



CAROLS EVENING

2024

Prelude:

Welcome:

Psalm 96

M: Sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth!

C: Sing to the LORD! Bless His name! Proclaim His salvation from day to day!

M: Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous deeds among all the peoples!

C: For the LORD is great and very worthy of praise. He should be feared above all gods.

M: For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD has made the heavens.

C: Splendour and majesty are before Him. Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

M: Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

C: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name! Present an offering, and come into His courts!

M: Worship the LORD in holy splendour! Tremble before Him, all the earth!

C: Say among the nations: “The LORD reigns. The world also is firmly established. It will not be moved. He will judge the peoples justly!”

M: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! Let the sea and all that fills it roar!

C: Let the fields and everything in them be jubilant! Then all the trees of the forest will shout with joy before the LORD. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth.

M&C: Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for evermore. Amen.

PRAYER: Most merciful God, You gave Your eternal Word to become incarnate of the pure Virgin. Grant Your people grace to put away fleshly lusts, that they may be ready for Your visitation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL # 34

1

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!

2

God of God,
Light of light,
Lo, He abhors not the virgin's
womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

3

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
Glory to God
In the highest:

4

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born on Christmas morning,
Jesus, to Thee be glory given,
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing;

READING: The pagan and unbelieving world around us shines gushy superficial Christmas cheer all over the real reason for the season. The pagan and unbelieving world really cares nothing for the spiritual aspects of Christmas, and we must be careful not to become easily ensnared in this mentality. That is why we so desperately need the offence and message of John the Baptist.

And what is John's non-fickle and non-man-pleasing stern message?

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! After me comes He who is mightier than I!" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:7).

This message of John the Baptist to repent had been spoken by many Old Testament prophets like Elijah. Indeed, the message of repentance—the Law of God—has also come forth in the New Testament and since then through thousands of mouths and voices. In other words, John the Baptist needed to come before Jesus, repentance needs to happen before faith, Law needs to be preached before the Gospel, and Advent needs to come before Christmas.

HARK, A HERALD VOICE IS CALLING ## 1

1
Hark, a herald voice is calling!
“Christ is nigh,” it seems to say;
Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day.”

2
Wakened by the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.

3
Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from
heaven.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all to be forgiven.

4
So when next He comes with glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
May He then as our Defender
On the clouds of heaven appear.

5
Honour, glory, might, and blessing,
To the Father and the Son,
With the everlasting Spirit,
While eternal ages run.

ON JORDAN’S BANK THE BAPTIST’S CRY # 13

1
On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings.

2
Then cleansed be every heart from
sin;
Make straight the way for God
within;
Prepare we in our hearts a home,
Where such a mighty guest may
come.



3

For Thou art our salvation, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away
Like flowers that wither and decay.

4

To heal the sick stretch out Thy
hand,
And bid the fallen sinner stand;
Shine forth, and let Thy light restore
Earth's own true loveliness once
more.

5

All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom with the Father we adore,
And Holy Spirit evermore.

READING: Luke 1:26-38: *“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”*

The angel Gabriel came to Mary to foretell the coming of the Messiah. Yes, Gabriel comes bearing a message for this insignificant girl who is living in a town called Nazareth. He comes to this young virgin with a profound message that she is favoured by God, for God will work through her to bring forth the Messiah of the entire world.

Needless to say, Mary becomes greatly perplexed by the message and the messenger, and this is entirely understandable since this is a very common response of people who come into contact with mighty angels.

To intensify things a bit more, as if encountering an angel of God was not already extreme enough, Gabriel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will work an absolute miracle in her to bring forth the Messiah. The eternal Son of God will come down from heaven to take up bodily residency in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

SAVIOUR OF THE NATIONS, COME #332 LSB

1
Saviour of the nations, come,
Virgin's Son, make here your home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.

2
Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

3
Here a maid was found with child,
Yet remained a virgin mild.
In her womb this truth was shown:
God was there upon His throne.

4
Then stepped forth the Lord of all
From His pure and kingly hall;
God of God, yet fully man,
His heroic course began.

5
God the Father was His source,
Back to God He ran His course.
In to hell His road went down,
Back then to His throne and crown.

6
For You are the Father's Son
Who in flesh the vict'ry won.
By Your mighty pow'r make whole
All our ills of flesh and soul.

7
From the manger newborn light
Shines in glory through the night.
Darkness there no more resides;
In this light faith now abides.

8
Glory to the Father sing,
Glory to the Son, our King,
Glory to the Spirit be
Now and through eternity.

READING: Luke 2:1-7: *“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and*

lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

It is really tough to romanticise the birth of Jesus. You see, Jesus was not born into some sterile hospital environment but a manger. A manger was an open box that held scraps of food to be eaten by common farm animals.

Mary and Joseph most likely cleaned the manger the best they could and padded it to make a comfy little bed for Jesus. However, in the end, the fact remains that the Son of God was not laid in a royal cradle but in a feeding trough. The Son of God—the Creator of the universe—was laid on display in a common feed trough that was meant for horses, cattle, and donkeys.

But why was this the case?

Well, as we know, there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn, so necessity demanded that they spend the night where animals rest. However, we must be careful not to think that this was a fluke—some random misfortune as if Joseph said, “Sorry, Mary, all the inns are full. We have bad luck tonight; not even an overpriced hotel suite is available. Looks like we get to go to the barn tonight.”

It is imperative to understand that laying the newborn child in a manger was planned. Remember that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem due to a census being ordered by Caesar Augustus. In other words, God arranged for the most powerful ruler in the world at that time to influence Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem—the place in which the Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah would be born. And so, if God bends the arm of the Roman Empire to get one man and one pregnant woman to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, God could have most certainly made room for them in the inn, but instead, the Son of God is born in a feeding trough. Jesus becomes the least and servant of all in God’s kingdom. The point is that the birth of Jesus in that manger is exactly where it was meant to be. The plan all along was for the Son of God to be born and laid in a manger.

AWAY IN A MANGER, NO CRIB FOR A BED #365 LSB

(Children) 1 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.

(Congregation) 2 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.

(Congregation) 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
 Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
 And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM #361 LSB

1
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.

2
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!

3
How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
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.

4
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!

READING: Luke 2:8-20: “*And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.* ⁹ *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.* ¹⁰ *And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* ¹¹ *For unto you is born this day in the city*

of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”* ¹³ *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,* ¹⁴ *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

¹⁵ *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”* ¹⁶ *And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.* ¹⁷ *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.* ¹⁸ *And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.* ¹⁹ *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* ²⁰ *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”*

God did not announce the birth of the Christ Child to the great theologians of the synagogues or the prestigious priests in the temple. Instead, the Lord does the exact opposite. The announcement of Jesus’ birth is given to the least likely people in the land - to shepherds out in a field.

These shepherds were nothing special. They were a rough bunch, working a manual labour job with little pay. They were most likely known for being religiously inconsistent with their piety. However, God’s Word came to these rough shepherds through His messenger, an angel of the Lord.

When the shepherds see the angel, they are scared stiff. The brilliance of light signalled the glory and presence of God, and the shepherds were filled with fear. But instead of striking the shepherds down with power and might, the angel announced the grand news of Christmas, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

In case we move over this too quickly, we must pause and understand how grand, how powerful, and how magnificent this news is. It makes all the difference in the world. The Son of God was born and is now human. This day in the city of David, the Saviour for all of mankind was born. This Baby is no ordinary baby but is God in human flesh. God coming to mankind! Yes, the Son of God was born, He cried, He became tired, and He would hunger, thirst, bleed, die, and rise. This Baby is the Christ who will suffer, die, and rise from the dead on the third day. This Child is God come in the flesh to do the gritty, bloody, sacrificial work that we cannot do—the work of taking away sin.

WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT #624

1
While shepherds watched their
flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

2
“Fear not,” said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

3
“To you in David’s town this day
Is born of David’s line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

4
“The heavenly babe you there shall
find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing
bands,
And in a manger laid.”

5
Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

6
“All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from heaven to
men
Begin and never cease.”

THE FIRST NOWELL #744

1
The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as
they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their
sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.*

2
And by the light of a shining star
Three wise men came from country
far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it
went:

Chorus



(Ladies) 3
This star drew nigh to the north-
west;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay:
Chorus

(Men) 4
Then entered in those wise men
three
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in His presence
Their gold and myrrh and
frankincense:
Chorus

5
Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
Who has made heaven and earth of nought,
And with His blood mankind has bought:
Chorus

READING: Did you hear this grand Christmas news for you? The angels always knew the love of God; however, in the birth of Christ, the Son of God broke into this deathly world of sin to show and give this very love. Indeed, the angels of heaven always knew the love of God for His creation. However, that Christmas long ago, they witnessed the love of God for His creation as they saw how God fulfilled His promises of old and broke into this deathly dark world. They witnessed how God's love for His creation compelled Him to send His only begotten Son to redeem the children of Adam and Eve. John 3:16 says it best, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*"

ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY #367 LSB

1
Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
*Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the new-born King.*

2
Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the Infant Light:

3
Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star:

4
Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear:

5
All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To th' _eternal Three in One.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING # 33

1
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all you nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim:
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

*Hark! the herald angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

2
Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel:

3
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:

READING: We could summarise Christmas from a heavenly perspective by saying that the story of Christmas is one big descent into darkness, sin, and death for humanity's sake. Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary to come into this dark world. He was born and laid in that manger to live in this world of sin. And He went to that cross to die a death to redeem you and me from the sting of sin—death itself. And so, from the perspective of heaven and the heavenly host of angels, a Child was born in Bethlehem that Christmas night long ago to take away our sin, destroy our death, and bring eternal life to us. Again, from a heavenly perspective, Christmas is one big drop—one big descent—of the Son of God to come to us to make all things right. Through the Child in the Manger, a warring, divided, hate-filled people are forgiven and given peace with God the Father. This is not a mythological story, a pious sentiment, or a fluffy abstract idea—what the angels in heaven witnessed and what they proclaimed at Jesus' birth is the gift of peace for sin-sick humanity.

And so, we sing God is love because He did not leave or abandon us. The love of God did not stay in heaven but descended into sin's darkness.

We sing bliss, endless bliss, because royal splendour came arrayed—heaven has come to us.

We sing peace—the gift of peace—because the sky was torn apart so that light would shine on us to chase away fear and death.

No wonder why the angel said to the shepherds, *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”*

JOY TO THE WORLD #627

1
Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature
sing.

2
Joy to the world! The Saviour
reigns;
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills,
and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings
flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

4

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.

O SING OF CHRIST, WHOSE BIRTH MADE KNOWN #362 LSB

1

O sing of Christ, whose birth made
known
The kindness of the Lord,
Eternal Word made flesh and bone
So we could be restored.
Upon our frail humanity
God's finger chose to trace
The fullness of His deity,
The icon of His grace.

2

What Adam lost, none could reclaim,
And Paradise was barred
Until the second Adam came
To mend what sin had marred.
For when the time was full and right
God sent His only Son;
He came to us as life and light
And our redemption won.

3

He came to that which was His own,
but he was not received;
Yet still through Him God's glory
shone,
And some His name believed.
To these He gave the right to be
The heirs of heav'n above,
Born not of human ancestry
But born of God in love.

4

Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to
dwell
Among us here on earth
As God with us, Emmanuel,
To bring this holy birth.
Though rich, You willingly became
One with our poverty,
That we might share Your wealth and
name
For all eternity!

CLOSE: Merry Christmas! Unto you a Child has been born, His name is Jesus Christ—the One who has descended to you and has taken away your sins. He is great joy for you in this often-joyless world. He is the love that fills the songs of the angels and fills our songs this evening. May the gift of Christmas abide with you this evening and in the weeks to come!

Lord's Prayer and Benediction

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT #629

1
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.

2
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glory streams from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing: Hallelujah!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

3
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.

