

OT. LUCAS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN

CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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Christmas Eve – What a Story – Lutheran Elementary School December 24th, 2023





A Childrens Christmas Service



Text: tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802–1880, alt.; John F. Wade, c. 1711–1786 Tune: John F. Wade, c. 1711–1786, alt. Text and tune: Public domain

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayer

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all his glory in the life to come; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Be seated

Introduction

Narration:

Hadley Enright: It's easy to get lost in a good book. With the words "Once upon a time," our interest sparks and we are compelled to listen. With these familiar words, we anticipate the chance to dream and live happily ever after.

What makes a good book? Drama, excitement, suspense, interesting characters . . . If a story is really good, we'll read it over and over. Sometimes great stories are even made into movies.

Eliana Schepp: Have you read any good books lately? What stories do you love so much that you've read them many times? What book would you guess is the most popular and best-selling of all time? You might guess *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. They may rank pretty high on the best-seller list, but one book that holds the highest spot: the Bible. It's the most sold book of all time—billions of copies—and it's been translated into hundreds of languages. The Bible records many events and parables spanning more than a thousand years.

Mari Hulse: The life of Jesus, recorded in the Bible, is read again and again. In fact, it has been called the greatest story ever told. And it's more than just a story—it's fact! It really happened, with all of its real-life twists and turns. At this Christmastime, we want to look at a specific part of Jesus' life—his birth. It is full of dreams, scandal, and desperation. Let's take a closer look at the elements of this beloved account: its setting, plot, characters, conflict, and theme. And as we do, may we be moved to say by faith, "What a story!"

Peace Came to Earth

Sixers Singers

 Peace came to earth at last that chosen night when angels clove the sky with song and light and God embodied love and sheathed his might—

Who could but gasp: Immanuel! Who could but sing: Immanuel!

2. And who could be the same for having held the infant in their arms and later felt the wounded hands and side, all doubts dispelled—

Who could but sigh: Immanuel! Who could but shout: Immanuel!

3. You show the Father none has ever seen, in flesh and blood you bore our griefs and pain, in bread and wine you visit us again—

Who could but see: Immanuel! Who could but thrill: Immanuel!

4. How else could I have known you, O my God! How else could I have loved you, O my God! How else could I embrace you, O my God! Who could but pray: Immanuel! Who could but praise: Immanuel!

Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008 Text: © 1984 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 703484

1. The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Narration:

Saphira Heberer: Before we look at the account of Jesus' birth itself, let's look further into the past. Writers often use foreshadowing to give their readers hints about things to come. Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, Old Testament prophets predicted Jesus' coming. The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies about Jesus. And each one of them came true, including Jesus' miraculous birth, his sinless life, his many miracles, his death, and his resurrection.

Listen to some of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Jesus. In those prophecies we are told from whose family Jesus would come, what his name would be and where he would be born.

Recitation:

Grades 2-3: But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times (Micah 5:2).

Grades 4-5: The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Grades K-1: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

CW 330

Narration:

Hadley Enright: But why was Jesus to be born? It all began with humans falling into sin. After God created a perfect world with perfect people, those people chose to disobey him. They became imperfect—sinful—and deserving of death and an eternity in hell, forever separated from God's love and presence. And every one of their offspring, right down to you and me, would be sinful and destined for eternal death. But out of great compassion and love for us, God planned a way for us to be forgiven and saved from those awful consequences. Throughout the Old Testament, God reminded his people of his promise that a Savior would come. When the wait was over, God's gift of love took his place on earth and fulfilled all the prophecies about the Savior. That Savior is Jesus.



Text: Latin, c. 12th cent., Psalteriolum Cantionum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt. Tune: French, 15th cent., alt Text and tune: Public domain

2. An Angel's Startling Message

Narration:

Alec Nagel: How would you react if an angel appeared out of nowhere? Most of us would be amazed and scared. That's what happened to the first character we read about: Mary. She was a young woman who lived in the town of Nazareth and was engaged to a man named Joseph. One day, an angel appeared to Mary. She was frightened at the sight of the angel, and what the angel had to say was outrageous. Mary, a virgin, was going to have a baby. And this was not just any baby—Mary had been chosen to give birth to the Son of God. The angel instructed Mary to call him Jesus and told her he would be the Savior of all people.

Asher Peters: Mary was going to have a baby. Who would ever believe this bizarre story? Her fiancé? He knew the baby wasn't his. Her family? They would struggle to comprehend how she was having a baby before getting married. How could she expect anyone to understand when even she had questions?

Although her story was extraordinary, in faith Mary believed the words of the angel and trusted in the promise that with God all things are possible. Luke recounts the incident in chapter 1 of his book.

Recitation:

Grades 7-8: In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Grades 4-5: Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Grades 2-3: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

Grades K-1: Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her (Luke 1:26-38).

Narration:

Matthias Yttri: As we might expect, Joseph didn't believe Mary. After all, who would believe she saw an actual angel and that it was possible for her to be a *miraculously* pregnant virgin?

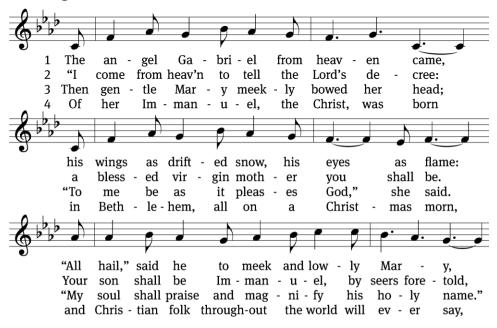
But Joseph also knew that Mary could be hurt or killed for this seemingly disgraceful act, so he showed concern for Mary and decided to end their relationship quietly. Before he could do so, God intervened. He sent an angel to Joseph in a dream to tell him about the very special child Mary was carrying. Listen to the account from Matthew chapter 1.

Recitation:

Grades 7-8: This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Grades 4-5: But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18-21).

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came CW 328



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"most high-ly fa-vored maid-en." Glo - ri - a!
most high-ly fa-vored maid-en." Glo - ri - a!
Most high-ly fa-vored maid-en, Glo - ri - a!
"Most high-ly fa-vored maid-en, Glo - ri - a!
"Most high-ly fa-vored maid-en." Glo - ri - a!
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Text: para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834–1924, alt.; Basque, c. 18th cent. Tune: Basque, c. 18th cent. Text and tune: Public domain

3. A Baby is Born

Narration:

Asher Peters: What image comes to mind when you think of an important person being born? If it were someone of royalty, we might expect to see top-notch medical facilities, the best doctors and nurses, and maybe a big party or even a parade announcing the arrival of the child. Jesus was the Son of God and the King of the Jews, and yet his birth did not attract a lot of attention. There was no party, no parade, not even the assistance of a doctor or nurse to deliver the baby.

Maddex Hulse: Not long before Jesus was to be born, Joseph and Mary needed to travel to Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus, the Roman ruler at the time, wanted to take a census of everyone in his empire. Each person was to go to the hometown of his or her ancestors to register. Since Joseph's family was from Bethlehem, he and Mary set out on a difficult journey, difficult especially considering Mary's advanced pregnancy.

Eliana Schepp: After a long and grueling trip, Mary and Joseph would have loved to be able to just sit and rest. But Bethlehem was a very crowded place. Many people were following the orders of Caesar and were in town to register too. Finding a decent place to stay was no easy task, but Joseph didn't give up. He knew Mary would need shelter—soon. So Joseph looked everywhere but was told that every inn in Bethlehem was full.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and with the baby on the way, Mary and Joseph ran out of options and took shelter in a stable. That stable was where Jesus was born. The long-awaited Holy One of Israel, the very Son of God, was born in a barn, and Mary laid Jesus in the feeding trough of the animals. We hear again from Luke in chapter 2:

Recitation:

Grades 2-3: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Grades K-1: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them (Luke 2:1-7).

Away in a Manger

Grades K-3

- 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.
- 2. 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.

3. 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 take us to heaven to live with you there.

CW 341

2 Text (sts. 1–2): The Myrtle, Boston, 1884; (st. 3): Vineyard Songs, Louisville, 1892, alt. Text: Public domain

4. Unexpected Guests

Narration:

Teagan Kiser: Having a baby is a joyous event. Oftentimes, the proud parents receive lots of visitors. Can you imagine receiving visitors in a barn? The next people we encounter are the first to visit Jesus after his birth, and again, angels play a part in the announcement.

Shepherds were outside of Bethlehem tending to their flocks when a brilliant angel pierced the darkness. After the shepherds' initial shock, they listened to the wonderful news that Jesus was born, where they would find him, and how they would recognize him.

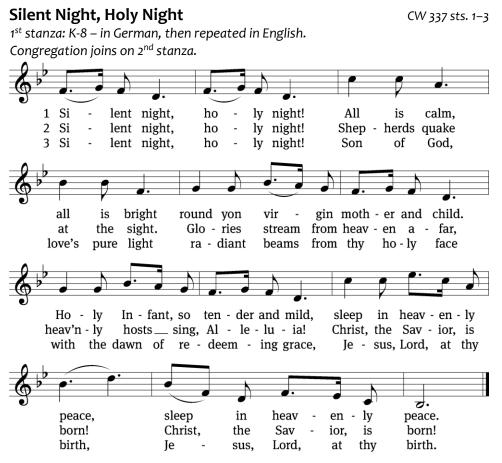
Then, in all their glorious splendor, hundreds—perhaps thousands—of angels appeared to declare God's praises. Once the angels were gone, the shepherds left their sheep to search out the Christ Child. They found him in Bethlehem, just as the angel had said. We continue hearing the gospel from Luke.

Recitation:

Grades 4-5: There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Grades K-1: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Grades 7-8: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **Grades 2-3:** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told (Luke 2:8-20).



Text: tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885; Franz Joseph Mohr, 1792–1848 Tune: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1787–1863 Text and tune: Public domain

Narration:

Maddex Hulse: Sometime later, more visitors came to Mary and Joseph. Magi, wise men from the East, traveled a long way searching for Jesus, the King of the Jews. A special star had appeared when Jesus was born and guided them to the promised Savior. They followed the star all the way to the place where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived. They brought gifts for Jesus, but these were no ordinary baby gifts. They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gifts of incredible value. They bowed down and worshiped Jesus as their king.

Alec Nagel: But this account has a twist. In general, babies do not have enemies—but Jesus did. Through the Magi, King Herod learned that a new king, Jesus, had been born. Feeling threatened, Herod used the wise men to try to find where Jesus was because he intended to kill Jesus. But the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went home a different way. Matthew records the event in chapter 2 of his book.

Recitation:

经保持的制度的复数的

Grades 4-5: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

Grades K-1: "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Grades 2-3: Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Grade 7-8: When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route (Matthew 2:1-12).



Angels from the Realms of Glory

Sung by K-8

- 1 Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth; once you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth: (Refrain)
- *Ref* Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.
- Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night, God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light. (Refrain)
- Magi, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar; seek the great desire of nations, you have seen the Savior's star. (Refrain)

CW 347

- 4 Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear, suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear. (Refrain)
- 5 All creation, join in praising
 God the Father, Spirit, Son,
 evermore your voices raising
 to th', eternal Three in One. (Refrain)

Text (sts. 1–3): James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt.; (st. 4): Salisbury Hymn Book, 1857, alt. Text: Public domain

Offering God's people offer their first and best to the Lord in response to the Lord's blessings to them. The offering is gathered in a basket in the church entrance before or after the service. If you prefer to give electronically, you may scan this graphic to access www.stlucaswels.org/donate.



Stand

Prayer

Gracious Father, when the time had fully come, you sent your Son to carry out your plan to save the world from the tyranny of sin, the threat of death, and the power of Satan. On this holy night, strengthen our faith as we ponder the depth of your divine love.

Lead us to quiet awe as we remember your gracious compassion.

Impress on us the poverty and pain your Son endured in our place, how he willingly set aside his power and place and assumed the weakness of an infant and the starkness of a stable. Lead us to acknowledge the sins which compelled his humiliation and the love which accepted his lowliness.

Forgive us and move us to trust in his mission to save us.

Take away our fears and fright and fill us with joy as we hear the message that Jesus was born for us and that he came to restore peace with you and mend the bond broken by sin. Move us to sing our carols and hymns not with passing pleasure but with the depth of praise for his extraordinary love.

Let our songs and hymns reflect our faith in the redemption gained by Christ.

Lead us to kneel at his manger with hearts of faith and to see there the God-man who takes away the sins of the world. Guide and guard us so that the happiness shared with family and friends does not delay or discourage our journey to his holy crib.

Make the birth of Christ our highest priority and deepest pleasure.

Fill us with an eager joy that moves us to share the good news with others, especially those who may have forgotten or dismissed the love of God in Christ. Give us faith-filled maturity to recognize that the best gift we can give to children is the story of Jesus who was born as a baby and died on a cross to save them for heaven.

Move us to tell the good news we have seen and heard.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

During this hectic holiday, provide us with quiet times to remember what the birth of Jesus really means for us and all people, that he came to free us from the evil forces that separated us from your love, that he lived and died to forgive our sins, and that he rose in triumph to prepare a place where we will live with you forever.

Move us to sing with hearts of faith, "Glory to God in the highest!" Amen.

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 forever. Amen.



Blessing

May he who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with such joy that comes from the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the + Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Be seated

5. Conclusion

Narration:

Matthias Yttri: How does the story of Jesus' birth compare to other stories? Stories that begin with "Once upon a time" and have happy endings are fairy tales, purely fictional, meant for our enjoyment. The story of Jesus has so much drama that one might not believe it's real, but the birth of Jesus as told in the Bible is different: it is not a fairy tale or fiction. It's the truth of our existence—our sinful condition and its dire consequences and God's immense love in restoring us to himself for eternity through our Savior Jesus.

Mari Hulse: Is there a similarity between a typical fairy tale and the life of Jesus? When we read or hear a fairytale, we wait with great anticipation for a happy ending. We long for a hero to enter, ready to sacrifice everything to save the distressed, restore the broken, and redeem the fallen. Is there a happy ending to the story of Jesus? Is there a happy ending to the story of you and me and all people? Absolutely! But only because Jesus' story and our story are so closely intertwined.

Saphira Heberer: God's unconditional love for us prompted him to send Jesus to this earth. Jesus sacrificed himself by dying on the cross, paying for the sins of all people past, present, and future—including yours and mine! It's a heroic act of love like no other, and through faith, we receive benefits like none other. The best part of the story is that Jesus didn't stay dead. He was raised from the dead, securing our salvation and a place for us in heaven. Our ending in death is truly happy because it's not an end at all—it's the beginning of life with Jesus in heaven forever!

Teagan Kiser: Read God's story in the Bible. See yourself in that story, and receive all that God has done for you. The Christmas story, like all of God's Word, has been shared for many years and will continue to be read and shared until Jesus returns. We base our faith on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His love has produced the greatest story ever told. With it, we have hope of everlasting life and a reason to celebrate now and always the birth of our Savior and King!



Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748 Tune: George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759, adapt. Text and tune: Public domain

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Serving in Worship

Presiding Minister: Pastor Timothy Henning Organist: Coralee Henning Trumpet: Malachi Yttri