

*Surprising things  
.... in unexpected places*





# Strange Night

# Here's a curious thing

- A teenage girl is made to go on a long journey
- Working men say they've seen angels in the fields
- Some professors say they've seen a new star

*And so begins that strange story*

Next: surprising presents But before that ....





# MARY POPPINS RETURNS



What's the biggest word in the whole wide world...?



## Intro (WAIT!) ...

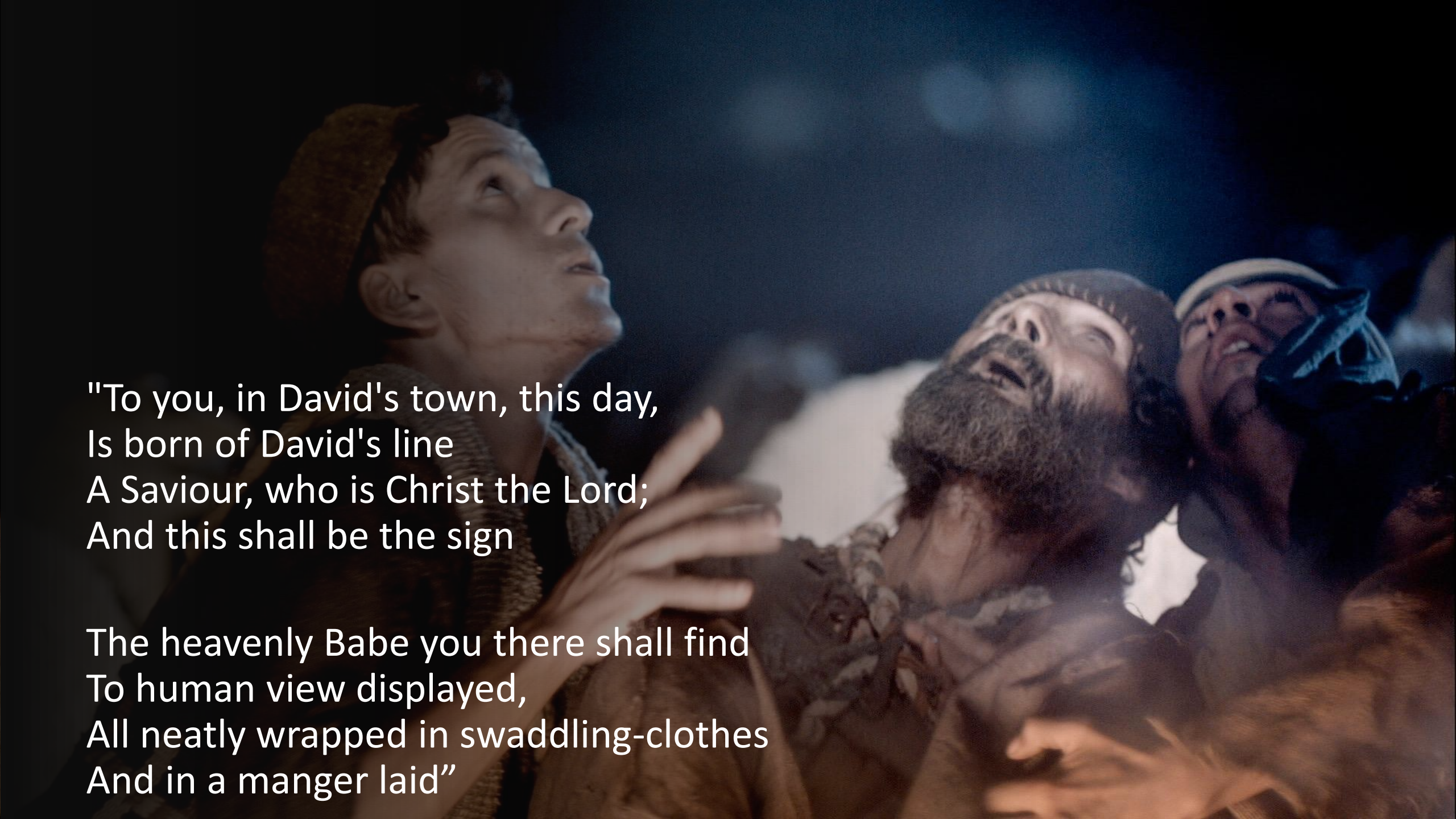
While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The angel of the Lord came down,  
And glory shone around

Fear not, said he, for mighty dread  
Had seized their troubled minds;  
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
To you and all mankind"

Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I  
Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I





A cinematic still from a historical film. Three men are shown from the chest up, looking upwards with expressions of awe and wonder. The man on the left is a young man with a brown cap and a fur-trimmed cloak. The man in the center has a full dark beard and a similar fur-trimmed cloak. The man on the right is partially visible, wearing a blue head covering. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor night scene.

"To you, in David's town, this day,  
Is born of David's line  
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;  
And this shall be the sign

The heavenly Babe you there shall find  
To human view displayed,  
All neatly wrapped in swaddling-clothes  
And in a manger laid"



Thus spake the seraph and forthwith  
Appeared a shining throng  
Of angels, praising God, and thus  
Addressed their joyful song

“All glory be to God on high,  
And to the earth be peace;  
Good will henceforth from Heaven  
to men  
Begin and never cease”

Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I  
Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I

**KEY CHANGE!**

Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I  
Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I





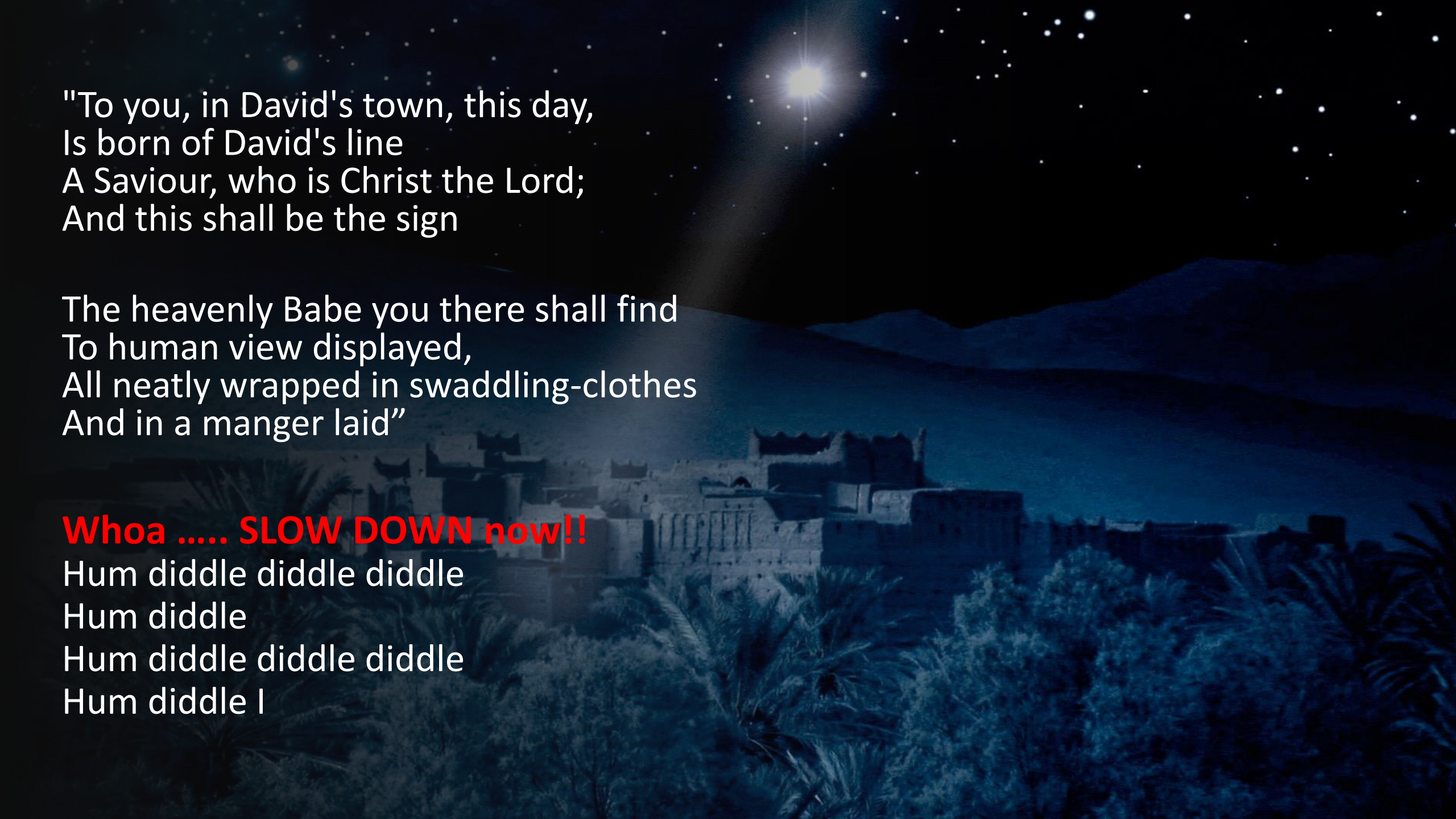
A painting of three shepherds in a dark, starry night sky, looking up in awe. The shepherds are dressed in traditional, rustic clothing. The central figure is a man with a beard, looking upwards. To his left is a younger man, also looking up. To his right is a woman, looking down. The background is a dark, starry night sky with a bright, glowing light source, possibly the star of Bethlehem, illuminating the scene. The overall mood is one of wonder and awe.

OK let's go  
**ONE MORE TIME!**

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The angel of the Lord came down,  
And glory shone around

Fear not, said he, for mighty dread  
Had seized their troubled minds;  
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
To you and all mankind"



A night scene of a town, likely Bethlehem, with a bright star shining in the dark sky. The town is nestled in a valley, surrounded by hills and mountains. The sky is filled with stars, and the star in the center is particularly bright and prominent. The town's buildings are visible in the foreground, and the overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

"To you, in David's town, this day,  
Is born of David's line  
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;  
And this shall be the sign

The heavenly Babe you there shall find  
To human view displayed,  
All neatly wrapped in swaddling-clothes  
And in a manger laid"

**Whoa ..... SLOW DOWN now!!**

Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle  
Hum diddle diddle diddle  
Hum diddle I

(Bit Faster! ...)

Thus spake the seraph and forthwith  
Appeared a shining throng  
Of angels, praising God, who thus  
Addressed their joyful song

(Faster ... Faster!..**FASTER!!**)

“All glory be to God on high,  
And to the earth be peace;  
Good will henceforth from Heaven to men  
Begin and never cease”

Good will henceforth from Heaven to men  
**Be-gin ..... and ne-ver ...**

**C...EEEEEEEEEE...A...S...E!!!!**



# MARY POPPINS RETURNS



*... and it didn't even sound precocious!*





# *Surprising things .... in unexpected places*

- Surprising guests
- Surprising gifts





# Surprising Gifts?

Matthew 2, 7-12



Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him as well.”

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.

Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

***Did YOU get any surprising gifts this year ...?***



Usually we try to buy  
a present that's right  
for the person

So what present would YOU buy for a baby?



# Surprising gifts

- Gold – useful!
- Frankincense – used as a medicine but usually for its beautiful smell
- Myrrh – embalming ...  
And also has a smell

*Want to smell some ?*



# Smells in the Bible (yes really!)



- Smells can help us remember
- There are lots of smells in the Bible

New Testament:

- Luke 1 – the Christmas Story
- Acts 10 – Cornelius and the angel
- Revelation 8:

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne.

The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God



# Smells in the Bible (yes really!)



- Bringing the best thing we have to God & giving it to him in the best way
- Remembering with a smell – we remember God & we ask him to remember us
- The smoke rising was a reminder of prayers rising to God  
Some churches still do this

***Ready to do some smelling?***

# *Surprising things .... in unexpected places*

- Surprising guests  
...on a strange night
- Surprising gifts  
... with a strange smell
- Another surprise to come, but first ...





- *Surprising things  
.... in unexpected places*

- Surprising guests
- Surprising gifts (& smells!)
- Surprising God



What  
Child  
is  
This?

Here's a question we've been asking this Christmas...

- Isn't it obvious?
- But some questions don't simply ask a question
- Some questions can be a shout of surprise!  
... The question itself is the point

*How amazing was that! How wonderful was that meal! ....*





# The question itself is the point

- A question can express wonder, surprise
- ... *what love is this?*
- A surprising God who works in unexpected places
- Who loves to “surprise” by using the foolish, the weak



# What Child is This!

- A young teenager in an occupied territory is forced on a long journey
- Born into poverty instead of a palace
- When angel choirs visit working men
- When wise men bring gold for a baby

Riding on a donkey – bleeding on a cross  
– God is not short on surprises





One last thing



*What about the surprises still to come?*

*What about 2019?*



*Where might this path lead? .. Somewhere good ? .... or not?*



2019

*Where might our path lead?  
What new things might there be?  
How will we deal with the uncertainties? ...*

*Once ...*



# 2019

- Some of us feel vulnerable with a path like this
- The surprises in the Christmas story depended on people being open
- God works surprisingly more often than we think

*What will you strive for this year?*







*What  
Child  
is  
This?*

