



FOURKINDSOFCHRISTMAS.COM

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Use this stuff however you like but if you want the best deals on the book, I highly recommend going to 10offthose.com and buying in bulk.

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A FOUR-PART SERMON SERIES

SERMON 1: SCROOGE

Text: Genesis 3:1-24

Summary: Here we establish the context for Christmas: the curse. In our flight from God we have wanted life apart from his life and love. This means a cursed life of disconnection. All creation is frustrated because when we go against the reality of God, we get splinters.

Outline:

QUOTES FROM A *CHRISTMAS CAROL*:

“Every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.”

“Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it.”

“External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm [him], no wintry weather [could] chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty.”

In a sense Scrooge gets something right! Life is hard. It's just tragic that Scrooge's response is to get harder still.

Are you a bit like Scrooge? I am. When life is hard, I get harder. When life gets bitter, I get bitterer, and Bah humbug to Christmas!

There *is* something realistic about Scrooge's response. At least he takes the curse of this world seriously.

But notice the promise of v15: a miraculous offspring! Women don't naturally have “seed” (literally the word for “offspring”). This child would be a miraculous gift and he will take our side in the fight against evil. How gracious! Especially when we chose to make an alliance with the serpent. Nevertheless the Offspring will take our side against evil

and strike a victory blow, though it is so costly to him. Imagine being shoeless and stepping on a snake's head. Now imagine being defenceless and laid in a manger. Now imagine being naked, nailed to a cross. This is how God would break the curse — the Christmas child would come to defeat evil at *great* cost to himself.

At the end of *A Christmas Carol* Scrooge was touched by a vision of self-giving love. It melted his hard heart. This Christmas let the Christ-child melt yours.

SERMON 2: SHOPPER

Text: Psalm 72

Summary: Here we examine the consumerism around Christmas and conclude that Christ actually brings a cosmic prosperity that puts our festive overspend into eternal perspective.

Outline:

Statistics on Christmas spending.

Examples of consumerism.

Sometimes people bemoan the fact that Christmas is “carnal”, but actually Christmas is all about the “incarnation”. It’s all about God becoming flesh and anchoring himself to the world. Christmas affirms creation, it says that God loves this world and loves embodied life. In fact Christmas tells us that Shoppers have *something* right — they love life and they think it’s worth celebrating. So does God.

Psalm 72 picks up promises from the OT

- Genesis 3:15
- Genesis 12:1-3
- Genesis 49:10
- Numbers 6:22-27
- Psalm 67

It’s about the blessings of God flowing from heaven to earth through the Offspring (of Abraham). This Offspring is promised to Eve then to Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob. Then the promises narrow down to Judah, then to David, then to the Son of David. Here we explore the promises of prosperity that will come in His reign: v3, 6-11, 15-19.

The Shoppers are right: Christmas, ultimately, means a blow-out! BUT...

The Shoppers are wrong: it’s not about ‘spend now, pay later.’ And it’s not about selfishly grasping at prosperity for ourselves. Look at the self-giving nature of this King and this Kingdom: v2, 4, 12-14.

Jesus is not just *for* the little guy — He becomes the little guy! And he becomes the poor on behalf of the poor.

Because of Christmas we can be certain that there will be prosperity and celebration — cosmically and eternally. God really does love this world in all its embodied, physical, joy-filled glory. But the way He loves this world is a pattern for all who would receive this love. As He pours Himself out for the world in service, so we who receive the Christ-child do the same.

SERMON 3: SANTA

Text: Isaiah 9:2-7

Summary: Santa gives *things* and then leaves. He rewards the good and puts coal in the stockings of the bad. Jesus is the opposite. He gives *Himself* to be 'God with us' forever'. And He gives Himself not to the good but to sinners.

Outline:

Santa Claus is a lot of fun but have you ever wondered about the 'gospel according to Father Christmas'? Read out the lyrics to 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town.'

That's pretty similar to the way many people think of God. Many consider God to be a faraway fairytale — irrelevant to the vast majority of our lives. But occasionally we ask him for things and hope that we've been good enough to receive his gifts.

But Christmas gives us a very different gospel. First of all it doesn't assume that we're basically OK (and only need a few things to make us happy). The Bible's more realistic than that.

Verse 2 says we're walking in darkness.

Verses 3-5 speak of the threat of war — something very real in Isaiah's day, and in ours.

A Santa Claus God has little to say to the land of deep darkness. But the God of Christmas is different.

Verse 6: He gives us a Gift in the midst of our darkness. And it's not an abstract blessing — it's the Son!

Santa gives things not himself. Jesus comes as God's Gift.
Notice who Isaiah says He is: "Wonderful Counselor, etc, etc"

What did we do to deserve such a Gift? Nothing. We were in darkness and the Light dawned. This isn't a reward for good boys and girls, it's a Gift for sinners.

Will you receive the ultimate Christmas Gift?

SERMON 4: THE STABLE

Text: Matthew 1:18-25

Summary: Scrooge thinks it's darkness now, darkness later. The Shopper thinks it's light now, darkness later. Santa thinks it's light now, light later. Only with the Stable — only with Jesus — do we have God's view of life: darkness now, light later.

Outline:

Ever noticed how darkness features in Christmas carols? *In the bleak midwinter, etc.* In the Bible Christmas happens in dark places (see Isaiah 9; Luke 1&2; John 1). It's about the light coming into our dark valley.

Scrooge thinks it's all darkness.

The Shopper thinks, it'll be dark later but let's celebrate our brief moment in the sun.

Santa says, forget the darkness entirely, everything is sunshine.

But with the Stable we get a true picture of reality. It's dark now but the light has dawned.

Let's examine the two names of Jesus in this passage to explore those two truths. First of all, we know it's dark because the Christmas child is called "Jesus" — "Saviour". Second of all we know that Light has come because He's called "Immanuel" — "God with us."

Verse 21: Jesus = Saviour. If the world needed more money, He'd have sent an economist; if we needed more pleasure, He'd have sent an entertainer; etc; etc. But our biggest problem is sin, so He sent a Saviour.

The problem of sin — a problem of darkness, not just out in the world but here in our hearts. Don't you notice how Christmas brings it out? "The most wonderful time of the year" can be so incredibly hard. Why should it be so hard, when we're with our 'loved ones'? Well isn't it telling that there's no-one we hurt more than our 'loved ones', and no-one who hurts us more than our 'loved ones'?! We have a deep problem. There is darkness. But, hallelujah, that doesn't put off our God. He still wants to be "with us"...

Verse 23: Immanuel. Imagine one response to our darkness? God could merely exclude us: *You've made your bed now lie in it!* Or He could grant blessings to us from a distance. But instead God the Son joins us!

Here is the fulfilment of Scrooge — it takes the darkness seriously but offers us hope.
Here is the fulfilment of the Shopper — it denies the materialism but affirms God's love of this world.

Here is the fulfilment of Santa — we are given a gift but the gift is God Himself.

Will you call Him "Jesus" and "Immanuel"? In other words, will you say "Jesus save me and Jesus be walk with me — through this dark valley and into your eternity"?

FOUR KINDS OF CHRISTMAS SERMON (All in one)

Text: Isaiah 9:2-7

Let me present you with three popular responses to Christmas.

Actually they mirror three popular responses to life. All of them get something right as well as something wrong.

One response to Christmas is the Scrooge response. Bah humbug.

In Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" Scrooge says: "Every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart."

You see Scrooge looked at a dark world and he decided to act accordingly. In fact, as Dickens wrote: "Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it." Dickens goes on:

"External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm [him], no wintry weather [could] chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty."

Here is one way of handling the darkness. Make your home in the darkness. Become just as dark. Become just as bitter as your bitter circumstances. And bah humbug to Christmas. That's an approach to Christmas, and it's an approach to life. Do you know Scrooges? Are you a Scrooge? Life gets hard, you get harder.

There's something right about Scrooge's response. Not enough of us acknowledge the reality of the darkness.

Look at our passage from Isaiah 9. It's a prophecy written about 700 years before the first Christmas. But here Isaiah prophesies about the coming Christ and he describes it as like light coming to darkness.

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Isaiah's own context is speaking to a people who are about to be besieged by a foreign army, many will be killed, the rest will be exiled – thrust away from God's presence. Isaiah preaches Christmas hope into that context. But their predicament of death and

judgement is a microcosm of the predicament of the whole world. We all face death and judgement.

The natural state of the human condition is darkness.

Which means it is death, separation from Him Who IS our life, ignorance of our Lord and Saviour. That's our natural state: Darkness, death, separation, judgement, ignorance. Scrooge was more right than he knew. We do live in the land of the shadow of death.

What an image! The shadow of death. It's the idea of death casting a dark and icy shadow over everything we do in life. No matter our achievements, no matter our loving relationships, everything is overshadowed by death.

And at Christmas we can feel that very keenly. Someone is missing from Christmas dinner, because the valley of the shadow has claimed another victim.

The whole of the human race and everyone in this room lives under that shadow – an inescapable death sentence.

And at least Scrooge acknowledges that. He says: Life is darkness, act accordingly. Life is hard and tough and bitter – so become harder, become tougher, become bitterer.

The spirit of Scrooge. That's one response to Christmas, one response to life.

But it's not the only one. What about the Shopper?

The Shopper says "Happy Winter". In fact there's a large advertising campaign run at the moment whose slogan is, Happy Winter. There's images of scarves and holly and ivy and cups of cocoa. It's an encouragement to wrap up warm against the elements and to make merry here in the darkness.

The Shopper is not like Scrooge, because it's about making merry, but in common with Scrooge, the Shopper has also given up on church and religion and Santa and fairytales and all that nonsense. In some ways they see the world like Scrooge does, but they're going to celebrate anyway. They'll rug up warm and make the best of it with family, food and festivities.

And this is an approach to life too. We're in the dark, and we've given up on Jesus and church and Father Christmas and fairy-stories, but still... eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Here's what they get right. We are built for joy. The Scrooge response is not what we're made for. We're made to rejoice. Look down at verse 3 and see what it is human beings are built for:

3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

Here Isaiah is pointing his people to a joyous happily-ever-after. Right now the people are in the dark, but Isaiah assures us, there will be a very bright future. When Christ comes again it will be very like celebrating Christmas: We will gather as family around great food, great friendship, great singing, great joy and we will celebrate. That's where all creation is heading – joy. And so the Winterfest crowd are right to emphasize joy and family and feasting and festivities. But here's the trouble – they don't actually believe in the happily-ever-after.

Ultimately they don't believe those last four words of verse 2. They don't believe that "A Light has dawned". They don't believe that Christ has come to bring us our happily ever after. They basically have the same view of the world as Scrooge, they just choose make merry under the ominous shadow of death.

And so really, their slogan is ridiculous. Happy Winter! Happy Winter??! What's happy about winter? When CS Lewis wrote the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe he described the cursed state of Narnia as "Always winter but never Christmas." But that's precisely what Happy Winter says. Don't bother with Christmas, make the best of Winter.

When you dig down into the Shopper mentality it's actually desperately sad. Because all the fun and food and family and festivities in the world aren't going to deal with our darkness. All our attempts to huddle together in the shadow of death is ultimately futile. Death claims us all. It isn't a happy winter, not without Christ it isn't.

Well here's another approach. Not Scrooge, not the Shopper, here's Santa.

Unlike the Scrooges and the Winterfest people, these people are spiritual. They're the sort of people who come to church. They believe that there's more to life than just the

valley of the shadow. And maybe someone up there likes me, dunno. They probably even go to church – at Christmas anyway.

And probably the Scrooges and the Shoppers look down their noses at them but the spirit of Santa people believe.

What do they believe?

Well essentially they believe in Santa. I don't mean they still think there's a fat man living at the north pole – I mean they think there is a God – and he's basically a big Santa in the sky.

The similarities between Santa and how people think about God are endless.

Because Santa lives very far away. He's irrelevant to the vast majority of our lives. He doesn't really ever show up – not that we see. But actually we're not sure we want him to show up. We want what he gives us, but we'd rather he didn't pull up a chair at the dinner table and share our turkey. We probably don't want Santa to stay at Christmas do we? Frankly I'm nervous about what Santa would be like after a couple of glasses of red wine. No Santa, you go, leave your gifts with us and shove off. We don't want a personal relationship with Santa – we just send off our requests every now and again. And maybe, if we've been a good boy or a good girl, maybe, he'll give us what we ask for.

That's Santa. But it's also most people's view of God.

He's a distant, mostly irrelevant, jolly but not particularly personable, dispenser of stuff. That's Santa. And that's most people's idea of God.

But you know the worst thing about Santa is that he's a big old legalist.

“He's making a list, He's checking it twice, He's gonna find out who's naughty and nice. Santa Claus is coming to town. He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good so be good for goodness sake!”

That's Santa. And it's most people's picture of God. So... You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout. Santa Claus is coming.

No wonder children are petrified of Santa.

Get a child anywhere near Santa and they bawl their eyes out. Of course they do. No-one wants Santa. We want his stuff. We certainly don't want him. He's creepy.

He's a big, old legalist is Santa. And parents around the world scare their children into obedience with threats about Santa. "Santa's coming. And Santa only rewards good children, you better be good or it's coal for you this Christmas."

But that's Santa, a distant, mostly irrelevant, big old legalist. And while the propaganda tells us that Santa is generous – giving gifts to all the children of the world – actually he doesn't give gifts. He gives rewards. Rewards for good behaviour. So technically, they're not gifts. They are performance related Christmas bonuses. Aren't they? It's not the overflow of Santa's generous heart – it's part of a global performance-based conspiracy with the parents of the world to keep kids moral.

And while Santa might give people stuff, he never gives himself. He's always distant from us, always anonymous. That's Santa, a distant, big old legalist.

And that's precisely what people think God is. Isn't that how people think of God? If someone says they "believe in God" isn't this the god they believe in? A Santa in the sky – a big old legalist, watching us.

You know, in church this morning, we are tempted to think of God as a big Santa in the sky. A mostly irrelevant, distant, impersonal, legalist who's always watching. Who might give us stuff, never gives us himself. We Christians often have the spirit of Santa about us.

And against all of that nonsense verse 6 resounds:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

Here is the heart of Christmas — it's the fourth S, The Stable. At the Stable we realise that God is nothing like the Santa in the sky. He doesn't give us stuff from a distance – He gives us His Son. Jesus comes Himself as God's Christmas present to the world. The Gift of Christ isn't stuff – the gift is Himself in Person. Santa gives rewards and then leaves. Jesus gives Himself and hangs around to be GOD WITH US. He gives HIMSELF TO US. We are given God's beloved Son. God does not want to be a distant benefactor. He wants to draw near. He HAS drawn near.

And it's not because we've been good little children. We've done nothing to deserve this gift. We're just here lost in the dark, heading for death. But the Light has dawned. From out of this world the Christ-child is given to us.

And who is He, this Christ child?

Verse 6 calls Him:

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

What a name! Names can be difficult things to live up to can't they? Putting a name on a child can generate expectations that are hard to live up to. What about calling a child Mighty God? That's a heavy weight of expectation don't you think?

Unless He is the Mighty God. In which case the name fits.

Well it fit Jesus like a glove. He IS the Mighty God. Let's think about this name – He is the Mighty God: Colossians tells us the fullness of deity dwells in Jesus. And He is full of the Spirit. That Wonderful Counsellor dwells in Jesus without measure. And this Christ-child reveals to the world the Everlasting Father – because Christ has known the Father everlastingly and we see the everlasting Father nowhere else but IN Jesus. So He is the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and He is Himself the Prince of Peace, that Royal Son to restore the world to rights.

What a name to put on a child! Who could carry off that name? Who could bear that weight of expectation? Only Jesus.

But think about this: If you were the Mighty God, What kind of entrance would you make to the earth?

Chariots? Armies on Parade? Fanfare? A press conference at least!

Not for the Prince of Peace. He shows up in a cattle shed, laid in a feeding trough, born into the poorest of families, the most oppressed of peoples, and, thanks to King Herod, even as He's born the death threats have begun. The Mighty God shows up meekly in the deepest part of the valley of the shadow. He enters the darkness.

That's Christmas. Not a denial of the darkness – like the Shoppers. Not a capitulation to darkness – like Scrooge. Not a remaining above the darkness – like Santa. Jesus enters the darkness.

Don't you just love Jesus? The Mighty God who doesn't remain aloof but stoops down even to the manger.

When the Mighty God comes to our dark world, He doesn't come with a drawn sword to make war on the rebels. He comes as Prince of Peace. And look at the effects of His rule in verses 4 and 5:

4 He shatters the yoke that burdens [His people], the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

Here is a King who doesn't make war, He makes peace.

Isaiah was preaching this to a people about to be devoured by the Babylonians. And the Babylonian kings, who were conquering the world, would call themselves "King of kings". But here's the prophecy – when the TRUE King of Kings comes, He won't wage war, He'll wage peace.

And there's no greater sign of that than Christmas, is there? If God wanted to come against us, if He wanted to come in war, then He wouldn't have sent a baby would He? If Jesus wanted to judge the world He'd come with a drawn sword. But no, He comes helpless and meek as a Gift to us. He comes to reconcile the world, to save the world, to draw near to the world, and so He comes as a baby. Not to mete out punishment, but to take it. Not to curse but to bless.

How does God feel about you? Do you think God wants to send you thunderbolts because He's angry? No, He sends you His Son. Do you think He's indifferent to you? No, He gives you His precious Son. Do you think God is interested in receiving your paltry morality? No He's interested in GIVING you His Son. Do you relate to God as though you give Him stuff, and He gives you stuff? That's not it. Look at the manger. God gives you His Son – He wants relationship. Look again at verse 6: TO US a child is born, TO US a Son is given.

That "TO US" is very important, it's the gift tag. Jesus is a GIFT TO US.

The Father has loved and enjoyed His Son from all eternity and now He gives Him TO YOU. God is nothing like Santa. He gives His very Self, His very heart and soul, His Son, and gives Him entirely to you.

But why? Why does Jesus come into the world?

Well when He came, Jesus said 'I've come to seek and save the lost'. That's why He's in the manger – to come and seek and save those in the dark.

And Jesus told stories all about it. Stories about a Shepherd who comes to seek and save lost sheep. And when He finds the sheep He hoists it onto His shoulders and strides home.

Well look at verse 6. It says "the government will be on His shoulders." Here's the phrase I want to end with. Let's think hard for a minute – what does it mean for the government to be on the shoulders of the Christ-child?

Well as verse 7 goes on to explain, the government is the reign of the true King over this world. Ever since Adam, man has ruled the world. But man has done a dreadful job of it and taken it down into darkness and death. Since then, the whole world has waited for the Messiah to come and to undo what Adam had done and reverse the curse.

Isaiah says to a people 700BC – take heart. The Christ-child will be born. The Mighty God will be born as a man to take the government on His shoulders.

So here's the picture: Christ is born into our world, born into our humanity, born into our predicament. There He is, the Mighty God, crying and coughing and wriggling in that manger. The Prince of Peace has come as our Brother! And in doing so He hoists humanity onto His shoulders. That's Christmas. Christ enters into this man-ruined-world AS MAN. And AS TRUE MAN, takes responsibility. He takes all our darkness and death and fear and eventually, on the cross, even all our sin – He takes it all onto Himself. The government is on His shoulders.

He has scooped us up in His arms, and from the manger onwards He does EVERYTHING that He does in our shoes, in our place, on our behalf, as one of us.

God the Son has become God our Brother, taken us into His own possession and marched us out of the valley.

This is what the Gospels are all about – you could write the phrase “the government is on His shoulders” across the top of every page of the Gospels. That’s what we see. The Christ-child grew up to live the life we should have lived FOR US – the government was on His shoulders. And He died the death we deserve to die FOR US – the government was on His shoulders. He rose up from the dead, marching out of the valley of the shadow and straight up to the Father of Lights and He does it all carrying US with Him. The government is on His shoulders.

That’s the Spirit of Christmas. Good news of Great Joy that’s for All People. A Saviour is Born to us, and the government is on His shoulders. He came as Man to do Humanity FOR US. That’s the Spirit of Christmas. It’s not the spirit of Santa. It’s not “Have you been naughty or nice?” That’s what the world thinks Christianity is – but Christmas blows that view out of the water. It’s not about whether you’re bad or good. It’s got NOTHING to do with whether you’re bad or good. NOTHING. Jesus Christ has not come to reward good boys and girls. He’s come as a Gift to the good, the bad and the ugly, the rich, the poor, the black, the white, to everyone living in the land of the shadow of death. He comes to ALL.

And He doesn’t come to assess how well we’re negotiating this dark valley. Truth be told, we’re all doing a terrible job. But He’s not interested in assessing how WE are governing our lives. And He hasn’t come to instruct us about how we can better govern our lives. No. He has come to take the government off our shoulders entirely and to put it all onto His. And from the virgin’s womb all the way through to the Easter tomb He carries us out of the valley and presents us perfect before His Father. The government is on His shoulders.

It’s not about us governing our lives a bit better. It’s not about trying harder. It’s NOT what some of the carols tell us. What’s that line from Once In Royal David’s City?

Christian children all must be, mild, obedient, good as He.

That’s not the Spirit of Christmas, that’s the spirit of Santa. Christmas says we’re not mild, obedient or good, but Christ has lived the mild, obedient and good life FOR US. The government is on His shoulders.

And if the government is on His shoulders, we can let our shoulders just relax. We can stop pretending like the whole world is on our shoulders. Do you feel like the world is on your shoulders? Look again to the manger. The government is on His shoulders.

Christmas splits the world into two kinds of people. Either you take your life in your own hands, or you let Christ take your life in His hands.

A Christian is someone who looks to Jesus and realizes “It’s out of my hands. Hallelujah, my life is out of my hands. And it’s in the safest pair of hands possible. My life has been assumed by the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

This morning God is offering His Christmas Gift again. He is addressing each one of us this morning, myself included. And He is saying verse 6 to us all. TO YOU the Christ-child is born, TO YOU My Son is given. Stop pretending the government is on your shoulders. Christ has taken it ALL on His shoulders. This morning look to Jesus who is YOURS, Christmas assures us He is YOURS, entirely YOURS. And when you realize that, you’ll find (v2) Light for your darkness. Look to Jesus right now – receive Him in your heart and you’ll find Dawn in the valley of the shadow. See the Christ-child given for you and, verse 3, you will rejoice. Believe in Jesus this morning and, verse 4, you’ll find Liberation from every yoke, every burden, every oppression. Rest in the Prince of Peace and v5, you will know peace. Look to the manger and you will see God’s Gift, His Son, He is YOURS and you are His.

FOUR KINDS OF CHRISTMAS POEM

“Every idiot who goes about with “Merry Christmas” on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.” Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE:

I like the darkness... at least it's cheap,
I keep adjusted to the gloom, the creeping doom,
that soon consumes the earth in tombs,
I hum its tune. Assume its tone and make my home right here
in the only world we know.
This world of woe.
Let others throw their festive flings,
I think I'll keep my five gold rings...

SHOPPER:

...Four Calling Birds, Three French Hens, Two Turtle Doves,
(She loves the doves.)
Yeah shove it on the card above.
...No never fear my dear, I'll pay it all...

Next year.
For now we'll drink to Christmas cheer!
And deck the halls with tinselled bling,
Forget what our tomorrows bring
We'll raise a glass of festive sherry,
Eat and drink and be quite merr...

SANTA:

Merry Christmas everyone!
What's your wish from me my son?

A hamper full of festive fun!
With snowdrops, rainbows, furry mittens;
unicorns and mewling kittens.

*Santa's sleigh may bring them near,
but were you good for me this year?*

Why YES, I think.
I didn't sink as low as some I know... although...
Hey, No! Father Christmas, mind your own business!

The kids might believe but they are naive.
I know for certain, I see through the curtain.
But when you strip it all bare, what exactly is there?

See Scrooge looks darkness full in the face,
embracing the chill but he loses the will to hope

The Shopper copes better, throws off fetters,
wears garish sweaters, but becomes a debtor,
spending now but nothing later,
tending down into death's crater.

Santa offers Christmas cheer,
the most wonderful time of the year,
but is it real?
At least Scrooge knew the deal with the dark.

In this stark world can we face facts like Scrooge?
Then paint it rouge like the Shopper?
Proper banter like Santa,
But below the Ho, Ho, Ho, can we know a truth beneath treacle?

Good news of great Joy for all people?

STABLE:

Are we able to strip back to the stable,
This fable made flesh, our Maker enmeshed in the mess.

To bless us, possess us, and be heaven's Yes to our race.
To embrace us in grace, evermore in our place.
Pledging flesh, blood and bone. To exchange a throne for a manger.
Endangering all to be present to you. To be God's present to you.

If you're Santa or Shopper, or any such thing.
If you're shepherd, or Mary or Joseph or king.
For this the herald angels sing.

In Him the Light shines and all is forgiven.
To you this Christmas Child is given.

