

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
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!

Leader:

Blessing

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing ...

CRIB SERVICE 20.12.20



Storyteller 1: We are ready. The waiting is over. This morning is like no other morning. This morning is a time to sing and dream our way to Bethlehem, a little town in the hill country, 10 miles south of Jerusalem.

In the centre of the town is a small inn. On the night of our story it is overflowing with people seeking a place to sleep and something to eat.

Behind the inn is a dark stable. A donkey chews barley and a cow leans and rests. All is quiet and still.

Storyteller 2: As night gathers, two travellers slowly come up the road. The young woman is about to become a mother. She is walking with her husband. They are Mary and Joseph from Nazareth. They have walked for six days to come to this town where King David was born so long ago.

They have come, like so many others, because the Roman Emperor wants to count each one so that he can take their money as a tax.

But it's late and Mary is weary. Where will they sleep? There is no room at the inn, but the innkeeper lets them sleep in his stable with the animals.

Mary and Joseph are placed in the stable, as we sing:

**IT WAS ON A STARRY NIGHT,
When the hills were bright
Earth lay sleeping,
sleeping calm and still
Then in a cattle shed
In a manger bed
A boy was born,
King of all the world**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen**

**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.**

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

**Myrrh is mine; it's bitter perfume;
Breathes a life of gathering gloom: —
Sorrowing, sighing, Bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.**

***O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
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.
Heav'n sings, Hallelujah;
Hallelujah the earth replies.**

Storyteller 2: The kings' journey ends in a new kind of king. Their restlessness rests at last. They fall to their knees and give him bright gold, sweet-smelling frankincense and bitter myrrh – brought so far with so much love.

Storyteller 1: So now we have come, following the star to find God with us. We come, as people have come through the ages, to bring our gifts to the Christ Child – God with us.

So lets us pray and bring to God our gifts.

**Father God,
Thank you for the gift of Jesus,
that first Christmas,
to be our friend and saviour.
Receive the gifts we offer,
all that we can bring,
our humble, thankful hearts.
Amen**

Talk

Prayers

***And all the angels sang for Him
The bells of heaven rang for Him
For a boy was born,
King of all the world
And all the angels sang for Him
The bells of heaven rang for Him
For a boy was born,
King of all the world***

**Soon the shepherds came that way
Where the baby lay
And were kneeling, kneeling by His side
And their hearts believed again
For the peace of men
For a boy was born,
King of all the world**

Storyteller 1: Stars brighten slowly in the sky. All creation holds its breath. Suddenly from the stable comes the cry of a new-born baby. Mary wraps the child gently in a blanket and lays him in the feed box which Joseph has filled with straw.

**AWAY IN A MANGER,
no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus
laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the bright 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 You, Lord Jesus!
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus:
I ask You to stay
Close by me forever
and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children
in Your tender care,
And fit us for heaven
to live with You there.**

Storyteller 2:

In the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds are watching their shadowy sheep. All at once, the dark is lost in light, and in the midst of the light is something even brighter – the faces of angels.

The fearful shepherds hear music in the sky and a voice says to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of a great joy – a joy to be shared by all people. Today in the city of David, a Saviour is born. He is Christ the Lord.’

More angels appear – a whole heavenly host – praising God and singing, ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people everywhere.’

The shepherds run with joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the barn behind the inn. They find the Holy Family there, and creep forward, overwhelmed with mystery, to find Nativity itself in the centre of all that love.

***The angels and shepherds are placed
as we sing:***

**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**

**Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!**

**Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Saviour is born!**

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

Storyteller 1:

Three camels plod up the road to Bethlehem. They have come from the East, far beyond the Arabian Desert, perhaps even as far as the Caspian Sea! The camels carry the kings, the wise ones, the Magi. They are following the wild star, the destiny they had never seen before. And they are following it wherever it goes to find the king its shining shows them.

The Kings are placed as We Three Kings is 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 Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading, Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.***

**Born a King on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, Ceasing never
Over us all to reign.**

**Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a Deity nigh:
Prayer and praising, All men raising,
Worship Him, God on high.**