

When the Unseen Becomes Visible

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's birth and the hope it brings for peace and goodwill among humanity.

Duration: 37:26

Scripture: Luke 2:11, Romans 7:15

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "Gods Glory"

Description

This sermon from Luke chapter 2 focuses on the transformative power of Jesus Christ in bringing the unseen into the visible realm. It emphasizes the birth of Jesus as a pivotal moment marked by the bursting force of the unseen into the visible, offering hope for change and peace in the hearts of all people. The message highlights the struggle of humankind to live according to God's ways and the need for surrender to Christ for true transformation and a life that brings glory to God.

Transcript

I'd like to speak to you this morning for a little while from Luke chapter 2, please, if you would go there in the New Testament, Luke chapter 2. I want to speak to you about when the unseen becomes visible, when the unseen becomes visible. Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart, Lord, for this time in your house this morning. I'm asking you, Lord, to anoint and bless your word.

And God, let the miraculous take place in our midst today. Do something so profound, O God, that glory could not be given to anyone but you, Jesus. We thank you for this with all of our hearts today.

We bless you and praise you in Jesus' mighty name. Luke chapter 2, beginning at verse 7. A text very familiar to many of us about the birth of Jesus Christ. Now take note of that verse.

Good news, great joy, all people. And you say in your heart, does that mean me? Yes, that means you. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Now, beloved, this was an incredible moment of the birth of the Son of God, and it was marked by a bursting force of the unseen into the visible.

A whole realm that exists outside of our natural understanding. Something that you and I can't, we can't see it with the natural eye, we can't comprehend it with the natural mind. But it's as real as you and I today.

Very much there. There's an entire realm of God that is invisible to the natural man. When I say natural man, I mean it's the man or woman who lives outside of the supernatural presence of God.

This bursting force into the visible with an incredible song. Now think about it for a moment. Suddenly, it says, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

God will be glorified, they were singing. Peace will come to the earth. And there will be a change in men's hearts towards God and towards one another.

That's an incredible song, it was an incredible pronouncement. It's as if heaven for one moment just burst onto the scene, and then suddenly faded back into the background again. And I think that's the way it is for many people at Christmas time.

You come to church, and there's an agreement in the heart, this is right. I do believe that God had a son. I do believe he was born in a manger, I have no problem with that.

I do believe that God should be glorified in the earth. I do believe that there should be peace among men. If ever there was a cry in any generation, it certainly is in ours.

Peace, oh God, bring peace to this earth. There's so many people wandering through the earth now with such trepidation in so many people's hearts. Governments are trying to find the path roads to peace, as madmen are seeking to get their hands on weapons that have the capability of destroying much life and much good in this world.

And you can see this scrambling as it is for peace in the earth, and goodwill towards men. You ever wondered, why are people so selfish? Why is it so hard to get along? Why can't people just agree on common truth as it is, or common good? What is it in the heart of man, that we seem to be always on the edge of what we know is right, but we can't find within ourselves the strength to perform it. And that's the way it is for many.

We agree with these sentiments today. I know you agree or you wouldn't be here. You agree that Christ came to this world.

You agree that on earth there should be peace. You agree that what we're experiencing today in this sanctuary, what have we got here, a hundred nations. There's a unity, there's a love among brothers and sisters here today, that we agree should be in the earth.

You agree with it, I know you do. You feel it in your heart. And if this atmosphere we find ourselves in at this moment could be transported everywhere we go, it seems reasonable to assume that this world would be a much better place to live.

I know you agree with that. If we could take just what we're experiencing this morning in this sanctuary and take it into New York City, let's just say for a moment the whole city believed the way we do right now, wouldn't it be a much better place to be? Just think of what kind of a city this would be. If we could take

this reality, this momentary glimpse as it is, this bursting onto the scene of something of God that can't be seen with the natural eye, we could embrace it and take it and people received it.

If all races got along together, if people were honest, if we truly cared about one another, think of how God would be glorified. Think about how things could change. But like the Apostle Paul, we find ourselves incapable of making these sentiments in our heart the cornerstone of our daily living.

It's like the man or woman who says this is right, but I don't know how to do this. I know in my mind it's right. Listen to what Paul said in Romans, I'm just going to read it to you.

He said, for that which I do, I allow not. For what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that I do.

And Paul is saying, look, I know what I should be doing, and I have an inner knowledge of what is right, but I don't know how to perform it. I want to be different than I am. And I agree with God that I should be living in peace, and there should be something of goodness in my heart towards other people, and I want it to be that way, but I don't know how to do it.

Now that's the dilemma of humankind. How many people here today, you make New Year's resolutions every year. I know I did for 20 something years.

How long did it last? You're going to be kinder to people. You're going to be, you know, because everybody is singing Auld Lang Syne, and you feel so good at 12.02. By 12.10, you're on the verge of another fist fight, and your New Year's Eve party. You have these great sentiments in the heart, but there's no power to bring them into reality.

You say, I'm going to go home. I'm going to stop certain practices. I'm going to start speaking differently, living differently.

I'm not going to be selfish like I used to be, and so many other things, and then you get home, and you get up, and it's a despondent position really to get up in the morning and realize I have no power to change. It seems that something within every person is at war with how he knows his life and relationship with God should be lived out. Paul said it this way, I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul said, I love the law of God. I know the law of God is right.

I know it's true. I agree in my heart that the songs we sing on Christmas morning should not just be a momentary illusion. There's got to be more than just this brief, as it is bursting into the heavens in my sight, this song that heaven seems to know so much about, but I seem to know so little about.

There's got to be more than just this. I see it every Christmas, and then it just sort of fades from my view. And then I leave this place with an agreement in my heart, but no power in my physical being to perform what I know is right.

And that's the dilemma. The liar knows that he should speak truth. The angry person has an understanding in his heart or her heart that he or she should be gentle, and wants to be gentle.

I know there are men, I know I'm speaking in the spirit this morning. I know there is at least one man here that you don't want to be doing what you're doing in your own home. You know that your conversation is destructive.

It's harmful to your wife and to your children. And you want to stop, but you can't find the resource to stop. You want to be gentle, but there's an inner law that's warring against what you know is right in your heart.

And no, your wife has not called me this week to tell me about you knowing you were going to be here. The Holy Spirit knew you would be here. And God in His mercy is reaching out to you something deeper, something more profound, and in your case, an evidence that Jesus Christ really is alive.

He's not a fiction. He's not a presentation that we do at Christmas. He's an ever real, ever living, ever present Savior every day of the year.

The selfish person knows that we're all called to be gentle and generous and kind. And yet, even momentarily Sunday morning after the service, you want to reach in your pocket and you just want to do something good for somebody, but you get an hour away from the service and all of a sudden it begins to change. Something begins to take over the heart.

And these arguments about, well, there are social systems designed to look after this, and they're in this mess because of their own lack. All these arguments take over from the kindness of God, and suddenly the hand just comes out of the pocket empty one more time. And the sentiment of mercy and kindness leaves us.

The verbally abusive often hates the things that he or she says but doesn't know how to stop. Because you were the recipient of verbal abuse quite often, it's so entrenched in you that you don't know how to change this bend in your character. You don't want to speak the way you do.

You don't want to do the things you're doing, but you don't know how to stop. Like Paul said, I know what is right, but I don't know how to get out of the wrong way of doing things. The wounded here today want to let go, but can't let go of the pain.

For many, many people Christmas is a time, it's a very bitter time, especially in our society today because family weren't there. Disappointment was the order of the day. You hated this season.

You couldn't wait for it to leave because all it brings is pain. It just brings memories of people not being there, promises unfulfilled, things that should have been there for you that weren't. And you want to let it go, but you can't let it go.

You know the basis of Christmas is God forgiving the sins of humankind through the sacrifice eventually of his Son on the cross. And you agree in your heart that it's right that I should forgive, but you can't find the resource to forgive. You can't let the pain go.

The dishonest person wants to trust God, but doesn't know how. You want to stop reaching into your own resources and doing things that you perhaps feel are not right. And you want to trust God because you know God can be trusted, but how do I find it in my heart to trust God? I've looked there for the resources, but they seem to elude me.

They escape me. Those addicted to immoral action would like to be free from the enslavement of their own bodies and the lust that has so dripped their minds, and because of it they don't have normal interactions with people anymore, don't see people in the right light. They're driven inwardly by lust, and there's no sense of goodwill towards their fellow man, and they don't want to live there.

They know it's wrong, and they know there's a better way to live, but how do I get out? How do I escape these things? Paul said, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? How will I get free from this? How will I come out of this? Is there hope? Is Christmas just a momentary illusion? Was it really a moment of glory to God? Was it really a time of peace on earth? Was it really a time of goodwill to men, or is it just an illusion? Is it just something that perhaps only the strong can lay hold of? Is it for me, or is it going to be eternally out of my grasp? And if it is mine, how do I attain it? How do I get there? How do I get to this place where the glory of God is in my life? Where I'm at peace on the earth, and I have a heart that is somewhat representative of the heart of God to people that are around me. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? You see, that's why in the scriptures, when the messenger first appeared to the shepherds, he said, I bring you good tidings of great joy to all people. Good news, great joy, all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. A Savior. You see, mankind is born with an inner nature to sin.

And it's that sin nature that Paul talks about that keeps us in a state of being captive to the things we know are wrong. Our conscience tells us it's wrong. The word of God tells us it's wrong.

The way we interrelate with people tells us it's wrong. We instinctively know it's wrong. It's a law, Paul said, of sin and death that works within us.

A law that is stronger than our best efforts to change in our own strength. A law that is so strong, so powerful, that no matter how high we try to jump in our own strength, it still brings us back down to that place from which we began. Paul said, I don't want to live this way.

Who will deliver me from this body of death? I live in a body that is bent on death, that has a working of death in it, that is contrary to the ways of God, that leads me to do what I don't want to do and drags me, moaning as it is through life, always lamenting what happened yesterday, vowing to change it tomorrow, but seemingly powerless to make a difference, wounding those that are around me, not wanting to live this way anymore. Selfish, so preoccupied with consuming everything around me and myself, and yet it never brings any satisfaction. Now I come back to church one more time at Christmas, one more time I find myself in this manger scene, one more time hearing these songs, one more time with a brief glimpse of heaven, but I feel somebody's pain here, I just feel it in my spirit, somebody in this sanctuary saying, my God, is there any chance that this can be taken home? Is this something just reserved for Sunday morning? Is it something that forever, I'm only going to get a glimpse of for an hour on Sunday, or two hours on Sunday, and it's going to elude me again for the rest of the year.

Is it just a pipe dream or can it be real in my life? Unto you, the messenger said, is born a savior, a man who living and dying for the honor of God, would break the penalty and power of sin. That's who Jesus Christ is. God in the flesh came to this world because you and I had no way out.

We could not get back to God. We could not live lives that glorify God. We could not be at peace with God on the earth.

We could not be at peace with our fellow man. We could not break the chains of our own sin. We could not rise above the death that was part of our inner nature.

And so God in his mercy, not when we were looking for him, but he was looking for us, came to this earth and came here humbly, came here with a display of compassion for our frailty and for our weakness. Walked through 33 years of human life on this earth. The scripture says, enduring all the struggles that we struggle with and was victorious over them.

Took all of our sin and all of our frailty and all of our captivity to the cross. It was nailed on him at the cross. Triumphed, triumphed over it.

And rose from the grave three days later, fully victorious over every power of sin, death and hell. Oh yes, it's a day of great joy. It's a day of good news and great tidings to all people.

It's a day when you and I can come back to God. If you will acknowledge today that Jesus Christ is the son of God, he died on the cross and paid the penalty for your sin. If you will acknowledge you can't save yourself, you can't change yourself.

If you will acknowledge that God so loved you that he came to this earth, an innocent man took your place. All the wrong things that you've done and will do, he took it upon himself. Broke the chains and broke the power and broke the penalty of sin and made it possible that you and I can live a new life that brings glory to God.

That was the song of the angels. Glory to God in the highest. Glory to God.

Every time I shout that, I shout that a lot in this church. Hallelujah. That's actually what it means.

Glory to God. Hallelujah. It's Hebrew, never mind.

It means glory to God. Glory to God. I am what I am because of Christ.

I've gone where I've gone because of Christ. I'll become what I'll become because of Christ. When you open your heart to Jesus Christ, the glory of God, God comes into your life.

Not a concept of God. Not a song about God. Not a pamphlet about God.

God comes into your life. God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, comes and takes up residence inside of your life and you and I begin to change from the inside out. Our lives begin to be lives that bring glory to God.

All we can shout is glory to God. When we get to heaven, we'll shout glory to God. That's why the angels around the throne, all they can say today is, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are filled with His glory. The glory of God. The mercy of God.

The compassion of God. The power of God. The enablement of God.

When He comes into a life, He begins to change us from the inside out. That's why Paul said, If anyone be in Christ, he becomes a new creation. The old things in him pass away and all things become new.

The power of death is broken. The power of sin is broken. The bondage of sin is broken.

The pathway of sin is broken. And a new heart, a new mind and a new life is given to the believer. You ask me how I know He lives? The song says, He lives within my heart.

There's a change comes into the heart of the man or woman who comes to Jesus Christ. It is good news of great joy to all people. Oh, I thank God.

I thank God to this day for what He's done in my life. I don't know, I could talk about it from now until next Christmas without stopping if God gave me the strength. I thank God.

I thank God with everything that is in my heart. I give God praise for what He has done. Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God.

The transformation He makes inside a heart. The giftings of God that come into the life. The newness of mind.

The newness of heart. The newness of life. This experience with God that brings glory to His name.

I don't stand on this platform for any other reason. But in my heart, there's a desire to give glory to God for what He has done. Glory to God in the highest.

And on earth, peace. He brings whoever comes to Him on earth to peace with God. Peace, no longer fighting against God.

No longer trying to be God in my own strength. No longer trying to do what only God can do. Remember when He stood in the temple that first day when He was about 30 years old and He opened the scripture to the book of Isaiah and He said, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

He sent me to preach the gospel to the poor or to release those that are in prison, to give sight to the blind. In other words, I've come to do what you can't do for yourself if you'll open your heart and let me come in. And lastly, after bringing us to peace with God, my goodness, if you don't know this, this would be the most life-changing moment that you will ever experience, perhaps for eternity.

To be at peace with God. To be forgiven. To become a new creation.

And goodwill toward men. And to change our hearts towards both God and our fellow man. Goodwill toward men.

I can't explain it to you other than to say, when Christ truly comes into your life, He changes your heart. And you don't feel towards people what you used to. Goodwill means you'll have the power to forgive those that wounded you.

You'll be given of God the power to love the unlovable. You'll care where you didn't before. You'll see people differently than you used to.

And it brings such an incredible peace into the heart that the Bible says it's a peace that passes all understanding. I thank God today that Christmas time is not just an illusion for me in the house of God. It's not just a momentary song.

It's every day now of my life. Every day. Glory to God.

On earth peace and goodwill towards men. Has become the song of my heart. And it can become the song of yours today.

Now a lot of you have made a tremendous effort to be here this morning. But the effort is not complete until you have made the decision to open your heart and let Jesus Christ be the Lord of your life. And if you will do that today, this will not just be a nice presentation.

And you won't go away from this church just saying, well, that was nice. I really enjoyed that. No, you'll go away changed.

You'll go away a completely different person than the person you were when you came in the door today. Now God burdened my heart last night for one man who's here today. Who knows exactly that God has revealed your life today to speak just to you.

One man. You so desperately don't want to do the things that you're doing. You so desperately want to be the father that God has called you to be to your children.

You so desperately want to be the husband that God's called you to be to your wife. And yet you've made such a mess. Some of it's known and some of it's hidden.

And you're so afraid today. But sir, if you'll just make the step. If you will just have the courage and make the step, I promise you that you'll leave this sanctuary so changed.

Such a different person. So filled with the joy of God. You'll be given such hope for tomorrow.

Now this applies to the ladies here too as well today. There are people, you're just on the edge of despair. You've come to this house and you say, Oh God, if this is real, you've just got to show me today.

You made an incredible effort and some of you made that effort because you're true worshippers and others made it because you're truly desperate. The Lord Jesus Christ will not disappoint you today. He will come to your heart, I promise you.

I'd stake my life on it. May God strike me dead in this pulpit at this very moment if anything I'm telling you is not right. If the Lord would fail you in one thing, He will touch you, He will change you, He will be faithful to you, He will not fail you.

I'm going to ask you today to make a decision. The decision is that you will open your heart and let this momentary revelation of the goodness of God become part of your daily life. You will open your heart and say, Jesus, I can't change, I need you to change me.

You will receive Him as your Savior. You will let Him begin to guide your life from this day forward. You will open your heart to the fullness of God and He promises that He will come to you, He will sit down with you, He will open His word to you and He will give you the life that you've been longing for.

You can leave this sanctuary with the glory of God, which is Christ Himself in your soul. You can leave this sanctuary today at peace with God, no longer fighting with Him and against Him. You can leave this sanctuary with your heart towards other people changed.

I stake my very life on these words. It's what God has done for me and I know He will do it for you today. How many in this sanctuary and those that are sitting in the annex today with an upraised hand can say,

Pastor, I see what you're speaking and today I want to open my heart and I want to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Would you raise your hand unashamedly, all of you. God bless you everywhere. Raise your hand.

Don't be ashamed. I want to tell you something. You're bringing to your family this Christmas, those who raised your hand, the greatest present that you could ever have brought to your family.

Now we're going to stand in just a moment and I'm going to ask you to do something. Those who raised their hands today, I'm going to ask you to come down and meet me at this altar and we're going to pray a prayer together that will be the beginning of a transformed life for you. Now if you've come with family members, husbands have come with their wives, wives with their husbands, brothers with sisters, cousins with cousins, friends with friends, and perhaps somebody is next to you that is afraid to make this decision alone.

You can feel free to turn to them and say, I'll go with you if you want to go. I'll go with you. You don't have to go down there alone.

This is the beginning of a brand new walk and we're going to walk this together. It would be awesome to see husbands and wives here together, especially if one or the other is giving their lives to Christ or both. Oh please, I beg you in Christ's name, don't leave here unchanged today.

Don't leave here unchallenged. Don't leave here the way you came when you can go home with the glory of God in your soul. Now as we stand, I'm going to ask, let's please stand together.

You've heard the word today in the balcony. Make your way down here. Those who raised their hands and families who want to come together, please make your way here.

We're going to pray together. Everyone who raised their hand, unashamedly just slip out of where you are. Husbands and wives, come on.

Get down here together. Give your children a great gift this Christmas. Fathers, the Bible says in the last days that God's going to turn your hearts to your children.

But it has to be God that does it. You can't do it in your own strength. Have the courage to join these that are coming.

God bless. Just keep coming in. Annex 2 as well.

We're going to take a moment just to worship. And as we do, just slip out of your seat. Turn to somebody beside you.

Do it now, folks. Will you? Ask them if they want to go. Do you want to go down? Do you want to give your life to Christ? I'll go with you.

Go ahead. They're not going to bite you. Go ahead.

Ask. And just make your way down. Help somebody if they need help.

People are afraid. This is a fearful city. People are afraid of commitment.

But you don't need to be afraid of God today. He's your friend. I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. All you are required to do is open your heart and receive that. That God died on a cross in your place.

He paid the price for the wrong things that you and I have done. And made a way for us into heaven when we die and to a newness of life while we live. A supernatural life is what he promises.

The evidence that you truly have received Christ is that you begin to change from the inside out. It's not overnight. But just like a new babe when he is born or she is born, you begin to have new desires.

New ways of thinking open up to you. New possibilities are suddenly before you. It's no longer just an illusion at Christmas.

It's now a reality in your heart. You begin to thirst and hunger for this freedom that God brings into your soul. You get to know him to the point that you cannot stop but speak of what he's doing.

That's where God's going to take you. When I first came to Christ in 1978, when God began to do what he promises he will do in a person's life, I could not stop speaking about him. I don't know how else.

You'll know this in just a little while. But today I'm going to lead you in a prayer. And prayer is nothing mystical.

It's just something that I'm going to do to help you to understand how you receive Christ. You acknowledge that you've sinned against God. And that this sin has separated you from God.

But God in his love bridged that gap of separation between you and him by dying on a cross. Paid the price in full. When he said it is finished, those are his last words in one of the gospels.

When he said it is finished, that means that the right of sin to rule over you was broken. The devil's lawful claim on your life forever, not just for this earth, but forever was taken away. The list of grievances that God would rightly have against you was covered over when that precious blood of Jesus Christ was shed on that cross.

So you're not coming to a concept of God today. You're coming to the living savior. And you're opening your heart to a God who promises to come in.

Not a concept of God. Not a song about God, but actually God himself. In the person of the Holy Spirit will come to live inside of you.

And you'll change. When you go home today, you look at your eyes in the mirror. That first thing after I got saved that really shocked me is my eyes changed.

And you'll see it right away. You'll look in. It's like another set of eyes are looking back at you.

And it's God within you now. Brings a brightness into your countenance. He changes you.

Pray this simple prayer with me. Lord Jesus. I am a sinner.

And I'm sorry for my sin. And I don't want to live this way. Any longer.

Thank you today. For helping me to understand. How much you love me.
Why you died for me. And that you're calling me. To open my heart to you.
And to live the rest of my life. In this strength. That you promised to give me.
Lord Jesus Christ. I receive into my heart. This day.
The gift that you gave to me. When you come into this world. Bore my sin.
And died on the cross. And you did it all for me. I receive this.
Love of God. Forgiveness of God. Into my heart.
I am so deeply grateful. I believe. That from this day forward.
My life will never again. Be the same. I will win victories.
Not in my own strength. But in the strength of God. Within me.
You will be merciful to me. You will help me. Through all of my struggles.
And all of my trials. You will not forsake me. And oh God thank you.
That Jesus Christ. Your name. Will be brought to glory.
Through my life. I will walk. With peace in my heart.
I will learn. To forgive. And to love.
All people. As you do. From this day forward.
I am a follower. Of Jesus Christ. Thank you for receiving me.
In Jesus precious name. Now let's just give God glory. Now Father.
I just pray in Christ name. That you seal this decision. With the Holy Spirit.
God don't let anybody turn back. Don't let them listen to the voice. The voice of the enemy.
God don't let anything come against. This seed of life that's been shown in them. Lord you are patient.
You are merciful as we learn to walk. As we learn to go forward. In this new relationship we have with
God.
Father thank you Lord. That when we fall down you will pick us up. When we make mistakes you will
speak to us.
And help us to do things differently. God you are a merciful God. You are a kind loving Savior.
We thank you for this Lord. God don't let one of these be missing. At the throne of heaven.
When we all get there one day. Let everyone at this altar be at that throne Father. Seal this work.

Seal it deep into the heart. Father we thank you for this God. With everything in us we give you praise.
And glory for this. In the mighty and holy name of Jesus. Now folks if ever we've given a shout of God.
A shout of glory to God we should. Hallelujah.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19513.mp3>

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