

The First Christmas Gift

Welcome: With all our hearts we welcome you,
We're very glad you came
for we've a lovely story to tell
About a lovely name
That name is Jesus, who alone
Can cleanse the heart from sin
So listen as we tell of Him
Who came your heart to win.

Everyone Sings: O come All Ye Faithful

WHEN AND WHY

Narrator 1: Long, long ago when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and He sent them out of the Garden of Eden, God promised He would someday send a Saviour into the world. God told the serpent who tempted Eve, "...and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel." (Gen. 3:15) Ever since the time of Adam and Eve, God's people were expecting the coming of a Saviour, but it took a very long time.

WHERE

Narrator 2: Long ago through the prophet Micah, God had promised that His Son would be born in Bethlehem. But Mary and her husband Joseph lived in Nazareth. God used Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, to bring them to Bethlehem. Caesar said that a census would be taken throughout the land. Everyone must go back to his ancestral home to register. Joseph was a member of the royal line so he and Mary had to go to Bethlehem, King David's ancient home to register.

Everyone Sings" O Little Town of Bethlehem

HOW

Reader 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 strips of cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And 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 of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Reader 2: 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 favour rests.” 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 a 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. 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)

Everyone Sings: come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Narrator 1: God used the prophet Isaiah to encourage His people and tell them their Saviour was still coming. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) “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)

With the encouragement of the prophets God’s people continued to look for the Saviour for many more years.

Everyone Sings: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Narrator 2: The angel told Mary that she had found special favour with God. Mary was scared when she saw the angel, but Gabriel told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son, and that when He was born she should call him “Jesus” Gabriel said that Jesus would be a king whose kingdom would last forever. Mary still wondered how this could be. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and God’s power would overshadow her so that her son would be the holy Son of God. Finally Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” (Luke 1:38) Then the angel went away from her. Mary praised God for what He was doing to her.

Everyone sings: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Narrator 1: Some wise men from the East also heard the good news of Jesus’ birth.

Narrator 3: Matthew 2:1-11

Narrator 1: God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back and tell Herod, so they went to their own country a different way.

WHAT MUST WE DO?

Narrator 2: The good news of Jesus' birth was not just for the shepherd and the wise men, but for everyone. The Bible tells us that God loved the world so much everlasting life. God wants us to believe in Jesus and give our love to Him. This is the story of the first Christmas present which God in His love gave to the whole world. Today, almost 2,000 years later, we can still share the happy news of this gift with everyone.

Everyone sings: Joy to the World

Prayer

Child of light, Saviour of all,
We thank you that you come to us,
seeking to enter our lives.
Child of Mary, help us to welcome you.

We thank you that you come to us,
bringing love into our aching world.
Child of Joseph, may we love you as you love us.

We thank you that you come to us
no matter where we are or what we do.
Child of the Shepherds, help us to realize you are always near.

We thank you that you come to us,
showing us a different way of living.
Child of the magi, may we follow you
no matter how hard or narrow the way becomes.

God of all mercy and tenderness,
Child of the angels,
may we sing your praise.
Crown our celebrations this Christmastide
and bless our gatherings, whether in person or at a distance.
Help us know you are near. Amen.

Benediction

Everyone sings: Silent Night