

Advent – The Story of Old, the Promise of New

The Christmas story told through Poems and Carols.

P: Christmas marks the joy of a moment when hope and expectation were gloriously met by the illumination of one bright star. Lord, we praise you for the precious gift you bestowed us with, all those years ago.

During this season of love, may we have quiet moments of prayer where we escape from the bustle of the world. In these moments, bring alive the smell of the hay, the sound of the animals and the cry of a baby that changed the season and the world. Today and always, help us to make place in our hearts for the same Christmas spirit that transformed the world that night, Amen.

Opening Hymn

Oh, come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels;

*Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord.*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n.
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing;
Lyrics and Music: John F Wade

Kauma

P. †Glory be to the Father our Creator, to the Son our Redeemer and to the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.

C. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

P. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest.

C. Blessed is He that has come and is to come again in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

P. Holy art thou, O God.

C. Holy art thou, Almighty Lord.

P. Holy art thou, Immortal Lord.

C. O Lord, the Messiah who was crucified for us † have mercy on us.

(To be repeated thrice)

P. O Lord, have mercy on us.

C. O Lord, have mercy on us and bless us.

P. O Lord, accept our prayers and worship and have mercy on us.

C. Glory be to you, O God.

P. Glory be to you, O Creator.

C. Glory be to you, O King the Messiah; who has mercy on us sinners. Bless us, O Lord.

(Let us sing together the prayer that Jesus taught us)

**All: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is done in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

***And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Forever. Amen.***

(Cong to be seated)

1st Lesson: Malachi 3:1-4

2nd Lesson: Acts 13:17-26

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Gabriel

L:

For a moment I hesitated on the threshold.
For the space of a breath
I paused,
unwilling to disturb her last ordinary moment,
knowing that the next step
would cleave her life:
that this day would slice her story in two,
dividing all the days before
from all the ones to come.

The artists would later depict the scene:
Mary dazzled by the archangel,
her head bowed in humble assent,
awed by the messenger
who condescended to leave paradise
to bestow such an honor
upon a woman, and mortal.

Yet I tell you it was I who was dazzled,
I who found myself agape
when I came upon her—reading, at the loom, in the kitchen,
I cannot now recall;
only that the woman before me—
blessed and full of grace long before I called her so—
shimmered with how completely she inhabited herself,
inhabited the space around her,
inhabited the moment that hung between us.

I wanted to save her
from what I had been sent to say.

Yet when the time came,
when I had stammered the invitation
(history would not record the sweat on my brow,
the pounding of my heart;
would not note that I said
Do not be afraid
to myself as much as to her)
it was she who saved me—
her first deliverance—
her Let it be
not just declaration to the Divine
but a word of solace,
of soothing, of benediction

for the angel in the doorway
who would hesitate one last time—

just for the space of a breath
torn from his chest—
before wrenching himself away
from her radiant consent,
her beautiful and
awful yes.

Jan Richardson

C: To be sung

**O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

**O come desire of nations. Bind
in one the hearts of all mankind,
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease
And be Thyself, our King of Peace**

Tune: VENI EMMANUEL (Chant), Translator: J.M. Neale(1851)

L: Mary

She had been a child who played, ate, slept
like any other child – but unlike others,
wept only for pity, laughed
in joy not triumph.
Compassion and intelligence
fused in her, indivisible.

Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail, only asked a simple,
'How can this be?'
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel's reply,
perceiving instantly the astounding ministry she was offered:
to bear in her womb
Infinite weight and lightness; to carry
in hidden, finite inwardness,
nine months of Eternity; to contain
in slender vase of being,
the sum of power –
in narrow flesh,
the sum of light.

Then bring to birth,
push out into air, a Man-child
needing, like any other,
milk and love –

but who was God.

Anonymous'

C: To be sung

**What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

***This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!***

**Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading**

***Nails, spear shall pierce him through
The cross be borne for me for you
Hail, hail! The word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.***

Tune: Greensleeves, Composer: W. Chatterton Dix, 1865

L: But what about Joseph

There is so little that we know about you

Just that you were a simple carpenter
Taking a young wife to make a life of your own
Then she surprised you with the news of a babe
How shocked you must have been.
It was before you'd made her your own.
How could she have deceived you so.

The thoughts of having her shamed
When the angel appeared
Telling you this was God's son
You had been chosen, just as much as your betrothed

The responsibility on your shoulders to provide for him
Teaching him about his heavenly father, or maybe learning instead
Keeping him safe from a frightened king
Sharing your craft and heart with him

Then you just disappear
As we wonder where you went
What your life must have been like
To be the earthly father of the KING

Leagh Matthews

C: To be sung

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.**

Tune: Gloria (French Carol)

The Wise Men

L: A brilliance burning in the heavens a star to point the way,
High up in the night sky, guiding the wise to where He lay.
They trekked from a distant land to the Manger's lighted gloom,
Searching for the 'Christ Child', cradled in that lowly room.

These men of a learned race, paid homage in that place;
Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, to Him of 'Godly Grace'.
As Mary held the child to her she was amazed to see,
People who had travelled far, to meet Him who had to be.

Micah's prophesy fulfilled, each marvelled in his mind;
Here the Babe in swaddling clothes; a 'Saviour' for mankind.
The living 'Lamb of God' foretold in scriptures of the past,
A sacrifice for sins of man; His role already cast.

The power of God was all around, Peace on Earth to bring;
A host of Angels all around, hailed the new-born King.

Monty Alexander

C: To be sung

**We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.**

***O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.***

**Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies.**

John H Hopkins (1857)

L: And now all these years later, I wonder what all the fuss was about
A tiny babe in a manger, surrounded by cattle and hay
With people in attendance, only a small turnout.
Until I realise that its meaning is in its silence,
Its truth lies in its power-

In Zachariah's prayers,
In Elizabeth's hope
In John's perseverance,
In Mary's faith,
In Joseph's obedience,
In the Angels' happiness
In the Shepherds' eagerness
In the Wise Men's determination
In The little baby's peace

Now I know
It is a foretelling of a nation, the building of a people
In the guiding of a star.

So when you ask me what Christmas is, and how it came to be
I'll tell you this story, of what Christmas means to me.
The Story of Old, the Promise anew

C: To be sung

**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness
and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders of His love.**

Tune: Antioche (Handel), Words: Issac Watts (1719)

(Cong. to stand)

Prayer of Confession

***Kyrie Elieson, Kyrie Elieson, Kyrie Elieson
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy***

P: Lord Jesus Christ, you are loving and merciful. Forgive us for being so captivated by Christmas that we forget that you, the little baby in the manger, grew up as the Lord over all creation. It is sometimes easier to leave you in the manger than it is to reckon with your difficult teachings and fierce challenges. So often we do not follow these teachings, and we do not live up to your challenges.

C: We need your grace and your strength to follow you more closely. This year more than ever, we ask for the magic of Christmas to come alive in our hearts, for the spirit of Christmas to wash over our hearts. In these times of war, uncertainty and doubt, help us to be beacons of your light, love and life so that Christmas becomes an act and not merely a feeling. Amen.

***Kyrie Elieson, Kyrie Elieson, Kyrie Elieson
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy***

Gospel Reading

P: †Peace be with you all.

C: May the Lord make us all worthy to listen to His Word.

P: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which proclaims life and salvation to the world as recorded by **Evangelist Luke**

C: Blessed is He that has come and will come again. Praise to the Father who sent him for our Salvation. May His blessings be ever upon us.

P: In the days of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, the Word of life, God incarnate of the blessed Virgin Mary, it happened in this way.

C: So, we believe and affirm. **Luke 1:57-66**

(After reading the Gospel, the priest says,†'Peace be with you all')

C: We thank you, Lord, that you have given us your gospel which is indeed the light of the world, that we may be drawn closer to you through the living words from your gospel which we have now heard.

The Nicene Creed

P: We believe in the one true God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

C: We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all world; Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He was crucified† also for us in the days of Pontius Pilate; suffered and died and was buried. The third day He rose again, by His Father's holy will, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead and of His kingdom there will be no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets and the apostles. We believe in one Holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the new life of the world to come. Amen.

(Cong. to be seated)

Birthday, Wedding Anniversary and Thanksgiving

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King:
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King"*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus, our Immanuel here.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give them second birth.
Tune: MENDELSSOHN, Author: Charles Wesley (1739)

Announcements

Offertory

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!
Tune: ST. LOUIS, Author: Phillips Brooks (1868)

MESSAGE

(Cong. to stand)

Closing Prayer

P: Gracious, loving and merciful God, during this Christmas Season, as the light of your Word penetrates our hearts, as we are reminded of the gift of life and faith, as the glories of the heavenly hosts are echoed in our church, we open ourselves up to your Spirit and give you thanks.

C: Draw us close to our Savior, Messiah and King as we bring not Gold, Myrrh or Frankincense but the gift of our lives the only offering we can bring.

Let us go from this place proclaiming that we have seen the glory of God, believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness,

which no power can ever overcome. Amen.

Benediction

P: O God, you have caused that holy night
to shine with the brightness of the true Light:
Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth,
may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven;
where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns,
one God, in glory everlasting.
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Doxology and Kiss of Peace

*Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills, and ev'rywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. [Refrain]

Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn

African American Spiritual, John Work Jr 1906

