

# Christmas in 3 Words

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[ 0 : 00 ] I feel had I known I would have put on a much better costume than what I managed this morning. I just want to speak to you very, very briefly.

And before John Lewis stole the march on the Christmas advertising campaign with the old man in the moon or the wildlife trampolining team, back in the day, the company that ruled the Christmas advertising campaign was M&S;

It wasn't just any Christmas advertising campaign. It was an M&S; Christmas advertising campaign. And in 2001, they ran an advert called Christmas in Three Words.

Christmas in Three Words. The likes of Julian Clary offered these three words, the Queen's Speech.

And I know we'll all be there, Christmas afternoon, so full, so sleepy, but with hands on our hearts as Elizabeth shares her pearls of wisdom for the year ahead.

[ 1 : 11 ] George Best offered peace on earth. Hugh Laurie pulling a cracker. Morecambe and Wise was offered by Matthew Pinsent and Steve Redgrave.

Redgrave. But how would you sum up Christmas in three words? How would you sum up this time of year with all the festivities and eating?

What would you say were your three words? Perhaps it would be these. Friends and family. That's your Christmas, friends and family.

Perhaps like me, you'd be no Brussels sprouts. Perhaps it might be the very thing I'm feeling today. Itchy Christmas jumper.

Snazzy Christmas jumper. My favourite bit of Christmas. Pigs in blankets. Million percents. Or that disgruntled child on Christmas Day that opens the new thing only to find batteries not included.

[ 2 : 18 ] You know you're middle-aged when this is your Christmas, where you have to muster the enthusiasm to say, wow, more socks. Or perhaps it's this.

New Year diet. How would you sum up Christmas in three words? Well, if you ask Dr. Luke about the first Christmas, that Christmas account that we just read for us by the soldier and the shepherd.

If you ask that guy, the guy who wrote that account, how would you sum up Christmas in three words? He would use three radically different words to describe his day.

The first word he would use is the word historical. If you said, Luke, what is Christmas about? He'd say it is historical.

It really happened. Luke sets upon this great journalistic endeavour to write down exactly the things that are true about Jesus so that we can all have certainty about who he is, why he came, and what it means to follow him.

[ 3 : 28 ] And he gives us all sorts of facts to show us that it is an historical event. He tells us that it is while Caesar Augustus was the emperor.

He tells us also that Quirinius was the governor of Syria. He's trying to say that these are historical, verifiable facts, that there really was a Mary, there really was a Joseph, and on that first Christmas there really was a baby born who they named Jesus because he would save his people from their sins.

It also tells us that Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem because Joseph was of the line of David and his ancestral city was Bethlehem. So they had to go on this long journey because of the decree that had been issued.

Also tells us that during the night the baby was born, whether it was quite exactly as we saw happen here. I couldn't quite tell, but it was in historical events.

That first Christmas was historical. Luke, what is Christmas about? Word one I would give you, historical. This is not something that happened far, far away.

[ 4 : 47 ] This is not something that happened way back when, when the world was full of wonders. This is not a fairy tale. This is not Rudolph. This is not St. Nicholas.

This is not the Grinch. This is a real historical verifiable fact. That there really was a Mary, there really was a Joseph. And there really is a Jesus who was born into the world.

C.S. Lewis often pondered this question, could Shakespeare ever meet Hamlet? And C.S. Lewis' conclusion was, yes, Shakespeare could meet Hamlet, but Shakespeare would have to write himself into the story.

And that's exactly the historicity of Christmas. That God himself has written himself into the story in the person of his son, Jesus Christ.

That God wrote himself into the story. The God who stands outside of the story entered the story. And the second person of the Trinity was born in the lowliest circumstances imaginable.

[ 5 : 56 ] What's Christmas about? Word one, it's historical. Second word Luke would give us is that it was essential. The first Christmas was not an optional extra for us.

It wasn't an intriguing event that we can take or leave. It wasn't the metaphorical Brussels sprout that you can just leave and hope somebody will take them away from you. Christmas is essential.

It's something to which we must pay attention. The first Christmas is a pivotal moment that begins to answer life's big questions.

What am I here for? What does it mean? What is life all about? What is the purpose of life, the world, and everything?

And God answers that question. He begins to answer that question at Christmas. And we know we needed help. We look on our TV and we see the carnage and the chaos and the catastrophe and we do think that the world is broken, that it was not meant to be this way.

[ 7 : 05 ] And not only that, but we look in the mirror into our own lives and we realize that we're not the people we were supposed to be. Selfish, self-interested, sinful, self-promoting, self-obsessed.

That God is the boss, but we decided we wanted to be the boss. So we sacked him as our boss, even though he is the boss, and we wanted to be the boss ourselves.

And the world is broken as a result. This broken world, which includes you and includes me, this life shrouded in darkness, needed a solution to come from out with.

These deep problems needed a rescuer, needed a dawning of new life, needed the shining of new light. We needed a fixer and a healer and a saviour and a restorer.

We needed somebody to come and help us and do for us what we couldn't do ourselves. This baby born that first Christmas, this Jesus whose name means God saves, is one who perfectly embodies everything that we all need.

- [ 8 : 22 ] We need a saviour and Jesus comes and says, I am the saviour. See how the baby is described. He's called Jesus, meaning God saves.
- He's called the Christ, which means that he is God's chosen, anointed, promised, eternal king. He's called the son of God, one who perfectly mediates for us.
- He is the saviour who is Christ the Lord. One to come to rescue us and give us another chance, new hope, forgiveness, life and joy forever.
- The truth is, ladies and gentlemen, that we all have a deadly default problem caused by our sinfulness and our brokenness.
- And that's why Jesus is essential for us. He's the one who fixes us up, heals us, restores us and gives us another go. The only one who can get us out of the mess we are in and give us a fresh start and wipe the slate clean.
- [ 9 : 28 ] The one who can reconcile us, separated from God as we are in our sinfulness. The one who comes to us and brings us back together with the God of the universe.
- Christmas is historical and it is essential. And lastly and finally, Christmas is joyful. By joyful, I don't mean the transient joy of tinsel or the fleeting joy of festivities or the passing joy of presents, not the joy of the consumerist Christmas.
- I mean joy that is deep, satisfying, monumental, life-changing, lasting and even eternal. Dr. Luke, what is Christmas about?
- Well, it's historical, it's essential and finally it's joyful. In the story that was read to us, everyone who comes in contact with this boy who realizes who this baby is, is overcome with joy.
- A whole choir of angels on the hills above Bethlehem, an unprecedented array of the heavenly host, they gather in a joyful chorus, I'm sure just as joyful as the chorus we heard this morning.
- [ 10 : 54 ] This earth-shattering event where the joy of heaven overflows into earth. And what do they say? Fear not. I bring you good news of great joy.
- That will be for all the people. All the people at that time and all the people every time ever since. Good news. That will be for all the people.
- Good news that will be for you and for me and for us. That will bring great joy. It is joy that you are invited into this morning.
- Joy through this good news. Joy through this son who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. A present that will never disappoint.
- An event they could not fully comprehend. A joy they couldn't fathom. A joy open to us. So how would you describe your Christmas in three words?
- [ 12 : 00 ] Friends and family. No Brussels sprouts, batteries, not included. New Year, diet. Maybe tedious, burdensome and wearisome.
- If you're a bit of a scrooge. Scrooge, rushed, exhausting and stressful if you're cooking for 37,000 on Christmas Day. Perhaps empty, lonely and endurance.
- But perhaps today you will see that in this son there's a better story. There's the chance of a better Christmas. A lasting joy. Perhaps today you will see your need of this Jesus.
- Jesus who grows up, lives the life we fail to live, dies the death that we all deserve. Perhaps with Luke you will say what is Christmas about? Well it's an historical event that really happens and that changes absolutely everything about absolutely everything.
- Perhaps you'll see that it was essential. It wasn't just something that happened way back then which was a matter of history but it's something that is so relevant for us today. And perhaps you'll experience that it's joyful.

[ 13 : 14 ] It is the most joyful good news that you're welcomed into this very day through faith in Jesus Christ this one who came to save us from our sins this one who came to save you from your sins.

Christmas in three words. Historical, essential and joyful. Let me pray and then we'll close our service with a song.

Father God we thank you so much that it is Christmas. We thank you so much that it's a time that we focus on that first bit of the word Christ.

Your son come into this world to save us from our sins. Lord I thank you that it really happened. I thank you that Jesus is really real.

Father I thank you that Christmas is absolute good news. And Lord I thank you that by believing that good news you change absolutely everything about absolutely everything.

[ 14 : 17 ] Father you change our eternity. You give us new life new hope and new dawn. You restore us to a relationship with yourself. So Lord I pray today you would open our eyes to see its relevance its reliability and that we might know joy unspeaking as a result of trusting in your son.

Father bless us and help us we pray in Jesus name. Amen.