

Happy Christmas to economic radicals

Published: January 14, 2026, 5:48 am

Christmas Day is, in the Christian tradition, a day to mark the birth of Jesus – who was a radical economic reformer who died for social justice. Why have we forgotten that?

https://youtu.be/feKEpW_F4Sc?si=Jc9pZ1jo8nomJPqS

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=achpc-1782681-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Happy Christmas! That is the obvious thing to say this morning because here we are, Christmas Day, and we're still making videos.

Why? Because there are things to talk about this Christmas.

I spoke yesterday in the video that we put up about my desire for a vision, and I want to build on that idea today.

I want to think about Christmas, what it really means.

I remember my childhood. Don't we all, when we think about Christmas when we're of a certain age? And what was that like?

Well, in my case, my childhood Christmases were in a fairly strict evangelical Christian household. We certainly weren't materialist as a result. My parents believed that

presents should be small and limited in number. I'm well aware that I was very slightly jealous of those who I knew who got bigger presents than I did.

Christmas was always short as well. I now look back and think that my mother must have had OCD. She hated the Christmas tree and everything that went with it. It went up on Christmas Eve, and if she could have done it, she'd have taken it down on Boxing Day. I think it lasted a day or two longer - but not much more than that.

So, Christmas was a limited affair and going to church was a big part of it. But I always remember that going to church was all about stables and donkeys and all of this stuff and swaddling clothes, whatever they were. But there was no discussion. of what it was really about.

Now, I'm not here to tell you that you should be a Christian, which would be pretty hypocritical of me because I won't be in church this Christmas, but I do think that Christmas does happen to mark the birth of one of the great teachers of humankind.

I have no doubt that somebody called Jesus did exist at around the time we call zero to 33. I do believe that this person did teach, and I do believe he inspired people to write about what he had to say.

I don't think that everything he said was entirely original. He built quite clearly on the shoulders of others, but then everybody does.

But, he most certainly made a difference. And I think it's just worth reflecting today on that Jesus - a name that, by the way, was quite common in Palestine at that time, and think about what that person had to say.

When he first spoke about his mission, he said he came to give good news to the poor, to free the oppressed, to declare - as he put it - the year of the Lord's favour, which when it is unpacked, means he was there to declare a jubilee. And, in Jewish law, a jubilee meant the voiding of all debt, the declaration that those who owe money did no longer. He came, then, to declare an economic change in the society in which he lived.

Look at something called the Magnificat. It's in the Gospel of Saint Luke, and it's supposedly the song of praise sung by Mary about the child she was having. It says the rich will be pulled down from their place. It's extraordinary, radical stuff.

And Jesus went on to found a movement that shared all their goods in common, and the excess that they could generate, they gave to the poor. T

This was not a man who came with a mission which was just about loving little children, or whatever else. This was a man who preached about economic reform, and he died for it. I've little doubt about that.

And so, what is Christmas about? Christmas is about that same thing, really. It is about

declaring good news to all men. Or women, but when they wrote that they didn't think about that point. The point I'm saying is if we truly understand the message of the teacher whose birth we celebrate on Christmas day - although let's be honest, the probability that he was actually born on the 25th December is pretty darn remote - one in three six five to be precise - the point I'm trying to make is that this person was a radical economic reformer. And if we want to celebrate Christmas in its true style, we have to ask about what radical economic reforms do we want this Christmas because they are what Christmas is all about.