

A New Normal

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 December 2020

Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[0 : 0 0] the Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made. Without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

[3 : 2 8] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. I'll be with you.

He was there when all things began. All things were made through Him. He loved us before we understood what love or sin were.

Out of that love, He comes to us to become the way, the truth, and the life for us. The story amazes us still.

God chooses a young, humble, and faithful woman, and her trusting, devout, betrothed husband, to be His way into the world.

Rome plays its part, ordering a census that would bring them to the town foretold in prophecy many years before. God moves the skies in perfect timing so that the heavens would signal His arrival.

[4 : 3 3] When Mary and Joseph find no room in the house, they move to where the animals are kept. And in the night, God comes to us, just like us, as one of us.

Shepherds come from the fields to see what God has told them happened for them and for all of humankind. Christ has come.

Let us pray. Almighty and gracious God, we thank you for the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

We welcome and celebrate God with us. After so many extraordinary things leading up to His coming, our hearts and our world are eager to return to what is routine, what is comfortable, or what is normal.

However, you know that nothing will ever be the same because Jesus has come. Open our minds, touch our hearts, and move our souls to receive Christ and all that He brings.

[5 : 4 5] Help us to let go of what must go so that we might embrace all that is possible now because Jesus has come. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. You may stand if you'd like.

Christ was born for this. Christ was born for this. Good Christian friends rejoice with heart and soul and voice.

Now we need not fear the grave. News, news, Jesus Christ was born to save. Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting all.

Christ was born to save. Christ was born to save. Amen. Please be seated. We do welcome you to worship with us today.

[7 : 43] It's so good that you're here with us. And for everybody online, we're grateful that you're with us as well. It is a time in our service when we take a moment to reflect on just how good God is.

The incredible blessings in our life and we are incredibly blessed. Are we not? Amen. We are blessed. And so with this time, you can give in whatever way suits you best.

You can, if you're here with us in person, there's a box in the back or you can mail it in or you can give online. Whatever it is, do it with a grateful heart to give back to God with a generous spirit for all that God has given to us.

And I just want to invite all of us then as we move into worship further to reflect on just how good God is. And we're going to do that by celebrating an ancient hymn, the doxology.

So if you would stand with us again. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Let's read it. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

[8 : 48] Praise Him, all creatures there below. Praise Him above He, heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen. Holy God, we give back to you a reflection of our gratitude, of our love, of our commitment to you.

And we pray that you will bless the gifts that we have given, that they may be a witness in the world, bringing your light and your love to others, shining forth in the darkness, revealing who you are through us, through the ministries you've provided through us, Lord, that this world be changed in your holy name.

We thank you and we praise you. Amen. Please be seated. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Bethlehem town, what is this mystery?

[10 : 10] Hidden by evening's dim light. Mother and child, holy nativity, Who is this child in the night?

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.

Haste, haste to bring Him love, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Miracle child, born into poverty, Made in a cold castle style.

Who is this one? Born in humility, He is the Savior of all.

[11 : 28] This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.

Haste, haste to bring Him love, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Now in my heart, there rings a melody, Music born long ago.

This is the song, the glory of heaven, Promise of peace and love.

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.

[12 : 37] Haste, haste to bring Him love, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Beautiful. Thank you.

We gather together, because we know God's presence is with us. God's presence is with us wherever we are. They say where two or more are gathered, There is with us. There is power in the body of Christ, Gathering together to pray.

And so in this time of worship, We will be praying together. So a couple of people I want to lift up to you. My dad is recovering from heart surgery, So please continue to pray for him. I also want to lift up Beth, Who is in the hospital and needs prayer For significant health challenges, And many, many others.

[14 : 00] So let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Holy God, we come before you today With hearts that are open wide to receive you more.

That you will fill us with your presence, Fill us with your grace, Fill us with your love, Abiding within us in your abundance.

Lord, we pray that as we offer ourselves to you, That you will experience within us A repentant heart, A giving heart, A heart that loves you, And chooses to walk in your way.

We pray for those that are on our hearts, Lord, And offer them up to you, Trusting in you. For you are good, And we know that you are our healer.

Your merciful spirit, Come upon us, Lord. We pray that you will have your healing hand Upon the people that are hurting, Lord. The people who are recovering from surgery, The people that are in the hospital, The people that are experiencing Tightness of breath.

[15 : 12] Lord, release their lungs. May the breath of God, Your breath, Lord, Move freely through them, Lord. We pray for healing in the body in all ways, That pain will be gone in the name of Jesus, Healed from the top of the head To the bottom of the feet, Lord.

We pray for your healing touch. We pray that you will be with caregivers, Give them your encouragement and your support. Guide them, Lord, To care with your compassion, Your love, Your strength.

We thank you, Lord, For the healing you're sending upon all of us, And upon those on our heart, Lord. And we pray that you will fill us up, To be peacemakers with others as well.

That if there's any brokenness Within our relationships, Lord, That you will send your healing In that moment as well. Healing between people, Lord.

We pray for softened hearts, Softened minds, Forgiving spirits, Lord. Forgiving spirits, Lord. As we bind one another together in your love, We pray that you will heal us, In our families, In our church, In our community, In our nation, Lord.

[16 : 28] We pray for healing of relationships. We pray that you will fill our minds with your good things, With your blessings, With your way.

Fill our hearts with your love, That we may be your love to others. We pray in this time, That you will continue to give us your protection.

That we will be covered by your grace, By your sovereign hand, Lord. That we will be protected from the coronavirus, Protected from the enemy, Protected from the things that seek to destroy, Lord.

Give us your protection in every way, Spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, Lord. Protect us. Keep us strong. Keep us healthy. Fill us with your shalom.

Holy God, we offer ourselves to you. All the things that we've been carrying, That have been heavy burdens, We know that your yoke is light. And we pray that you will take these things, That we've had on our heart, The things unspoken, And help us to know, That you have taken them.

[17 : 41] That you are moving. That you are caring for us, And caring for our loved ones. That you are with us in every moment, Lord. Fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Increase our trust. Increase our faith. Help us to walk in your way. Boldly, Proclaiming your glory, In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. W Romeo. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Today's scripture is from Luke, chapter 2, verses 21 through 32.

[18 : 54] On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

When the time came for the purification rites required by the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As it is written in the law of the Lord, every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

[19 : 56] When the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

Isaiah chapter 62, verse 1. For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent. For Jerusalem's sake, I will not remain quiet.

Till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. This is the word of our Lord. Good morning, church.

Would you pray with me for a moment? Almighty and gracious God, it is indeed a joy to be in your house, to be connected with our church family through all your gifts.

[21 : 30] And as we come to this moment, we come with our hearts open. And we are praying that you would move among us, plant a seed in us that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and glory of your name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. Amen. So today I want to talk to you for a few minutes about the idea of a new normal.

It's a phrase we're hearing a lot these days, but I want to look at it perhaps in a different way. So to start, I'd like to ask a quick question. So some of you I've gotten to know pretty well, but I don't know this question about you yet, which is how long after Christmas will your tree be up?

Are we talking like a week? I'm going to give everybody epiphany because that's kind of a given. But I know some people who take it down the next day. So we're talking a week, maybe two, Valentine's Day.

Don't laugh. I know people do that too. But it's curious about that, right? Because taking down the tree, taking down the decorations is a sign of getting back to normal after the season, right?

[22 : 45] And so there's always a thing. The routine gets back to it no matter how many days you take off. You've got to get back into getting up and going to do what you normally do. You don't make the same kinds of dinners and you don't prepare the same kinds of meals.

The stuff comes out of the window. The stuff comes off the porch. The tree gets put away, all of it. And eventually, we are back to what we call normal.

Now, that's not a bad thing. It's kind of what we come to expect to do, right? Get back to normal. But I'd like to ask us a question to think about this back to normal thing.

Because as you know, we are in the midst of Christmas. And this idea of back to normal, when we've done all these preparations, we took four weeks of Advent and we were talking about hope and peace and joy and love and anticipation and preparation of the coming of Christ.

Now, that may not be a physical birth in our world right now. But at the same time, we're expecting God to come through in some new and unexpected way.

[23 : 59] And the thing I'd like us to think about is, okay, so Christmas comes. How quickly do we go back to normal?

Because that could present a challenge for us. You see, like most of us who have had children, and even if you haven't had children, you probably know this feeling.

For example, say you get a new job. Usually, when that thing happens, you don't get to go back to your pre-life. If baby shows up in your house, odds are you're not going back to your pre-baby life.

Changes everything that you do from here on forward. If you start a new job, say your commute changes. Maybe you have to dress differently. Maybe you do all these sorts of things.

But it changes everything you do from that point forward. So again, I want to ask the question. Now that Jesus has come into your world, how hard are you fighting to go back to normal?

[25 : 14] Because if we spend our energy doing that, then what did Jesus come for? So let's think about this from the standpoint of the story we're reading today.

Because what we see is we have all the things that we're familiar with in the story in Luke, right? We see the shepherds come.

We see Joseph and Mary in the place where the animals are kept. And we freeze that moment in time. Everybody put their little memes out and everything. We're there. But what the scripture tells us is that the world kept spinning.

And we know it did, because we're here. The world kept on spinning. Even despite that moment, we tend to freeze in time. And so if we pick this up at verse 21, which is immediately after the Linus speech ends, we pick this up at verse 21.

And it tells us that we go from there, that on the eighth day, it was time to circumcise the child. He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

[26 : 24] Sounds rather routine. So we had this week. That happened right after that moment we freeze. The world kept spinning. So maybe there were probably seven, what we'll loosely call normal days in there.

Right? So we freeze the big moment. Then all of a sudden, it's Tuesday. It's Wednesday. It's Thursday. And we know why the story moves forward more quickly.

It has to. But what we don't want to lose is the idea that Jesus comes. It doesn't mean we stop caring. Right? We've got a couple who has to take care of their newborn.

And they're doing the things they're supposed to do. And we see that they go a week. And as in accordance with their tradition, they take him. They have his naming ceremony.

And he's circumcised, just like we would expect. But then we keep going. We find out that a month later, they do what they have to do. Because the Mosaic Code said that a woman who had given birth was ritually unclean.

[27 : 30] And so it was time for Mary to go do her purification rites. So it's 40 days, really. But it's, you know, we're going to call it a month. It's 40 days. So they head on up to Jerusalem, which was not that far from Bethlehem.

So they head up to the temple. So they can do the things they're supposed to do. Now, there's some speculation in biblical scholarship why Joseph was a part of this. Because given what we know about the story, he was probably made ritually unclean, too, for helping with the delivery.

Because, oh, darn, they were by themselves. So we don't know that for sure. But he, too, participates in this. So they go up to the temple to do what they expect to do.

And because they're offering the two doves, that if you were going to get deep into Leviticus, we learned that they're of modest means. Because the actual price was higher than that. But if you couldn't afford the actual price, you were allowed to do two doves.

So they show up at the temple to do the normal things. But then, all of a sudden, here's this guy.

[28 : 37] This guy comes out, who's known to be righteous and devout, which is a pretty big deal if that's said about you in those days. He shows up. He shows up. And what we also see is Luke makes a point of letting us know that the Holy Spirit was on him.

Because that was a rare thing then. This is the pre-Pentecost time. The Holy Spirit's on Simeon. And he's got a promise from God. You will not leave this earth until you have seen the Messiah.

You will not leave this earth until you have seen the plan for salvation. And he's led by the Spirit to the temple on that day. And sure enough, in they come.

Now here come our nice normal couple with their newborn son to do the things that they're expected to do. And Simeon, of course, bursts into this prayer that reminds us that we're not dealing with what is normal.

We're dealing with God with us. We're dealing with God's plan for humankind. We're dealing with the one who has come to change everything.

[29 : 52] And in case you had forgotten, living day to day for these past 40, this is who this is.

And that's an important lesson for us. Because in our rush to get back to normal, in our rush to get back to what's comfortable and what's routine, we forget that Jesus has come.

And things are going to fundamentally change. Because Jesus has come. And Simeon says a couple of things that I think are especially poignant for us.

Now he's talking to Joseph and Mary. But if we hear these words land on our hearts today, he says some things that we should pay attention to, especially for all of us who are looking for Jesus to make a difference.

That we were waiting for something from God. And we were hoping for a movement from God. And now God has come. So what should we be paying attention to?

[30 : 58] If you're in verses 34 and 35, you see Simon Simeon is saying these things. And we're going to start at 33.

Because it says, Three things there that I want us to pay attention.

First, The rising and falling of many. I would ask you to think about, as your preparation during Advent was taking place, when you were reaching out to God to say, God, I need something.

What is it you are doing in our world right now? Come to me in this new way. Come to me in this fresh way. Do these things. Help me be a little better. Help me walk a little more like Jesus every day.

So Jesus has now come. Are you aware that you are rising? Are you taking a journey in sanctification?

[32 : 21] Are you getting holier? Are you taking those steps forward to be a little more like him every day? That's an intentional thing. That's a gift from God.

But it is also work that you have to put in. We have to be conscious of the fact that we want this closeness. We say we want this relationship.

We say we want to follow. But we can want those things, but not do what's necessary. And that's a hard thing for us to have to admit, but that's what it means to be human.

We are certainly not the only people who have had this challenge. But when we think about the cause of the rising and falling of many in Israel, because Jesus is here, what's Jesus causing in your life?

Are you going to rise or are you going to fall? Next thing, when he talks about this idea that he's a sign that will be spoken against, we know that the people of the time spoke out against Jesus, but we think, but we love him.

[33 : 25] We follow him. We do what Jesus wants until what Jesus wants takes us someplace we don't want to go. Until Jesus' demand for holiness, until Jesus' demand to be what he has asked us to be, what he has called us to be, makes us have to do something that we don't want to do.

Until it decides it gets a little too hard. And whether we actually do it with words or whether we do it with our own behavior, we are speaking against the faith we profess.

That he is not who we said he is because we are living in ways that say exactly that. Third thing, clearly Simeon was speaking directly to Mary because the sword would pierce her heart.

When we think about, perhaps she knew what she was going to witness over these next few years. We don't know that for sure, but maybe she knew.

But even so, this idea of all she would endure, because remember later on in the scripture, Mary becomes so concerned that she gathers up her other children and says, we got to go get your brother.

[34 : 48] We got to go get him. Remember that story where he's preaching to others in the house and his mother and brothers are here? And that's when he says, who are my mother? Who are my brothers?

But then we also know what happens at the foot of the cross as well. But that said, when we get into that place where we're speaking against Christ by how we behave, if we are conscious of the movement of the spirit among us and we look up and we realize we've been the crowd on Holy Week, we were saying, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Then we, on Friday, start screaming, crucify him in our own way. In our own way.

If the spirit is moving among us, if you felt that deep conviction of knowing, yes, that was me, then you know what it's like to have that sword pierce your heart.

Certainly not like a mother watching her son being crucified, but you know that pain. So what does this mean for all of us?

[36 : 16] That's really the lesson. What does this mean for all of us? You see, if we come to Christ in hope, if we have spent this time saying, Lord, help me, or Lord, move me forward, or Lord, walk with me, if we have reached out with our hearts hoping for a movement from God in our lives, and then the star appears in the sky, and Jesus has come in this new way, will we receive him?

Or will we keep trying to fit him into our old normal? Because we want two things that really can't exist.

We want things to be different, but we want things to be exactly the same. We want God to change us, but we want to be exactly who we are.

Simple truth is, we can't have both. Don't get it twisted, church. God loves you just as you are. Just as you are.

All your junk, all your stuff, all your sin. But, you cannot change and stay the same. You cannot be changed and stay the same.

[37 : 50] And so, are you trying to get back to normal? Or will you allow Christ to be the center of a new normal?

As I said, that phrase has gotten into our brains this way because of the year we have lived. And I know it raises up a whole lot of mixed feelings in people's life. People sort of hate that jargony stuff.

That idea of a, quote, new normal. But we also know that there are lessons we have learned in 2020 that it would be wise for us to hold on to. That does not make COVID a blessed thing and we're not saying God did this to teach us stuff.

That's not what we're saying at all. What we are saying is that if you know or if you have a new value for your relationships, if you now appreciate something in a way you didn't appreciate it prior to March of this year, maybe you want to hang on to that and not rush to get back to normal.

Maybe if God has broken through in a way that said you are closer to me than you have ever been. That you know you have been saved. That you know you have been touched. You know you have been healed.

[39 : 02] Why race back to who you were if that's what God has done for you? You don't want to get back to normal. You need a new normal with Christ at the center because that is what this was all about.

Christ came to change things. Let him change you. Amen and amen.

Oh my ingress is God we thank you for the gift that is Jesus Christ. The way you have come to us in humility and the way you have moved among us in so many unexpected ways.

Lord as we receive you as we welcome you Lord let the changes you would hope for let the changes you call us to take deep root.

Let us not keep rushing back to what we were. Let us not keep seeking what makes us comfortable and not let us keep seeking what is regular for us.

[40 : 22] Come and change it all whether it be by a spoken word that teaches us a truth whether it be by a gentle touch that heals our brokenness or whether it be by turning over the tables and teaching us that this cannot stand or whether it be but breaking our hearts by seeing you hanging in pain because your love is that great.

Lord move in us move in us in the ways you know we need we are so thankful and grateful that you seek to give us the desires of our heart but you do what we need more than what we want.

So Lord let it take root. Let us be changed. Come into us in a fresh way. In Jesus most holy name we pray and ask.

Amen. And so we celebrate together what God has done for us.

The Lord be with you. And also we lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth.

[42 : 13] You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity made covenant to be our sovereign God and spoke to us through your prophets. In the fullness of time you gave your only son Jesus Christ to be our savior.

And at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ.

[43 : 18] As Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected.

As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born so that by the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.

As your word became flesh, born of a woman on that night long ago, on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took the bread, he gave thanks to you, he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said, take and eat all of you, this is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me.

And when the supper was over he took the cup, he gave thanks to you and gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Drink of this often, remembering me. And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[44 : 45] Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen. And now let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us saying, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. And so we will be receiving the sacrament together.

[46 : 09] Please carefully remove your mask if you'd like to do that with us at this time. And on the bottom portion, peel it back and there is a wafer there.

The body of our Lord given for you. The blood of our Lord poured out for you.

Amen. Amen. Hark the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king.

Peace on earth and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled. Joyful all the nations rise.

Join the triumph of the skies. We the angelic hosts proclaim. Christ is born in Bethlehem.

[47 : 59] Lord, the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king. Christ by highest heaven on door.

Christ the everlasting Lord. Late in time, behold, him come. Offspring of a virgin's throne.

Veiled in flesh, the God at sea. Hail the incarnate deity. Pleased with us in flesh to dwell.

Jesus our Emmanuel. Hark the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king.

King. Hail the emperor, prince of peace. Hail the son of righteousness. Light and life to all he brings.

[49 : 09] Risen with healing in his wings. Born in his glory by. Born that man no more may die.

Born to raise the sons of earth. Born to give them said birth. Hark the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king.

Christ has come.

Christ has come. Into your world changing things. Let him be who we profess him to be.

Our wonderful counselor. Our mighty God. Our eternal father. Our prince of peace. He changes things. Let him change you.

[50 : 32] And now in the name of God our creator and king. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our savior. And in the name of the Holy Spirit. Our counselor.

And our sustainer. May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[52 : 49] Amen. Amen.

Amen.