

## Carol Service Talk 2025

### Are you a faithful or a traitor?

**(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)**

#### Are you a faithful or a traitor?

I'm aware that as I ask that question there will be some in this room who don't have any idea what I'm talking about. However, my hunch is that quite a number of you have already made the connection between my words and the **BBC programme** that captured the hearts of millions.

I'm told that **Celebrity Traitors** has been watched by over **15 million** people since it was first broadcast earlier this year.

The fans of this series will need no introduction. However, if you haven't seen it, here is a summary of what it's all about.

- The show is hosted by Claudia Winkleman
- At the start of the series she welcomes **19 celebrities** into a picturesque Scottish castle
- Over a few days the celebrities complete a number of team challenges in order to raise up to £100,000 for charity
- Here's the twist. At the start of the show, Claudia secretly chooses three of them to be **Traitors**, whilst the others are called **Faithfuls**.
- The job of the Traitors is to get rid of one Faithful every night, and the job of the Faithfuls is to identify the Traitors and banish them from the castle at the daily Round Table Discussions.
- One of the joys of watching Celebrity Traitors is that we, the viewers, know who the Traitors are but the Faithfuls in the castle have no idea. This means we watch with **amazement** as they discuss who they think the traitors are and who they want to banish. **Spoiler alert** - they get it wrong, again and again.

If you're looking for some fun TV viewing then I certainly recommend **Celebrity Traitors**.

**(Change to slide 2)** However, the real reason I mention it this morning is because it's a programme that can help us understand **why Jesus was born**.

I'd suggest that is the **vital question** we need to know the answer to at Christmas.

Of course, there are **other questions** that are helpful to know. For example, how long should I cook the turkey for? Is it wise to turn off the Wi-Fi for the day to encourage loving conversation between the family?

The most important Christmas question of all time is, **why was Jesus born?**

Listen again to what the angel said to Joseph.

**(Change to slide 3)** **Matthew 1:21**, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The word **sinner** is in danger of becoming increasingly meaningless in our contemporary world.

We hear the sound but it leaves **no imprint on our souls**.

How about we replace the word **sinner** with **traitor**?

Initially that might sound **too harsh** or **too serious**.

However, I'm increasingly convinced that **the word traitor** is exactly what we need to hear.

How should we identify someone who lives in God's world, receives all his generous gifts and yet lives for themselves, according to their priorities and who either denies God or relegated him to the argos of their existence? That's a **spiritual traitor**.

As we would expect, the **long-term consequences** for such a posture are **eternally devastating**.

### **Who are the spiritual traitors?**

Or let me make it more personal, **are you a faithful or a traitor?**

In order to find out we could try some of the **methods** they used in Celebrity Traitors.

**(Change to slide 4)** There is the **Round Table discussion**. That was pretty useless.

**(Change to slide 5)** There was another moment in Celebrity Traitors when they had to **look each other in the eye and say, "I am a faithful."** That produces a brilliant scene with Alan Carr who cannot even say those four words without laughing!

**(Change to slide 6)** **How can we discover who the traitors are?**

The easiest way is to be told by someone who knows.

In Celebrity Traitors we are told by Claudia. That makes a critical difference to how we view the unfolding events. We're not in the dark. We aren't trying to guess. No, the truth is revealed.

As we ponder who the spiritual traitors are, **we don't have a Claudia** but **we do have a Creator**.

**(Change to slide 7)** This is what he says in the Bible. **Psalm 14:2-3**, "The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there

are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

**Aren't you glad you came to this Christmas service?** Before you leave in a grumpy mood let me assure you that this isn't the end of the story.

We may all **start our lives as traitors** but because of Christmas there is the **glorious possibility of change**.

**(Change to slide 8)** Listen again to what the angel said to Joseph.

**Matthew 1:21**, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Or to put it differently, **Jesus came to save the traitors**.

This is completely different from the mission of the Faithfuls on Celebrity Traitors. Their task is to first identify the traitors and then **banish** them from the castle.

**How different to the mission of Jesus!**

Jesus knows exactly **who we are** and **what we are**. That is, we are traitors.. And yet knowing this, he sets out from his heavenly home to be born as a human being and then to live **a perfectly faithful life**.

The purpose of all that was **not to make us look bad** or to **make us try harder at our moral endeavours**.

No, his faithful life enables him to die on the cross to suffer the punishment we traitors deserve, and by doing so to offer salvation as a **free gift** to those who put their faith in him.

**(Change to slide 9)** If there is one time of year when we understand **the principle of gift giving** it's got to be Christmas. When you hand over the present, don't ask for money. You pay for it and the other person enjoys it!

Without the help of Jesus we are traitors. We deserve to be banished from the castle.

However, here is **the great news of Christmas**. Jesus was sent to be the faithful one.

His mission was **not to get rid of us** but to **save us**.

Because he paid the price of our treason, **the gift of salvation** is now offered freely to all who put their faith in him,

This **gift** is more than just a spiritual pardon. That would have been incredible in itself. But Jesus offers us **more than just forgiveness**.

Through **unity with him**, he enables us to **join his family** and to become one of the **Faithfuls**.

**(Change to slide 10)** **Do you want to be a faithful?**

I hope you do. It means **forgiveness** and **fellowship** with God, both now and forever.

The way to be a faithful is **not to try harder**. No, it is to respond to the gracious invitation of Jesus, the true faithful one.

**Matthew 11:28-29**, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

As we come to Jesus, he will change us so that increasingly we become like him. And that's a wonderful prospect!

### **What's next?**

- *Find out more*

Free book. Come to church.

- *Trust in him*
- *Live in him*