

The Festival
of
Scripture Lessons
&
Carols

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2009

6:00pm

About this Service

THIS service is adapted from the renowned “Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols,” heard every Christmas Eve over BBC radio. It was first drawn up by Archbishop Benson when Bishop of Truro for use in that Cathedral. It was later simplified and modified for use in King’s College Chapel in Cambridge, England, in 1918 by Eric Milner-White, who, at age 34, had just become dean of King’s College.

In this festive setting this antiphonal service of Word and Song with enough narrative throughout engages both the mind and heart. This service is meant to draw its participants into the story of the birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: God’s Son, Israel’s Messiah, and our Savior. We are engaged as we hear the Scriptures read from the entire history of salvation; beginning in the Garden, moving through the Prophets, and culminating in the Gospels. In response to this great dramatic story unfolding before us, we sing some of the Church’s greatest hymnody as we celebrate God’s eternal plan come to fulfillment in the incarnation of his Son.

The Liturgy

Minister—Normal words | Congregation—**Bold words** | *—Stand, if able

Rev. Danny Hyde, Leading | Mrs. Debby Rau, Pianist

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION—*from John Donne's "Holy Sonnets"*

Annunciation

2. *Salvation to all that will is nigh;*

That All, which always is all everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo ! faithful Virgin, yields Himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb ; and though He there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet He'll wear,
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres time was created thou
Wast in His mind, who is thy Son, and Brother;
Whom thou conceivest, conceived ; yea, thou art now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother,
Thou hast light in dark, and shutt'st in little room
Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb.

Nativity

3. *Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb,*

Now leaves His well-beloved imprisonment.
There he hath made himself to his intent
Weak enough, now into our world to come.
But O ! for thee, for Him, hath th' inn no room?
Yet lay Him in this stall, and from th' orient,
Stars, and wise men will travel to prevent
The effects of Herod's jealous general doom.
See'st thou, my soul, with thy faith's eye, how He
Which fills all place, yet none holds Him, doth lie?
Was not His pity towards thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pitied by thee?
Kiss Him, and with Him into Egypt go,
With His kind mother, who partakes thy woe.

CALL TO WORSHIP—Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

*PRAYER OF INVOCATION—Proposed Psalter Hymnal

Merciful Father, you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son. He who was rich for ourselves became poor, the eternal Word made flesh, a great Light shining in the darkness. Only because of your Word and Spirit have we seen that Light and been drawn into its brightness. Give us the grace humbly and joyfully to receive your Son even as the shepherds and princes who welcomed him, and to look no further for our redemption than to this child lying in a manger. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

*GOD’S GREETING—Revelation 1:4–5

*OPENING CAROL—*Angels, from the Realms of Glory* (340)

The Old Testament Prophecies of the Coming of Christ

THE FIRST LESSON—Genesis 3:8–15

¶ *After the lesson the following response is said:*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

CAROL—*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* (stanzas 4–5)

**Come, Desire of nations, come, fix in us Thy humble home;
Rise, the woman’s conqu’ring Seed, bruise in us the serpent’s head.
Now display Thy saving power, ruined nature now restore;
Now in mystic union join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
*Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”***

**Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface, stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above, reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain, Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart, formed in each believing heart.
*Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”***

THE SECOND LESSON—Genesis 22:15–18

¶ *After the lesson the following response is said:*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

CAROL—*Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus* (335)

THE THIRD LESSON—Isaiah 7:10–14

¶ *After the lesson the following response is said:*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

CAROL—*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (331:1–4)

THE FOURTH LESSON—Isaiah 9:2–7

¶ *After the lesson the following response is said:*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

CAROL—*Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light* (344)

THE FIFTH LESSON—Micah 5:2–5a

¶ *After the lesson the following response is said:*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

CAROL—*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**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.**

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!**

**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.**

The New Testament Fulfillment of the Coming of Christ

THE SIXTH LESSON—Luke 1:26–38

¶ *After the lesson, the following response is said:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

CANTICLE—*My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord* (332)

THE SEVENTH LESSON—Luke 2:1–7

¶ *After the lesson, the following response is said:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

CAROL—*Joy to the World* (337)

THE EIGHTH LESSON—Luke 2:8–16

¶ *After the lesson, the following response is said:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

CAROL—*While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night* (338 to the tune of 490)

THE NINTH LESSON—Matthew 2:1–12

¶ *After the lesson, the following response is said:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

CAROL—*O Come, All Ye Faithful* (341)

THE TENTH LESSON—John 1:1–14

¶ *After the lesson, the following response is said:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

CAROL—*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* (339)

PRAYER—Liturgy of Heidelberg, 1563

ETERNAL, and Almighty God, we give you most hearty thanks, that in your great love, you graciously pitied us, who were doomed to eternal death for our sins, and ordained your only begotten Son, before the foundation of the world was laid, to be our Mediator, Atonement, and Savior; that he was promised unto our first parents in paradise, after their deplorable fall, and at the appointed time was sent into the world, that he assumed our flesh and blood, became our Brother, and in all things like unto, sin excepted. We praise you, that by his death he destroyed him who had the power of death, the Devil, and delivered us, who must otherwise have spent our while life in bondage to the fear of death, from the kingdom of Satan and darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of light and eternal happiness. We heartily beseech you to fill us with your grace, that we may rightly know this your love and mercy, and Jesus Christ your Son, whom you have made unto us for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and so love and honor him, as wholly to surrender ourselves up unto him, to confide in him, and esteem everything in the world as dross and dung, for the Excellency of the knowledge of Jesus

Christ. And may we cling unto this Savior with true faith, who forgives all our sins, and heals all our diseases, that we may rejoice in all the tribulations of this life, and sing with the heavenly host: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, and finally attain unto the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. We entreat you also for all the governments of the world. Grant unto our Rulers grace and peace, that they govern those placed under them in your fear, and with your approbation, that righteousness may be promoted, and iniquity be checked and punished, that we may fulfill our days in quietness and peace, as becomes Christians. Confirm all weak and disconsolate spirits, and send down upon us your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to pray:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is 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 and the power and glory forever. Amen.

OFFERING

*CAROL—*Silent Night! Holy Night!* (342)

*BENEDICTION—2 Corinthians 13:14