

John 1 completes the Christmas story from the Bible, often preached on Christmas Day. This passage does not mention stars or angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, or three wise men with their frankincense, gold, and myrrh gifts. With the Logos, the Word of God, and the dualism of light and darkness, John takes the Christmas story beyond and brings us back to the creation story, where only the Trinity existed. God created heaven and earth at the command of the Word, with the Holy Spirit hovering over the Tohu Vohu—the void, emptiness, and Chaos.

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

I have a song in my head throughout the week. It is a very unlikely Christmas song, not often sung these days: **“Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.”** African Americans sang it later in 1800, still in slavery. It was written and sung for Christmas day, singing of the savior born to save all, free or not.

Isaiah 52 is like that song or poem written around 587 BCE, during the Babylonian Exile. It speaks to the Babylonian exiles, who lived in a void, emptiness, and chaos, their land destroyed and their people taken and enslaved. But God had compassion on His people and sent prophets like Isaiah to tell them that they might have abandoned their God, but God had not. God has plans to redeem and save. He will bring peace and justice to their people, good tidings, and great joy.

Isaiah 52:7 sings, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim the salvation of the Lord...” I wonder who these are. Or whose feet are these?

Maybe Isaiah speaks about himself, who speaks on the mountain where God has spoken the things for him to prophesy, but it could also be the watchmen Isaiah calls out to and invites them to lift their voices together to shout for joy. It could also be those who return from the exile, who will see God’s redemption with their own eyes, and sing and shout the songs of joy together, singing for the Lord their God, who will bring them comfort, redemption, and salvation for all to see. Isaiah, the Watchmen, the exile...

Mary, Joseph, and angels... Herod and the magi, the angels, and shepherds... Similarly, in Our Christmas stories, we have heard so much about for the last few days from Matthew and Luke; we have these: the shepherds, the magi, and Mary and Joseph, who saw first-hand what God had done and how the Savior was born:

Which of the characters in the story do you identify with? What are you like? It is a bit like MBTI or Enneagram...

Shepherds?

Those who live by the principle of working hard and staying out of trouble. They care deeply about what they do, shepherding their flock day and night. They are skilled, diligent, and hard workers who are practical and even pragmatic. They are honest, don't do complications, and are quick on their feet, so they immediately see Christ-child after the angels leave them in the field. They went immediately after seeing and worshiping the Christ child, spreading the good news to everyone who they met on their way.

How about the Magi?

People with a love of knowledge, curious kinds, like to explore, are full of questions, and like to prove their theory. Love questions and believe that where there is a question, there must be an answer or answer; if answers can't be found..., they must find the answers... they are determined explorers with a sense of purpose and curiosity, and they walk miles until they find what they are looking for. They need to see, taste, smell, and touch things of life and all that is mysterious and wonderful.

Or Mary and Joseph

Ordinary men and women whose lives are so ordinary yet full of mystery, who quietly ponder, do what seems to be the right thing to do, yet are open to believing what seems absurd and peculiar sometimes. Open and pure in heart, they are likely to believe in Angels and miracles, take everything in stride, just let it roll off your back, and don't sweat the small stuff or weather the storm gracefully.

Regardless of where you put yourself and identify with... good news... God has chosen all of you. The shepherd, the magi, and even Mary and Joseph, God chose you to reveal this great tidings of great joy... to proclaim peace, to bring hope and proclaim salvation, and to say, "Your God reigns," so we all might burst into songs of joy together to welcome the Christ, child, the Messiah who brings comfort to those who mourn and peace to all who are troubled.

So... Go, tell it on the mountain over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born...

But we mustn't forget Herod, the king greatly troubled by the prospect of another being raised to take his place. So, he could not see beyond himself—a narcissistic, insecure, and fragile mentally, unsure of himself and too afraid ever to open his hands to receive God's blessing or too scared to give or to receive.

John says, “In him was life, and that life was the light of humankind. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him. The world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own; his own did not receive him. Yet, to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God. (John1:10-12)

At the heart of Christmas stories is this: Christ Jesus, the Messiah and the true light of God, bring Salvation to all, women or men, child or adult, slave or free, whoever you are... if you believe in his name, you will be given the right to be called the sons and daughters of God. And The word, the Word of God, who was in the beginning, became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. And so...

Go, tell it on the mountain over the hills and everywhere...

This is how Christianity began in Aotearoa. A missionary named Samuel Marsden arrived on Christmas Day in 1814, and at Rangihoua Bay in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, delivered the first Christian sermon in the country. Marsden preached from Luke 2:10, which says, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." He also sang the hundredth psalm. They say Marsden had prepared for this moment for a long time. With all of our political and even critical views of history beyond the rights and wrongs of our past, we must recognize a genuine desire of him and many other missionaries before or after him, to go tell it on the mountain and bring Christ to the people of this land. At this first Christmas, Marsden proclaimed Christ and felt his “soul melt” as he looked out at his congregation on the green hillside overlooking the sea. Around 400 Māori and Europeans gathered together to worship Christ and share in the Christmas celebration.

So, there we are... Christ is born, the Word of God, the light of life, the Messiah and savior—coming to us and to all, this day. So, you, the watchmen, Isaiah, the exile, the shepherd, the wise, or Mary and Joseph... let us then...

***Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.***

Thanks be to God... Amen.