

DARLING DOWNS PARISH OF THE AELC
TRINITY OAKEY, ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA

25 December 2017
Bulletin for Christmas Day

HYMNS: 34 23 part 1 23 part 2 29

INTROIT: Why have the nations been restless, and why do the peoples plot for no purpose?

The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together, against the LORD and against His Anointed One, saying: "Let us tear up their chains and throw their ropes away from us!"

The One enthroned in heaven laughs. The LORD ridicules them.

Then He speaks to them in His anger, and terrifies them in His glowing anger, saying: "Nevertheless, I Myself have consecrated My King on Zion, My holy mountain."

I shall proclaim the decree of the LORD: He has said to Me: "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.

Ask Me, that I may make the nations Your inheritance and the ends of the earth Your property.

You will break them with an iron rod. You will smash them to pieces like a vessel of pottery."

Now therefore, you kings, act with insight! Take advice, you judges of the earth! Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling!

Fervently kiss the Son, that He may not become angry, and that you may not perish in your way! For His anger may blaze up in a short time. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Psalm 2

COLLECT: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS:

Isaiah 52:7-10 All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Hebrews 1:1-12 I have installed My King on Zion, My holy hill.

John 1:1-14 The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

SERMON: Luke 2:1-20 – *The Unexpected Messiah*

The Creator in the Manger

The Christmas classic ballet *The Nutcracker* spins the tale of a wooden nutcracker whose fight against the evil Mouse King transforms him back to a prince. The true Christmas story is far more miraculous and magnificent: the Prince of Peace took on human flesh, conquered sin and Satan by His death and Resurrection, and reconciles sinful believers to the holy God.

As the Son of God, this Prince has reigned in harmony with His Father from eternity past. The Bible begins with the truth of the Creator: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). The Gospel of John begins similarly and identifies the Agent of Creation as the Son: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. Everything was made through Him, and not one thing that was made was made without Him,*” (John 1:1-3).

At Christmas time, we celebrate the day that the eternal Creator entered His creation. The Creator who stretched out the heavens was laid beneath them in a manger. The limitless Son of God took on human limitations. As a baby, Jesus depended on Joseph and Mary for care and nourishment. Yet the humility of His incarnation did not detract from the glory of His deity: “*The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s only Son – He is full of grace and truth,*” (John 1:14).

Although full of grace and truth, the Lord Jesus was not welcomed, even from birth. The Baby’s cradle was a manger because no proper room could be found. Lowly shepherds visited the new-born Saviour. King Herod sought to kill Jesus by ordering the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem. Creation neither knew nor received their Creator: “*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him,*” (John 1:10–11).

The same rejection happens today as “Merry Christmas” is replaced with “Happy holidays,” and nativities are banned from public display. These outward changes are a sign of hearts that refuse Jesus. People hang Christmas lights yet hide their eyes from the “*true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world,*” (John 1:9). Why? “*And this is the condemnation, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed,*” (John 3:19–20).

The reason so many reject Jesus, the “*Light of the world*” (John 8:12), is that they love the sin that Christ’s light exposes. Sinful mankind would rather cling to

their independence, immorality, idolatry, irreverence, and indulgences than turn in repentant faith to Jesus as the only Saviour from sin and Lord of life.

Many continue to reject the Prince of Peace, and the enemy, Satan, *“the prince of the power of the air,”* (Ephesians 2:2), strives to blind men from the light: *“whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them,”* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

But there is hope. God the Father makes rescue missions into dark enemy territory: *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,”* (Colossians 1:13-14). Redemption means to free by paying a ransom. Christ gave His life as a ransom to the Father by dying in the sinner’s place (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 2:24).

The Son willingly gave Himself to be laid in the manger and later laid on the Cross. Yes, Jesus was born to die for sin and rise in victory.

The sinner who receives Jesus becomes a child of God: *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,”* (John 1:12-13). Because of Jesus’ birth into this world for redemption, the sinner can be born into the family of God. That’s reason to celebrate at Christmas and throughout the year!

Welcome to all with us today!

May God bless our worship of Him by His serving of us!

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Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

COMING SERVICES

31 December New Year's Eve	1 January 2018 New Year's Day	7 January The Baptism of Jesus
8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.00am GRN HC	9.30am AUB HC	8.30am TMBA HC 8.30am OAK PR JZ 10.00am GRN PR JZ 10.30am AUB HC
Sunday, 31 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 30:8-15; Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 12:35-40		
HYMNS: 22 552 181 413 292 559		
Monday, 1 January 2018		
READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 35 36 277 398 330 219		