

# It's Time to Open Up Christmas

## December 2020 (29 November - 26 December)



Advent is the time when the Christian church really begins anew as we “Open up Christmas.”

I guess the fact is that many of us have literally placed Christmas in a box. We tidy it away from year to year and bring it out displaying it in lights and decorations. Christmas however, as we we know, is much more than something that can be contained in a box of decorations.

This year we have chosen the theme *It's Time To Open Up Christmas* to help us all begin to marvel at the sheer magnificence of the plan of God's salvation for the whole of his creation — to think about the open hearted people who have received and believed the plan as it has been unfolded. And to ask where will we find our open heart this Christmas? To journey further and encounter the mystery of Christmas that is beyond magic — leaving us with our mouths wide open in awe and wonder and surprise. And finally to consider that we have been created to live in an open world. The skies above us openly declare the vast extensive majesty of the creator. During the Christmas week we will be considering the part the skies have played in opening up a new understanding of God with us.

*Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.*

## It's time to open up Christmas... and discover God's open plan through the prophets (29 November)

An open plan that God has revealed through the prophets. At the beginning of Advent we want to be asking what is the role of the prophet in the past when telling the story of Christmas? Where are the prophets today? Can they help us understand the significance of past life events for present day understandings? Why does God use prophets in the first place? Can the prophets of old still speak to us today?

During week one our Daily Worship writer is invited to consider the role that the prophets have played in revealing God's salvation history and to further explore how that role continues to be played out in the modern world. Who are today's prophets? Do they give us hints about the nature and significance of God's plans in a world of pandemic and recession? Does the prophet help us feel secure — or challenge us to live from day to day? Where are the prophets pointing us to meet the Messiah?

1. Matthew 1:  
18-24 &  
Genesis 3:  
14-15

2. Micah 5:1-5 &  
Luke 2: 4-6

3. Isaiah 7: 10-15  
& Matthew 1:  
22-23

4. Isaiah 40: 3-5 &  
Luke 3: 1-6

5. Isaiah 53: 3 &  
John 1: 11

6. Isaiah 61: 1-3 &  
Luke 4: 18-19

7. Psalm 8: 2 &  
Matthew 19:14

1. [The Messiah is Jesus.](#)
2. [The Messiah's birthplace.](#)
3. [The Messiah born of a virgin.](#)
4. [The messenger to prepare the people.](#)
5. [The Messiah rejected of his people.](#)
6. [The Messiah will heal the broken hearted.](#)
7. [The Messiah praised by children.](#)

# It's time to open up... and discover the open heart of Christmas (6 December)

The stories surrounding Christmas open us up to meet open hearted and trusting people. We come across Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth. What do we learn about their journeys of faith, their open hearts? When it comes to understanding our family celebrations of Christmas what must we learn first about our own personal Christmas?

What kind of heart do we require if we are to see and understand the sheer completeness of God's redemption plan for the whole of creation? What kind of heart do we require if we are to grasp the love of God that seeks to mend our broken lives and relationships?

Could the Christmas season change relationships and even lives?

1. Luke 1:  
26-38

1. [Mary's open heart.](#)

2. [Create within me a clean heart.](#)

2. Psalm 51:  
10

3. [God's open heart surgery on his people.](#)

4. [God is close to the broken hearted.](#)

5. [God judges by the heart.](#)

3. Ezekiel 36:  
26

6. [How you spend your money says a lot about your heart...](#)

7. [Let peace guard your heart.](#)

4. Psalm 34:  
18

5. 1 Samuel  
16: 7

6. Mathew 6:  
21

7. Philippians  
4: 7

# Mouths wide open... when you truly open up Christmas (13 December)

There are a number of interesting stories in the Bible that involve mouths being opened, including that of a donkey! This week our Daily Worship writer is invited to concentrate on the sheer wonder and expectation that Jesus Christ brings into the lives of his followers. The texts below offer a rich context from which to explore the human experience of encountering the grace and mystery and love of God.

Christmas invites us to approach the stories of the incarnation with a sense of wonder and expectation. To consider once again not only what it means for Christ to be born again in our lives but also what it means for our lives to be born again in the light of Christ. Christmas invites us to open our mouths and our lives in adoration and praise.

## 1. Luke 1: 57-66

1. **Zechariah's mouth was opened in praise** after being struck silent through doubt.

## 2. Mark 7: 31-37

2. **"The sacrament of the opening"**. According to Ambrose there was a custom of saying "Ephaphtha" in the late 4th Century church to ask God to make the congregation receptive to hear.

## 3. Psalm 51: 15

3. **Open our lips** and our mouths will declare your praise.

## 4. Numbers 22: 28

4. **The donkey speaks back.**

## 5. Psalm 81: 10

5. **Learning to trust God to help us say the right thing at the right time.**

## 6. Ephesians 4: 29

6. **Speak words that build up.**

## 7. Proverbs 16:24

7. **Kind words can make you feel healthy.**

## Skies wide open to let in Christmas (20 December)

The skies above us openly declare the vast extensive majesty of the creator. During Christmas week we will be considering the part the skies have played in opening up a new understanding of God with us. There is a mystery beyond our memory and understanding. Angels, heavenly beings, stars and planets all called into the service of the creator to announce and explain to mere mortals they need not be afraid, to explain God's purposeful plan to bring all things together — God's plan to reconcile the unreconcilable; God's plan to place the longing for peace in the hearts of humans; God's peace plan born out in the life of Jesus the Prince of Peace.

Our Daily Worship writer for this week will invite us to lift our eyes from that which seeks to diminish us to gaze upon the open skies of Christmas that speak of God stooping down whisper in our ears "I'm with you all the way."

1. Job 38: 4-7
  2. Psalm 19: 1
  3. Matthew 2: 1-2
  4. Revelation 22: 16-17
  5. Luke 2: 8-15  
(Christmas Eve)
  6. Luke 2: 16-20  
(Christmas Day)
  7. Luke 2: 21-38
1. ...while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy...
  2. ...the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
  3. 'We saw his star...'
  4. The morning star...
  5. The heavenly choir of angels.
  6. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
  7. The prophets have the last word.