

***The Case for Christmas***  
**Advent Worship Series - Week 4**  
***What Secret is God Keeping with This Child?***

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements & Offering**

<b>SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus,</b>	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#114 – Light of the world</b> <b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful</b> <b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b>	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
<b>SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say</b>	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings</b>	HC-61	HCD5-T11
<b>HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful</b>	HC-121	HCD11–T11
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b>	HC-141	HCD13 –T11
<b>HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns</b>	HC-241	HCD23-T11

***THE EVIDENCE***

**Call to Worship**

The Magi traveled by night when this star was the most visible. They traveled in search of a king, not knowing where it would lead or what would happen to them en route or how their lives would be changed afterward.

By the time the wise men reach the outskirts of Jerusalem, the star has melted into the

morning sky. Surely the holy city would be bustling with activity after the arrival of its king. Shops would be closed. People would be celebrating. Thank offerings would be overflowing the temple.

But as the caravan threads through the outer gates, it’s just another day in Jerusalem. Shopkeepers are minding their stores. Women are picking over produce. Priests are attending to the daily rigors of religion.

The only thing that creates a pause in the morning routine is the presence of these foreigners.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?”

Heads turn at the sound of their language coming to them in a thick Persian accent. The crowd looks at them quizzically. A stern-looking man steps forward. “Careful of talk like that around here.”

The wise man turns to a rabbi.

“We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

But the rabbi scolds him. “God speaks through Scripture, not through the stars. Your talk is blasphemy, the babble of sorcerers and astrologers.”

Before noon, word reaches the imperial palace. Every step of Herod’s ascent to the throne has been stained with the blood of his rivals. When he hears rumor of still another one, he does everything he can to mask his paranoia. But behind the mask he is troubled.

And all of Jerusalem is troubled with him. (*Moments with the Savior*, page 42-43)

<b>Drama: A Threat to the Throne</b>		
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<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names</b>	HC-82	HCD7-T12
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20

<p><b>HC#168 – Offering - "Christmas Offering"</b></p> <p>[<i>Christmas words on vs. I</i>]</p> <p>Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star  While angels sang to lowly shepherds  Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled  from afar  Hoping to find the Child from Heaven falling  on their knees  They bow before the humble Prince of peace</p> <p>We bring an offering of worship to our King  No one on earth deserves the praises that we  sing  Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're  due  O Lord, I bring an offering to You</p> <p>[<i>Song continues with original words</i>]</p>	<p>HC#168</p>	<p>HCD15-T18</p>
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**Prayer:**

I confess, I go through times when my heart is like Herod’s, when I get tightfisted about holding onto my little kingdom. Forgive me when I get troubled and challenge your right to rule over my life. How much heartache could I have avoided if only I had stepped down from the throne and acknowledged you as the rightful King?

Thankfully, Lord, there are times when my heart seeks you as the wise men did. When I am diligent in searching for you. When I am delighted at any sign pointing the way. When I am down on my knees in your presence. Multiply those times in my life, Lord.

Thank you for the stars and the Scriptures and the many ways you reveal yourself. Give me eyes to see you in the circumstances of my life, ears to hear you in the Scriptures, feet to find you in the Bethlehems of this world, hands to bring you my gifts, knees to bow before you, and a heart overflowing with worship.

Thank you for coming those many years ago when you wobbled into the world as meek and tender as a lamb. Come once more, Lord Jesus, this time as the Lion of Judah, this time to claim your throne. Amen. (*Moments With the Savior*, page 46-47)

**Reading:**

The wise men spend the night in Bethlehem, talking among themselves, trying to understand it all. “Herod in his palace...and the heir to the throne huddled away in the

corner of some tumble-down house? In Bethlehem, of all places. Why here? What secret is God keeping with this child?"

That night an angel visits Joseph. He bolts upright in bed, heart pounding, eyes wide as Roman coins. He shakes Mary awake and tells her the dream.

She throws off her covers and bundles up Jesus while Joseph gathers what little food and personal belongings they have. Thoughts race through his mind as he packs. They have no money to go to Egypt. And what will we do when we get there? How will a foreigner like me find work?

He gathers up the gifts of the Magi—the pouch of gold, the costly frankincense, the precious bottle of myrrh. And suddenly he realizes. God has not only pointed the way but provided a way. (*Moments with the Savior*, page 44-45)

### **Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ**

#### **Candle Lighting:**

**Leader:** At least three prophecies were fulfilled in this account of the birth of the Christ child. He was born in Bethlehem; He would be called out of Egypt; and there would be mourning in the land because of the loss of children. This is too much to be merely coincidental. (*Jesus, Who is He?*, page 184)

**Reader 1** **Prophecy** – “When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11:1)

**Reader 2:** **Fulfillment** - “Arise, take the young Child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” When he arose, he took the young child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:13-15)

**Leader:** **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God.**

**Reader 1:** **Prophecy** - Thus says the Lord: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were no more.” (Jeremiah 31:15)

**Reader 2:** **Fulfillment** – Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. (Matthew 2:16)

**Leader:**        **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets. (Matthew 1:22)**

*[Light the fourth candle]*

<b>HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names</b>	HC-82	HCD7-T12
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**Prayer:**

*[Piano continues to play chorus]*

Jesus, you amaze us—you were present when the earth was spun into orbit and the stars were ordered in the night sky. You designed the awesome workings of our planet and all that live here on it. You shared with your Father in the joy and wonder of creating everything that now exists. And yet when we were lost and fallen, you were willing to take on the frailty of our human nature and become one of us so that we might be saved. We praise and worship you, Immanuel. You are indeed “God with us”! Amen. (*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1293)

## ***HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?***

**Sermon – Part 2 – The Triumph of the Manger**

<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19
<b>HC#186 – When I look into your holiness</b>	HC-186	HCD17-T16
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>SB#102 – Away in a manger, no crib for a bed</b>	TB-497 – Away in a Manger TB- 511 – The Manger Scene	HTD6 –T3 (3 vs.) HTD6-T14 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)

**Benediction**

Lord Jesus, however the events in prophecy play out across the world’s stage, keep the eyes of our spirits fixed upon you. Whatever we may encounter as the final days unfold, we ask you to provide us with peace, patience, loyalty and discernment to remain faithful to you and you alone, until the final Amen is spoken. (*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1671)

<b>Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful</b>	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings</b>	HC-61	HCD5-T11
<b>HC#128 – My Tribute</b>	HC-128	HCD11-T18
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b>	HC-141	HCD13-T11
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b>	HC-149	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus</b>	HC-151	HCD14-T11
<b>SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180</b>	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain</b>	HC-260	HCD24-T20

<b>Week #4</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>A Threat to the Throne</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Scripture:</b>	Matthew 2:1-8
<b>Synopsis:</b>	King Herod and his attendant discuss his plans for the new-born “King of the Jews.”
<b>Characters:</b>	<b>King Herod</b> – ruler of Judea <b>Julius</b> – his attendant
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Biblical dress, if possible, with a robe and crown for Herod. A throne for Herod.
<b>Setting:</b>	Herod is seated on his throne when Julius enters.
<b>Running Time:</b>	2:30 minutes.

- Julius:** [enters] They’ve gone, your Highness.
- Herod:** Good. And they will report back to us once they find [sarcastically] “the king?”
- Julius:** Yes, your Highness.
- Herod:** Good. It’s best that we take care of this matter quickly and quietly before anyone realizes anything has happened.
- Julius:** Do you really think this child could be a threat?
- Herod:** I think everyone could be a threat. And I take any threat to my throne seriously.
- Julius:** But, we’re talking about a child. The Jews themselves didn’t seem to be too concerned about him. Why should we be?
- Herod:** The Jews were just trying to please me. And they knew that I would take care of the matter. Trust me, they don’t want to lose their place either.
- Julius:** Then why don’t they just handle it “internally?”
- Herod:** And risk the public backlash? It’s much easier to have the hated monarch killing babies. I’d get blamed for it anyway. Besides, this child could be more trouble than he seems.

**Julius:** Why do you say that?

**Herod:** Those travelers obviously know something.

**Julius:** They are very wise.

**Herod:** [*gives Julius a dirty look*]

**Julius:** But not as wise as the King.

**Herod:** But they had knowledge of some prophecy. They must've known of this child or they wouldn't have journeyed this far.

**Julius:** So, I ask you again, do you really think this child could be a threat?

**Herod:** It doesn't matter. Any threat, real or imagined, will be gone in a matter of weeks, if not days. And you will see that it is done.

**Julius:** As you wish, your Highness.

**Herod:** Make arrangements to travel to Bethlehem with a brigade of soldiers as soon as we receive word of the child's whereabouts.

**Julius:** As you wish, your Highness.

**Herod:** And make sure the parents are kept silent as well. By any means possible.

**Julius:** It shall be done – quickly and quietly.

**Herod:** I would have it no other way. Soon we will be done with this talk about the “King of the Jews” and we will be able to get back to what matters most. Now, bring me my drink.

**Julius:** As you wish, your Highness. [*exits*]

[*Blackout*]

***The Case for Christmas***  
***What Secret is God Keeping with This Child?***  
**Advent Worship Sermon - Week 4**

**The Triumph of the Manger**

**Scripture:** Luke 2:1-20

**Theme:** Peace and joy are the gifts he offers at great cost to himself.

**Introduction:**

This is such a busy time of year! There is excitement in the air as people try to get all of the last-minute things done. Gifts have been purchased. Decorating has been done. Baking and preparations of all sorts have been made.

As you come to this point in another season of celebrating the birth of Christ, do you ever wonder why we do this? What is it all about?

Perhaps you have sat down and gone through your list of people for whom you need a gift. Often the more times you do that, the more names you think you must add to the list. Then there are all the service people you want to remember, like your postal carrier, your hair stylist and others who serve you regularly.

For some people there is the need to try to guess how much the other person is going to spend on you, in order that you know how much to spend on them. It would be terrible if your gift looked 'cheap' compared to the one you receive from them. So the game goes on with gift giving and receiving. Is this what it is all about?

Over the past few weeks we have been realizing again that the Advent season and Christmas is much more than our cultural celebration of it. More than the celebrating is the reality of the coming of the Messiah once in history to make a change in our world. Jesus was born into a world of chaos—a world faced with hatred and fears. At his birth came a promise of peace.

But in our world of chaos, where is the peace and joy that Jesus came to bring?

We have read today the story of the coming of the babe in the little village of Bethlehem and the message that was given by the angels. The shepherds were told where they might find him who was to be the Savior of the world. The angels proclaimed peace.

*Luke 2:13, 14—*

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

The Magi, too, had come seeking a new king. One who would be ruler over Israel. Perhaps the one who would bring a new peace?

### **What is this Peace?**

Peace is often used to mean the absence of war or strife. Surely peace means more than just the lack of strife; surely there is a positive sense of regard as well. The Oxford Dictionary says peace is ‘a quiet tranquility, a mental calm; serenity, or the freedom from, or the cessation of, war.’

The peace that Jesus came to give is not the peace that this world understands.

*John 14:25-27—*

*“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

Peace carries with it a sense of confidence and contentment. The peace that the angels proclaimed was not necessarily the cessation of war. They were not proclaiming peace with the Roman authorities and the freedom of Israel from foreign rule. Jesus came proclaiming a new message: Proclaiming a New Kingdom.

### **Christian Hope**

As kingdom people we have a confidence and a trust in something beyond ourselves. There is a sense of contentment in the midst of turmoil. We have a hope and peace that is beyond comprehension to many non-believers.

*Romans 5:1-2—*

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Hope is not naïve but realistic as it deals with things of this world, for it holds a different value base. This world is passing away and the eternal things are much bigger than the things valued in this world.

Christians hope in the final victory of the creative, self-expanding, community-forming love of the triune God. Hence they hope in the triumph of the love of God over all hate, of the justice of God over all injustice, of God’s freedom over all bondage, of community with God over all separation, of life with God over the power of death. Yet this hope becomes indistinguishable from cheap optimism if it fails to recognize and to share the present agony of the world. (Migliore, 238)

This hope in God’s final triumph involves a variety of expectations, but among them is triumph over personal sin, a triumph over injustice in society and some sort of cosmic restoration as well.

### **Personal Hope**

We celebrate Christ as the baby born in the manger and we look to his life as an example to live by. Here is the example of true humanness. Christ came to show us what life can

and should be. He gave us principles and guidelines by which we can live true and valid lives. But he knew our weaknesses. The final triumph for us will be the overcoming of the sin nature and the restoration of our personhood as it would have been prior to the Fall. In this life we will be tempted and we will struggle to live lives pleasing to God. But our hope is in the future when we will be like him.

### **Corporate Hope**

Jesus knew we would need the fellowship of other believers. He formed the Church around the concept of a people held together by love. In community we discover our gifts and the possibility of living to please God in all things. Alone we may be very godly, but in community and in the company of others is where we actually display patience and kindness and the other fruit of the spirit. It is impossible to demonstrate growth while living in isolation. It is in community that we grow. Alone we accomplish little, but in community we find real meaning.

In the corporate sense as well, we look for social justice and a righteousness that permeates all of life. Hope looks for a king who will rule in truth and justice over all of creation. God may at times seem very distant, and the waiting extreme, but Christian hope hangs on with anticipation. Poverty and injustice of every sort will be done away when the King returns to rule in peace.

### **Cosmic Hope**

A very real part of Christian hope has to do with what we may at times refer to as the natural order of things: When natural disasters will cease, when sickness and disease will be no more and creation itself will be restored to its quality prior to the Fall. JB Phillips says that “all of creation stands on tiptoe” awaiting the coming King.

The peace that Jesus brings has been established, in a sense, already, for as Romans says, we have “peace with God” but the hope of the Christian still anticipates a further reality of peace.

### **Confidence as a quality of God’s Peace**

Here and now we should know a peace of mind. The promised peace, particularly in the New Testament, includes the sense of: the sustaining power of God, so that we need not fear losing our hold on God. God will guard our minds and keep us close to him.

*Philippians 4:7—*

*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Of course there is a responsibility on us to guard what things we put into our minds. You cannot put in garbage and expect God to keep cleaning it up. We are to think on things that are good and pure and pleasing to God. We are to guard our minds then in order to know his peace.

*Romans 8:6—*

*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

### **Fearlessness as a quality of God's Peace**

Fear is a torment in our world. The media and the news broadcasts alone leave us fearful. We hear of so many things. We can become fearful of every stranger and every new situation and, if not kept in check, this fear can make us prisoners in our own homes. But God gives us a peace, as Jesus says:

*John 16:33—*

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

In a world that is in chaos, our lives as Christians ought to be a place of calm and stability—for we know who holds this world in his hands. There is nothing outside of the control of our God. If we should lose our life – do we not believe in a resurrection? I wonder why it is that as Christians we often live as if this is all there is. “Take heart,” says Jesus, “I have overcome the world.” This should help us be at peace.

### **Trust in the Family as a quality of God's Peace**

The Peace of God will bind us together in the fellowship as we talked about last week. The communion of fellow believers should give us a sense of peace even as we strive to live at peace with each other.

In large families you often see the squabbles between siblings, but when an outsider comes along to do harm to any family member, the family sticks together. The family of God, too, may suffer some sibling rivalry at times, but if we remember where the real battle exists we might be encouraged knowing our family will be there. We are members together in Christ's family.

*Colossians 3:15—*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*Romans 14:17,19—*

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

### **Conclusion**

We come to the triumph of the manger, then, as we celebrate the birth of Christ—for the law and the Old Testament were inadequate to lead us into real peace. He came as a humble servant in order that we may have peace with God, and in order that we might live at peace.

*2 Corinthians 13:11—*

*Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

In the meantime, Christ has left us the promised Holy Spirit. He has also left us many instructions on how to live. He has also encouraged us (in the prayer he taught his

disciples) that we should pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.

*Matthew 6:10—*

*“Your kingdom come, your will be done.”*

Revelation 21:1-4 gives a picture of the consummation and the final triumph of God with the establishment of the New Kingdom in its fullness. Herein lays some source of peace:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

*Luke 2:20 says,*

*The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

Just as the shepherds and the wise men came to the little village of Bethlehem with expectations of this king, what are you expecting and what do you long for in your life today? The greatest gift of Christmas is the peace Jesus longs to give. Not a peace that the world can give or even understand, but a peace that will sustain you in all that life will bring your way.

Can we go out from here today glorifying God, for we have found him and experienced him and have seen his peace, just as it had been told? His peace is our peace and we are ministers of peace in a world of chaos.

May we each go out as ambassadors of peace and joy to a hurting world.