The bravery of the ancestors who left home for the journey of faith. The vision of the prophets, the songs of the psalmists. The wild and wonderful stories of those whose descendants would step forward when called to "come and see".

Even as I came to terms with the newness of the human perspective, there came to me in the tent of faith, another realm of being new. Christmas was the start. It made me fully human - who I am. I could not have understood, though I knew where the rain is stored and the seas are kept, what this life is like for those who worship, without Christmas. But faith calls me to another newness - a second Christmas, if we will - a coming again. "Bring in your new world" we sing - so Meri Kirihimete, God. That's how we say it here.

-ooOoo-

### **The third monologue of three - God addresses the Christmas people**

Meri Kirihimete, children of mine. I'm told on good authority that that's how you greet one another on this day in my favourite part of the world. Just joking! Or it not joking, don't tell any of my other children!

If you are anything like the parents of Jesus, part of you will find yourself scrambling to make the world ready. There will be so many things almost to overwhelm you about all the stuff you wanted to have place that isn't in place. You'll feel embarrassed about the state of the house into which he's born -

with its "war, disease and brutality". Gaza will be a weight on your shoulders. Ukraine will be something you wish had by now been healed. If you wanted to fix these things before Christmas, well, Christmas came too soon! You're like the parents of Jesus.

And if you are anything like Jesus himself, you'll be completely alive to the calling in of the new world. Bring in the new world.

People, my people, people of my favourite part of the garden, may Christmas be a time for you to be inspired by the birth. I have loved you for an eternal time. I have been with you in Christ for a long time. And his having been human will inspire you to want all things to be made new. His presence among you, will turn your old world into the "new world". If you hear the **call** of Christmas, you will pray, you will long, you will hope and you will act towards the coming of the new world.

Your visionaries will say "behold, God is making all things new". They will say "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our God, and of the Christ". The birth of coming-again Jesus will find room, if not in the inns of Bethlehem, then at least in the stables that you prepare.

-ooOoo-

Those were three monologues for Christmas Day. May God bless them in our hearing.

*Bring in your new word, child of our earth,  
holding creation in your compassion,  
waiting your birth;  
come little human, cry your first breath,  
cry out God's kindness, light out of blindness,  
life out of death.*

A moment of quiet.

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