



'Worship at home' Christmas Day 2023



We come to worship today
with a sense of wonder and hope.

Today is the fulfillment of our anticipation:
the celebration of the coming of the Christ-Child;
the light of the world has come among us as a baby.

This is the time for which we have been waiting and preparing:
the time when God's promises are fulfilled; in the birth of a child,
wrapped in swaddling cloth and laid in a manger:
a child who brings the promise of hope, of new beginnings -
that justice and peace will reign.

We are at the great turning point of time! **Christmas is here!**

Isaiah 9: selected verses

*The people who walked in
darkness have seen a great
light. They lived in a land of
shadows, but now light is
shining on them. You have
given them great joy, Lord;
you have made them happy.
A child is born to us! A son is
given to us! And he will be our
ruler. He will be called,*

*"Wonderful Counsellor,"
"Mighty God," "Eternal
Father," "Prince of Peace."
His royal power will continue
to grow; his kingdom will
always be at peace. He will
rule as King David's
successor, basing his power
on right and justice, from now
until the end of time.*

Good News Bible



**Reflect on your family traditions
for Christmas.**

**How have these changed over time?
Which of them are most important or
significant for you? Why?**

We live in uncertain and changing times. For many of us, it can seem difficult to keep up. However, there are traditions and values which we hold dear, that endure despite external events.

Reflect on how your life has changed since last Christmas.

What are the values and traditions that you hold onto, that help you feel grounded and secure?



Life does not stay the same: just in this past year, you may have been married, or welcomed a newcomer into your family; you may have retired or moved house. External and internal events have the potential to bring change. Sometimes even a holiday, a book, or a chance conversation completely turns our life upside down. Likewise, we can imagine that the birth of Jesus completely changed life for Mary and Joseph!

Luke 2: 1-16

At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her

baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger - there was no room for them to stay in the inn. There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born - Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it 2

to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels

went away from them back 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." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger.

Good News Bible

The coming of Jesus did not only change life for Mary and Joseph... the coming of Jesus had cosmic implications for the whole world.

How does the coming of Jesus Christ make a difference to your life?

How does the coming of Jesus Christ bring hope to our world?



As we consider the changing world around us, and we consider the events of the year that has been and wonder about the year that is to unfold ahead of us, it might seem that we are on the brink of something new. Perhaps we are experiencing something of that first Christmas, when a tiny babe was born who was to change everything. Maybe this Christmas will also become a turning point of time...

Prayer

God of love, you come among us, revealed in us as a babe at Christmas. In you we find hope, in our difficult times. In you we find peace, amidst a world in conflict. In you we find joy, sneaking in sometimes when we least expect.



Merry Christmas 2023

In you we find love that changes us,
and has the potential to change our world.
In you we find forgiveness,
and the opportunity for a new start.
Whatever 2023 has held for us,
whatever this Christmas brings,
whatever lies ahead in the new year,
we are assured of your presence with us,
and your love to hold us.
Amen!

- Think of those who might find Christmas difficult this year. This might include those whose Christmas plans have changed, who are unable to get together with family, or who have lost loved ones during the year. There are many who feel isolated and alone at Christmas.
- Name them before God, and pray that they will know God's presence and peace.
- Phone or message someone you think might be struggling this Christmas with the following blessing:



“May the hope of Christ be with you this Christmas.”

Closing

May the blessing of God shine in you,

the life of God that is the light of the world.

May the grace and truth of Jesus Christ grow in you.

May the joy of God be within you and uplift you.

May the Spirit of God be at home in your heart.

May the glory of God surround you,

this Christmas time and always.

Amen.

- adapted from Silvia Purdie <https://www.conversations.net.nz/christmas.html>

MERRY CHRISTMAS!