



The story of Christmas as told
through poems and carols

A Morning Christmas Carol Service

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P: Loving Lord, as we gather here this morning, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. 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 16:1-5

Advent: The story told through poems and carols

L: Mary

We know the scene: the room, variously furnished,
almost always a lectern, a book; always the tall lily.

Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings,
the angelic ambassador, standing or hovering,
whom she acknowledges, a guest.

But we are told of meek obedience. No one mentions courage.

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 The engendering Spirit
did not enter her without consent.

God waited.

She was free to accept or to refuse, choice
integral to humanness.

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.

A simple, 'How can this be?'
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel's reply,
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.
This was the moment no one speaks of,
when she could still refuse.
A breath unbreathed,
Spirit, suspended, waiting.

She did not cry, 'I cannot. I am not worthy,'
Nor, 'I have not the strength.'
She did not submit with gritted teeth,
raging, coerced.
Bravest of all humans,
consent illumined her.
The room filled with its light,
the lily glowed in it,
and the iridescent wings.

Consent, courage unparalleled,
opened her utterly.

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 and Elizabeth

Here is a meeting made of hidden joys
Of lightnings cloistered in a narrow place

From quiet hearts the sudden flame of praise
And in the womb the quickening kick of grace.
Two women on the very edge of things
Unnoticed and unknown to men of power
But in their flesh the hidden Spirit sings
And in their lives the buds of blessing flower.
And Mary stands with all we call 'too young',
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime'
They sing today for all the great unsung
Women who turned eternity to time
Favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth
Prophets who bring the best in us to birth.

Malcolm Guite

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: Joseph

Who has not considered Mary And who her praise would dim,
But what of humble Joseph Is there no song for him?
If Joseph had not driven straight nails through honest wood
If Joseph had not cherished His Mary as he should;
If Joseph had not proved him A sire both kind and wise
Would he have drawn with favor The Child's all-probing eyes?
Would Christ have prayed, 'Our Father' Or cried that name in death
Unless he first had honored Joseph of Nazareth?

Luci Shaw

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.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,**

And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

Music: Martin Luther

L: The Angels

An urgency lingered in the cold evening air,
A nervous hastiness, an angelic rush of care.
It was to be the greatest celestial show,
The preparations had begun aeons ago.

Birthed in the depths of the galaxies,
The tune strung across time's fantasies.
Composed on the faith and hope of prophets,
With harp, lyre, cymbals, voice and trumpets.

Sopranos tuned to the songs of the breeze,
As Altos flowed with the wind in the trees.
With the rivers' rise and flow the Tenors sing,
The Bass from heaven's depth a beat they bring.

Which celestial prince will with them rejoice?
Which glorious palace will echo their voice?
The galactic sea was to be present in full glory,
With blasts of lightning and thunder roaring.

But, but, they were to sing for ordinary shepherds,
And a stable with animals and people unheard.
What? A shriek, a murmur, voices grumble,
Is this why we really took all the trouble?

But when the clouds finally parted,
Over Bethlehem, their doubts departed.
The most magnificent star blazed in the skies,
With the dance of a billion fireflies.

The great lights danced, the angels sang,
With true heart, while celestial bells rang.
That day life birthed again to lie in a tiny cradle,
And the past and future met in that lowly stable.

C: To be sung

**Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.**

***Gloria in excelsis Deo.*
*Gloria in excelsis Deo.***

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?**

Tune: Gloria (French Carol)

L: THE SHEPHERD

I do not think I'm likely to forget
The brilliance of the star that blazed that night,
And in my ear the song's resounding yet
Of that celestial choir whose voices bright.

With hope and promise filled the shining air;
Rang from the nestling hills, rang from the earth
Where slept our flocks that night, all unaware
These voices heralded a Saviour's birth.

We went into the stable where He lay
And my poor gift of love placed at His feet.
He smiled on me. The place grew bright as day,
And there was peace, ineffable and sweet.

John Davenport Womack

C: To be sung

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
an angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.**

**"All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
to those on whom his favor rests
goodwill shall never cease."**

Nahum Tate

L: The Wise Men

The sky was black on that eerie night
We wondered then what was that sight?

There was a star that led the way
Those three men they stopped to pray.

Those Three Wisemen who came to see
A sight to share with you and me.

They each brought gifts to share with You
They saw a babe so brand new.

In the manger on that night
That tiny babe what a sight.

How could we know when we saw His face
He'd be the one to change this place?

We offered frankincense and myrrh
On that night no one did stir.

The eastern light that guided them
Is there until he comes again.

Kathryn Neff Perry

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)

(Cong to stand)

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 Zechariah'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.

After the season is over, we may ask, 'What happens next?'
To heal the broken, To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner, To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people, To make music in our hearts.
The wonder and awe of Christmas is never in the end
But the magic in how it begins.

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)

Psalm 98

P: Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.

C: The Lord has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

P: He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

C: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;
make music to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,
with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

P: Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.

C: Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;
let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

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 have buried you so deeply in our hearts, the world doesn't see you. We have not followed Christ, we have ignored your teachings, we have lived lives of apathy against your love, we have built fences and fortresses to push people away, and we have silenced the screams of those in need.

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 dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.

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: As we come to the close of this service, we ask,
How do we celebrate Christmas?
What gifts suit the King?

C: We think of Mary,
Like her, we can
believe God still delivers miracles,
We think of Joseph,
Like him, we can
follow holy guidance
to show honor, protection, and love.

P: We think of the angels,
armies of Heaven,
Like them, we can
voice grateful praise,
and work to display his glory.

C: We think of the shepherds,
Like them, we can
cherish the Savior
not worldly possessions,

P: We think of the wise men,
Like them, we can
go searching for Jesus,
not to get something we want,
but to give from our own uniqueness.

C: Jesus, Messiah,
promised Savior of the world,
our hope and deliverer,
we celebrate your birth!
Learning from the faithful before us,
we bring offerings from the heart.
Lord, may our gifts for you
grow and grow
until they flow constant
each day we pray.

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 earth and 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