

Good News of Great Joy

Christmas 2020 Video Sermon Guide

[This sermon guide below has been developed in conjunction with the Christmas video 'Peace and Hope for Troubled Times' [<https://vimeo.com/469593407>] and represents a framework you can build on. Typically, Christmas sermons are delivered before audiences that include many people who don't have much faith at all. It's a great opportunity to use testimony to augment a monologue. A well-chosen testimony can underline key points in the sermon and help people place what otherwise may be some abstract points into the life of someone they can relate to.]

Bible Passage: Luke 2:1-20

2020 and the arrival of Christmas

Reflect on what 2020 has been like for you and your community.

- Recap some of the highs
- Recap some of the lows
- Share about how you are feeling landing finally at Christmas

Many people in our community have been eagerly awaiting Christmas and the end of the year. Ready to turn the page. Ready to move on.

McCrimdle Australians Post COVID-19 Report:

- "Almost nine in ten Australians (88%) are excited to close the door on 2020 and start 2021"

The Arrival of Jesus

- Recap the birth of Jesus from Luke's gospel
- Make note of the circumstances under which Jesus was born

Jesus' birth came not under what we would deem ideal circumstances. Just imagine being in their situation! Expecting their first child and being told to trek back to up Bethlehem for a Census.

The movement of people would have been immense.

And to add insult to injury, Mary goes into Labour while they are squatting in Bethlehem. There is no guest room available and so they end up giving birth in the animal shed and Mary manages to wrap her baby in scraps of cloth and lay him in a feeding trough.

Not as Planned

This would not have been what Joseph and Mary had in mind.

- Recap the visitation of the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38
- This child was to be God's Son, God has found favour in Mary and her son will take the throne

Surely, with these promises of God would also come a more idyllic situation in which this blessed child was to be born? Surely, if God's own son was entering this world, that God would orchestrate events to fall in Mary's favour?

Through our eyes though, it doesn't seem this way. If that were me, I would be miffed that God hadn't intervened and given this baby a trouble- and hassle-free arrival.

Jesus' Birth Announcement

And yet, hear the announcement of his birth to the Shepherds in Luke 2:10-14 (read)

'Good news of great joy for all the people.'

And what was to be the sign to the shepherds that this Messiah had been born? How would they know they had found the new king?

In the middle of a busy town; overcrowded because of the census; chaos and uncertainty everywhere; out the back, in an animal shed they'll find a newborn baby wrapped and lying in a make-shift bed.

How surprising and unexpected! How understated and humble!

No fanfare. No fireworks. No parade.
Just a sleeping baby.

Newborn Babies in 2020

Many families have experienced this juxtaposition in 2020 – the good news of great joy hidden amidst chaos and uncertainty.

Amidst all the loss, pain, fear, and changes of 2020 – babies have still been born. And these babies – born into a global pandemic, into drought, bushfires, social upheaval, economic stress and tonnes of uncertainty – they managed to still bring gifts of joy, peace and hope.

- Can you share a story of a 2020 baby?
- Can someone in your congregation share about giving birth this year?

What can we learn from the newborn at the centre of the nativity?

Many of us and many in our world have been looking forward to Christmas, looking for it to bring them gifts that they may have missed this year – joy, peace and hope.

- Many have lost the source of their joy in 2020. Whether this be through financial hardship, loss of freedoms, loss of travel or material things.
 - o McCrindle research: 56% said they are struggling to find anything good in 2020

- 65% have experienced negative affects because of changes to travel and lifestyle
- Others have found that peace has evaded them. Individuals and families have been stressed with time, health, finances or uncertainty and they've been unable to find peace.
 - McCrindle research: 40% of Australians identify a long-term negative impact of this year on their mental health
 - More than half are 'worried and anxious'
- And for some, hope has gone. As industries have shut down, jobs have been lost, and health has been compromised, many people will be experiencing the crumbling of the things they put their hope in.
 - McCrindle research showed 69% of people are worried about the future.
 - Many people are anticipating long-term negative impacts of 2020. Whether this be because of the impact to big life events like weddings and funerals, financial impact, or mental health.

The newborn babies of 2020, born into chaos, difficulty and trouble, show us how it's possible to find joy, peace and hope – even when it seems impossible.

They have brought a spark of joy, a feeling of peace and a glimmer of hope to the families in which they were born.

At Christmas, we are encouraged to experience this in the newborn baby at the centre of the nativity.

If we look to Jesus, we can find:

- Joy in the midst of sorrow

Jesus came as "Good news of great joy for all the people."

- Peace despite chaos

One of the names given to Jesus is the "prince of peace".

- Hope for tomorrow

"Emmanuel" – God with us.