

**SEASONAL
SPECIALS**

CHRISTMAS

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise;
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim:
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

Christ, by highest heav’n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell.
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

Hail the heav’n-born Prince
of Peace!

Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris’n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

Charles Wesley

About this hymn

- It was written by Charles Wesley—author of over 6,500 hymns, including “And Can It Be?”
- This carol began life in 1739. Charles’ original tune was much more sombre, and its first line was “Hark how all the welkin rings, ‘glory to the King of kings’”.
- The words went through many revisions after Charles’ death. In 1856, William Cummings adapted the words to fit a new cantata Felix Mendelssohn had written to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the printing press.

Exploring the Christian faith

The story of Christmas is the story of God’s Son, Jesus, coming into our world on a rescue mission. This Christmas he offers us...

- The gift of comfort—knowing that Jesus is with us in the midst of our sadness and struggle.
- The gift of hope—as we trust in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection for forgiveness, and look forward to a wonderful future with God.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

JOHN 3:16-17

Questions to consider

- Did anything from the talk strike you in particular?
- How are you feeling about the Christmas season and the end of another year? In what ways do you need comfort and hope?
- What does it tell us about God that he would come into our world—not as a VIP but as a poor and helpless baby?
- What would it look like for you to begin to unwrap Jesus' two gifts of comfort and hope? Or are there questions that you need to have answered first?





Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you so much for Christmas—that 2,000 years ago you sent your son, Jesus, to be born in a stable so he could rescue the world... and also rescue me.

I ask that you help me to know your comfort and your hope this Christmas. Thank you that these gifts are ready and waiting for me—I don't need to do anything extra or special to earn them; I just need to accept them.

Please watch over me, my family and friends today and over the coming weeks, and help each of us to know your comforting presence by our side and your bright hope for a future spent with you.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen

EASTER

THINE BE THE GLORY

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
Let the church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth: death hath lost its sting.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without Thee: aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors, through Thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

Edmond Budry

About this hymn

- “Thine Be the Glory” was written by the Swiss hymn-writer Edmond Budry in 1884.
- Edmond was born in Vevey—the home of milk chocolate—and later became a pastor there.
- He set the hymn to a tune composed by George Handel some 140 years previously.
- It was translated from French into English in 1923.

Exploring the Christian faith

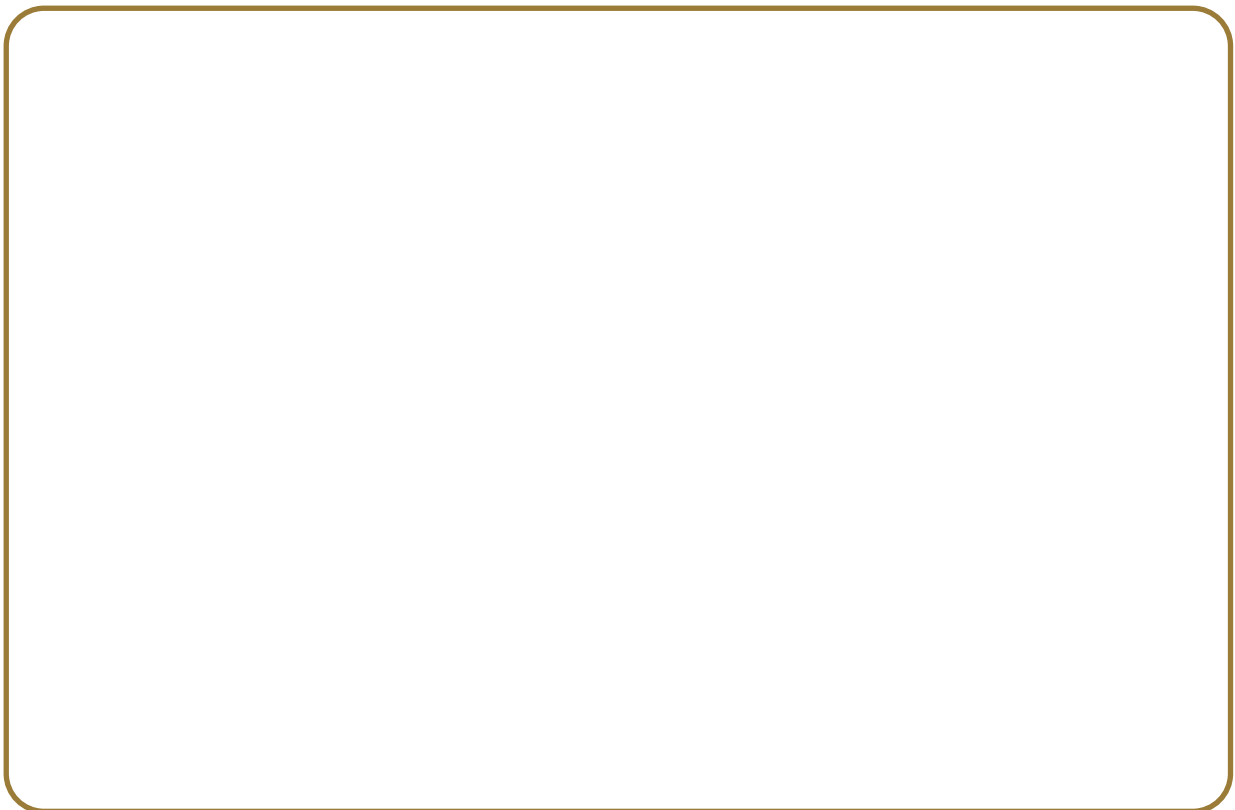
- The claim that Jesus rose from the dead is central to the Christian message. It shows that God can be trusted, forgiveness is possible, death is defeated and heaven is attainable.
- The risen Jesus patiently and lovingly met his followers in their fear and doubt, and brought them to a place of joy and confidence—and he offers to do the same for us.

“When the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.”

JOHN 20:19-20

Questions to consider

- Was there anything in the talk that particularly struck you?
- Which characters in the Easter story did you most identify with, and why?
- Why did Jesus' resurrection so transform his first followers? Why is it still significant for Christians today?
- How would you describe what Jesus is like, based on what you've heard today?
- As you consider Christianity, what questions, doubts or fears do you have? Would you be willing to bring them to Jesus and let him meet you in them?





Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you that no matter where I am today, you are able to find me, to come by my side and to call me by my name. Thank you that you are not put off by my doubts, uncertainty, or fears, but that because of Jesus, you will always be ready to welcome me, just as I am.

Help me now to put my trust in you, knowing that being held in your arms is the safest place to be.

I ask, dear Lord, that over the coming days, you would help me draw close to you, listen to your voice and come to know just how much you love me.

In the name of Jesus, I pray.

Amen

MY SONG IS LOVE UNKNOWN

My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
O, who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

He came from his blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But such disdain! So few
The longed-for Christ would
know!
But O, my Friend,
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

Sometimes they crowd His way
And His sweet praises sing,
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.

They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away.
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
To suffering goes
That He His foes
From death might free.

In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death, no friendly tomb,
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was His home,
But mine the tomb
Wherein He lay.

Here might I stay and sing;
No story so divine,
Never was love, dear King,
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend,
In whose sweet praise
I all my days
Could gladly spend!

Samuel Crossman

About this hymn

- The words were written as a poem by Samuel Crossman, an English clergyman, in 1664.
- Following Samuel's death in 1683, the words were set to music and sung like a formal psalm for many years in Anglican churches.
- It wasn't until 1919 that it became the popular hymn we know and love today. The editors of England's *Public School Hymn Book* asked the composer John Ireland to come up with a new tune—which he's said to have done in just ten minutes on a scrap of paper!

Exploring the Christian faith

Christians believe that two things were going on during Jesus' final days:

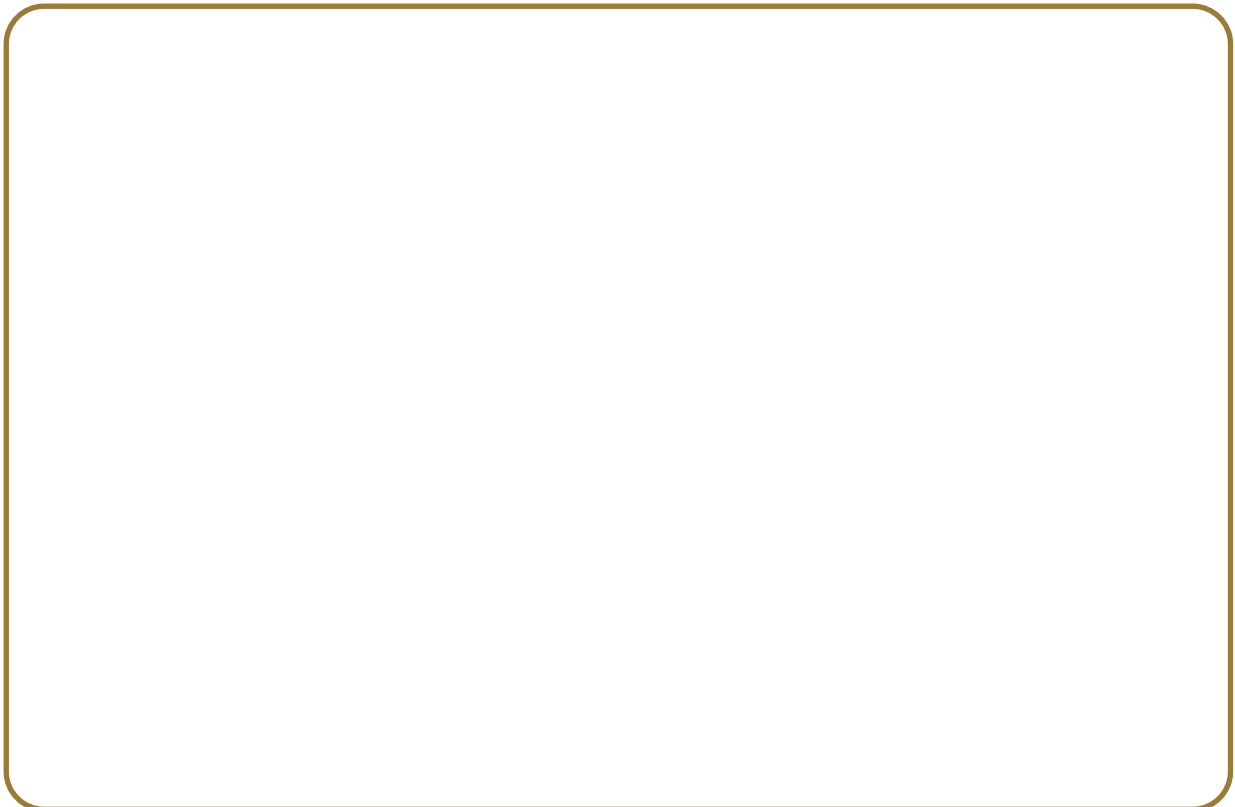
- On a human level, Jesus was a real person who was brutally executed by the Roman authorities of his day.
- On a deeper level, God planned for this to happen. Jesus' death had a purpose—to show us God's love and to make us lovely in God's sight.

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

ROMANS 5:8

Questions to consider

- Was there anything that particularly struck you from this session?
- We've heard that at the heart of the Christian faith is love. Is that what you would have said before this session? What word might you have chosen instead?
- Have you ever felt that God loves you? What makes you say that?
- How does Jesus' death on the cross show us God's love? What impact, if any, do you think Jesus' death has for you?



Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you so much for what Jesus did for us 2,000 years ago. Thank you for his life, for his sacrificial death and for his resurrection.

Thank you that through the awful hate and brutality of that last week, you showed just how much you love me.

Help me to receive and accept your love in my life and help me to allow you to change my life, so that I might be lovely in your eyes.

In Jesus' name, I pray.

Amen