

Traditional lessons and carols sermon

³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

If **none** of what we have sung and read this evening is true...

...if it's all made up

it it's fairy-tale...

...in the realm of Santa and his reindeer...

...an elaborate fabrication...

a brilliant hoax...

then the joke is on us, isn't it?

... because we are spending... hundreds if not thousands on gifts and travel and food and drink to celebrate a lie...

more fool us!

We've been hood-winked, taken in

If there were no angels, shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph...

...then this is all about out and out consumerism at its worst... and you're a party to it. You're supporting by continuing each year to go along with it!

But if this never happened – it's a **complete nonsense...**

And if God didn't come to earth – as the Christmas message claims – then we are completely in the dark about God... and life... and our place in it...

This can't be just a **little bit** true... or a **little bit** important...

Let's face it – either the Christmas story is **true** or **not**.

If it's **not** true – we have to an end these **mindless, meaningless celebrations... //**

...if it IS true – then it has to change everything – more than a season – more than Christmas – more than Easter –

...this changes everything!!

The Bible doesn't only tell the story of Jesus' birth....

In a number of places... it reflects on the meaning and significance of those astonishing events...

One such place is Paul's letter to Titus...

... **But when** *the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*

What a beautiful way of describing the coming of Jesus...

...the birth of Jesus – the life – the teaching – the compassion – the miracles of Jesus – were all about the *kindness and love of God our Saviour* appearing.

Kindness and love... that is how God is disposed toward us...

And that kindness and love outpoured, manifested itself as God stepping into our world in the person of his Son...

Must have been a good reason for taking such an extraordinary step down to us...

And the passage tells us the reason - **At one time** *we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another*

You see the Bible makes it clear that once we as humanity decided to sidestep God's authority and put ourselves in charge... everything went south from there...

As a result – our relationship with one another also soured...

But God always promised to rescue us from our selves...

...and so in his kindness and love... he steps in to save us...

save from ourselves...

save us from the result pushing God himself away...

save us by living the perfect life we couldn't live and dying the death we deserve.

And save us merely because of his mercy – not by anything we have done...

Again, from the passage - when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

He appeared because of his kindness and love

He saves because of his mercy...

That's the extraordinary nature of the God we celebrate tonight.

This is too good a piece of news to only get excited about in one season of the year.

This is too good just to sing about in carols at a carols service.

This is too good to ignore.

...too good to keep at arms' length...

If it's not true – forget... and stop celebrating Christmas in any way as you have known it...

But if it is true – don't mock it by only giving it a passing nod once a year...

If true – than take hold of the rescue held out to you... and find you sin forgiven... and your future destiny confirmed!

Because, when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.