

Stars Tell the Story

Worship Led by the Children

by Pastor Donald Neidigk

As We Gather

When you look up at the stars on a clear night, what do you see, an opportunity to make a wish, a reason to praise the Creator, a reminder of a romantic moment? In the Bible, the stars are powerful metaphors of the redemption story. The stars speak of the original goodness of creation, the challenge of Satan to God's rule, the future children of Abraham, Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem, and His coming reign in glory. Today with the help of our children, "The Stars Tell the Story."

We Prepare Our Hearts to Worship

Invocation and Opening Sentences

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

C **The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him—**

P the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

C **the Spirit of counsel and of power,**

P the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—

C **and He will delight in the fear of the Lord.**

P The wolf will live with the lamb,

C **the leopard will lie down with the goat,**

P the calf and the lion and the yearling together;

C **and a little child will lead them.**

Processional Hymn ... O Come, All Ye Faithful (Congregation)

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold Him born the King of angels:

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation.

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God in the highest:

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Confession and Absolution

P Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." In childlike faith, let us confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ, to grant us forgiveness and grace.

(Silence for personal reflection)

P Lord God, I confess to you,

C **that I have not had childlike faith. A little child believes all that is said about You. But I have doubted Your love and questioned Your ways. Indeed, far from having the faith of a child, I have stood in the way of children who would come to You. I have considered myself more important than others. I have been a poor example of godliness to children who look up to me. But I**

beg that You would forgive my sins and by Your Word and Spirit, change my thoughts, words and actions that they might be pleasing to You and edifying to everyone, from small to great.

P I have good news for you! The same Jesus Christ who loves little children and bids them come to Him loves you as well. The Child Jesus, whose birth the children help us celebrate, came to die for all your sins, bringing you forgiveness and righteousness as gifts of faith. In His name, I, a called and ordained servant of Christ, announce the forgiveness of all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Hymn Response ... O, Come, O, Come, Emmanuel
(Congregation)

**O come, O come Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Salutation

P The Lord be with you.

C **And with your spirit.**

Prayer of the Day

P Let us pray. Father in heaven, in this dark world of sin and death, You shined the light of Your love on all of us through Your Son Jesus Christ. May we reflect the light of His love and forgiveness as stars shining in a dark sky, that all the world might see and come to Bethlehem to worship Him; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Opening Hymn ... I Love to Tell the Story
(Congregation)

**I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.
I love to tell the story; I'll sing his theme in glory,
And tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

**I love to tell the story, how pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.
I love to tell the story; I'll sing his theme in glory
And tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

Part One: The Creation Star

Hymn ... O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
(Congregation)

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Part Two: The Fallen Star

Hymn ... O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

(Congregation)

**O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree
Free them from Satan's tyranny
From depths of hell your people save
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.**

Part Three: Abraham's Star

Hymn ... O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

(Congregation)

**O come, O God, who in the night
Showed Abraham your heav'nly might:
Descendents numbering as the stars—
A Seed with world-redeeming pow'rs.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.**

Part Four: The LIGHT Is Born

Hymn ... Away in a Manger

(Children)

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.

The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

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 take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

The Angels

Hymn ... Angels We Have Heard on High

(Children)

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?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

The Shepherds

Hymn ... O Little Town of Bethlehem

(Children & Congregation)

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 wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the 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.

**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;
Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!**

Part Five: The Bethlehem Star

Hymn ... As With Gladness Men of Old

(Congregation)

**As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led by Thee.**

**As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to Thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before Thee,
whom heav'n and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet ever seek Thy mercy seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare at Thy cradle, rude and bare.
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heav'nly King.
In the heav'nly country bright need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing alleluias to our King.**

The Wise Men and King Herod

Hymn ... Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

(Children)

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Part Six: The Morning Star

The Offering is gathered while children sing concluding hymn.

Concluding Hymn ... Joy to the World

(Children)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its King;
Let ev'ry 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.

Offering Prayer

P Gracious God, through your Son Jesus Christ, You paid the debt of our sins and lavished upon us Your gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. As we celebrate the dawning of Christ in our hearts and the riches of your grace, accept these gifts of thanksgiving that we bring. In His name we pray.

C **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

(Lighting of the candles.)

Benediction

P Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,
C **and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.**

P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.

C **Amen.**

Recessional ... Silent Night

(Children & Congregation)

**Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.**

Stille Nacht, heilige Nache! Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das heilige Elternpaar, Das im Stalle zu Bethlehem war,
Bei dem himmlischen Kind, Bei dem himmlischen Kind.

**Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.**

