

Into the Chaos

(Sermon by Cheryl Williams, preached at Footscray Baptist on Christmas Day, December 25th 2025, (Luke 2:1-20))

Into the Chaos

(Sermon by Cheryl Williams, preached at Footscray Baptist on Christmas Day, December 25th 2025, (Luke 2:1-20))

An unplanned teenage pregnancy, a quick escape to the hills to visit a cousin, a 'father' not sure what to do to avoid disgrace and scandal, a required trip to another town right when the baby was to be born because the occupying power demanded that all the people be counted, counted so they could be taxed as they attempted to increase the size of their empire, no available rooms so having to stay out the back in a cave with the animals, a birth with little help around – no midwives, no female relatives to assist, sharing space with animals and then the first visitors of the most unexpected kind – shepherds living in the hills with their sheep, outsiders, not particularly well liked and seemingly trying to avoid participating in the census. Absolute chaos.

And we sing carols – silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. I don't think so.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes and no crying he makes. I don't think so.

The birth of Jesus takes place in the midst of utter chaos.

If Jesus were to be born today, it would occur in similar chaos. In fact, if Jesus were to be born today he probably would not have been born in Bethlehem at all, it would be more likely he would be born at the checkpoint, as his family would be unlikely to be let in to Bethlehem. If you look at the image on the screen you will find a manger surrounded by straw. If you look more closely you will see the wall and wire that surrounds Bethlehem, meaning people must go through checkpoints to get through, checkpoints put there by the occupying force.

As I look back at this year it has felt chaotic. Wars continue, even in the midst of ceasefires the killing continues, we have had our own terror attack in Sydney just a week or so ago, we are learning about AI and what it can and can't do and how sometimes it gets things wrong, famine exists in many places, the number of people in need continues to grow, we see this each week as more than 120 people line up for free food. We have seen cyclones, and storms in our region like we never have before, the price of houses seem to be out of reach of our young people and the thing I feel most strongly is that democracy seems to be on the slide, as some in the world try to influence every country. Some even think they should get the Nobel Peace Prize for stopping wars that are actually still going, and at the same time killing Venezuelans and bombing parts of the Middle East. We too live in chaotic times.

The Christmas story reminds us that God breaks in, in the midst of chaos. Christ is born in the midst of chaos. Christ is born on the margins, in the most unexpected place surrounded by the most unexpected people. This birth is not a sweet and cute moment; it sends a message to the people that God's love reaches into the world via those on the margins. He is not born in a palace surrounded by all the help one could want, no, he is born in a smelly cave surrounded by animals and strangers. The King of peace comes to us in utter vulnerability.

This birth is a radical challenge to the status quo as much now as it was then, in the next week or so we will read of the dangerous turn things take, as this family is forced to

Into the Chaos

(Sermon by Cheryl Williams, preached at Footscray Baptist on Christmas Day, December 25th 2025, (Luke 2:1-20))

flee their home as they become a target of a raging king who is threatened by a different way of operating. Threatened by one who brings peace and justice for all not just the powerful.

This birth we have celebrated for more than 2000 years is first celebrated by a bunch of unnamed shepherds. Shepherds who lived away from the rest of society up in the hills, shepherds who kept to themselves and simply surrounded themselves with their animals. Shepherds were outcasts in society, at the bottom of the social ladder, that is why they didn't live in town. It is to them that the message of what has just taken place is given and they forget everything and run to see if the message is true.

Not only does God come in the midst of chaos, it is to the outsiders that the message is entrusted. It is the nameless shepherds who first announce to the wider world what has happened – that God has come to his people to bring hope, peace, joy and love.

In the midst of chaos, political occupation and control God comes. God comes bringing joy in the midst of fear, bringing hope in the midst of anguish, bringing peace where there is none, bringing love to those on the margins, bringing love to all.

Hope in the midst of despair, peace in the midst of conflict, joy when it all seems too hard and love that extends to all no matter who they are. This is the God we celebrate; this is the God we worship; this is the God we attempt to follow.

Merry Christmas, may you all experience hope, peace, love and joy today and into the NewYear. Amen.