

CANYON HILLS

# CHRISTMAS

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



©2023 CANYON HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH  
22027 17th Ave SE Bothell, WA 98021

Devotional material adapted from the work of  
John Peterson at Montage Bible Church.

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## CHRISTMAS AT CANYON HILLS

We are blessed to have a great treasury of Christmas carols, hymns, and modern songs that enrich our celebration of Christmas and our experience of the season. Even though some songs that we hear this time of year are merely silly, or sentimental, or downright secular, many are embedded with deep biblical and theological truths and they deserve our attention and appreciation.

Despite the secularization of our culture, and even in the face of hostility to Christianity, we still can hear with delight the sounds of many of these carols at Christmas time. This devotional booklet is intended to help us appreciate to a greater degree the heritage we have in these songs, and to communicate their truths to our children and to others. It would be sad indeed if not only our secular world, but also if the coming generations of believers, never learned nor heard these wonderful “sounds of the season!”

Additionally, throughout history the church has delivered its theology to believers primarily through the reading of Scripture and in song. So what we are focusing on throughout this season is the theology of the church from the truths of Scripture related to us through this incredible collection of songs.

If you aren't familiar with some of these carols, you may wish to listen to them online. We have created a Spotify playlist where you can listen to these songs.

We hope and pray that this booklet will guide you and your family in greater connection with believers around the world and through recent history toward pure and holy worship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**LISTEN TO THE  
PLAYLIST OF CAROLS  
BY SCANNING THE  
QR CODE**



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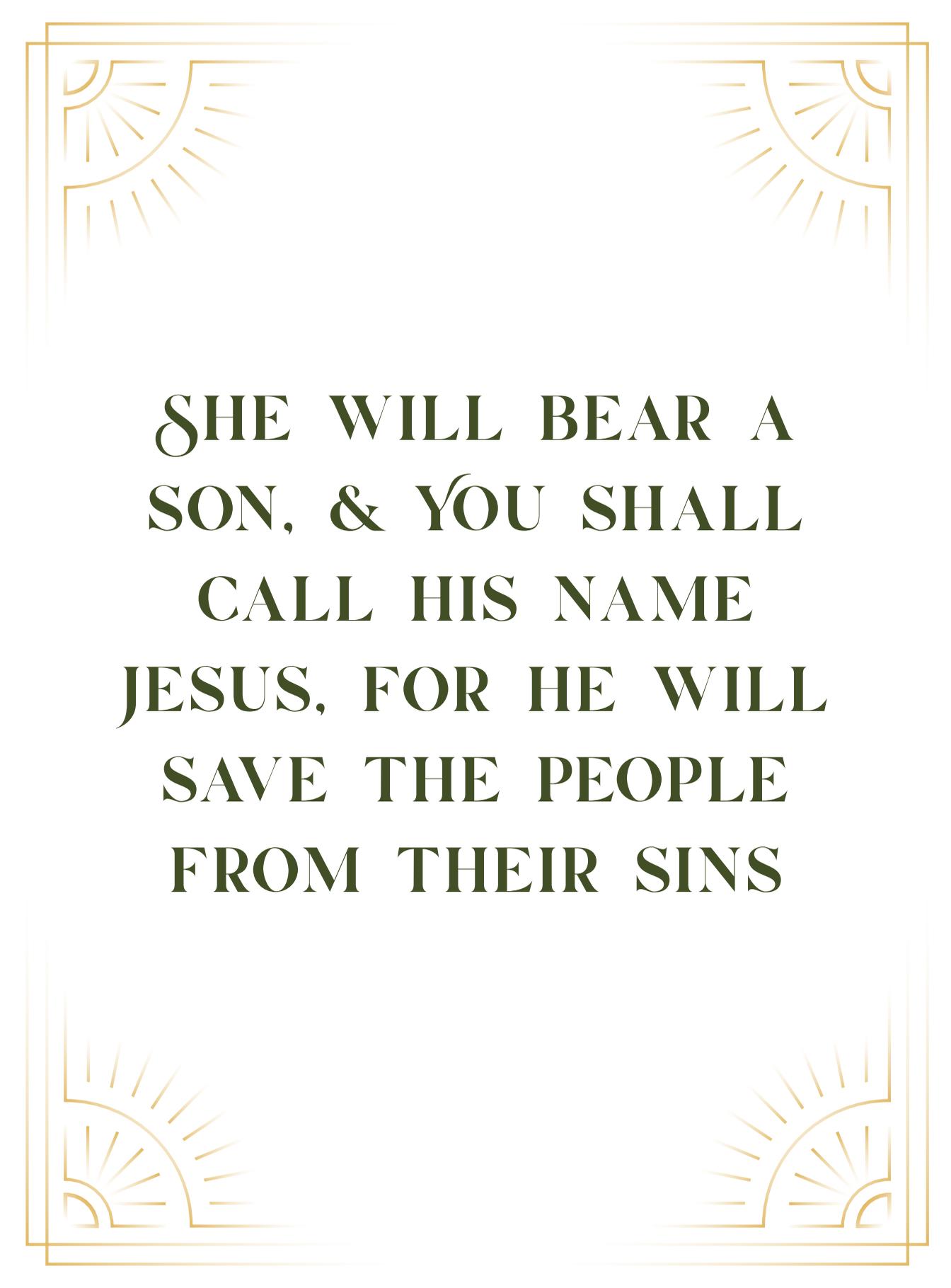
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**SHE WILL BEAR A  
SON, & YOU SHALL  
CALL HIS NAME  
JESUS, FOR HE WILL  
SAVE THE PEOPLE  
FROM THEIR SINS**

# ANTICIPATION

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus  
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing  
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming  
I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day  
Once in Royal David's City

# COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a king.  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

# DAY 1

**Isaiah 40:1-2, 49:13, 66:12-13, Zechariah 1:16-17, Luke 2:25-32**

This carol's words came from Charles Wesley, who was born in 1707, and who, along with his brother John, founded Methodism. Charles is probably the greatest hymn writer who ever lived, composing close to 9,000 hymns, including several carols.

Jesus is called "Israel's strength and consolation" in the second verse of the carol, echoing Luke's words in Luke 2:25 where he described Simeon as a man who was looking for the "consolation of Israel." The consolation (comfort) of Israel was the physical and spiritual deliverance of Israel that would take place with the coming of the Messiah. The ancient prophets had often spoken of the comfort which would one day come to Israel when the Messiah appeared, as in the verses above. The carol speaks of the longing for this consolation to appear.

Probably the yearning for deliverance and the blessings of the reign of the Messiah was universal among the Jews. In Simeon's case, and in that of godly Jews, this was a longing for spiritual revival and deliverance from sin as well as for physical deliverance from the pagan rule of Rome. God blessed Simeon by allowing him to see, even to hold in his arms, this Messiah baby who was "born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king; born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

Do we yearn for the coming of King Jesus as much as the Jews yearned for the coming of their promised Messiah?

## **Family Activity:**

Have your kids draw or write down what they are excited about for Christmas. Use this opportunity to ask them why we should be most excited to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

## HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark, the herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With th’ angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

### Refrain

Hark, the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come, offspring of the Virgin’s womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th’ incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!

### Refrain

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 man no more may die.

Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

### Refrain

## DAY 2

**1 John 1:1-4, Colossians 1:13-22, Hebrews 1:1-4**

The words to this well-known carol were also written by Charles Wesley. However, it has been altered considerably. Wesley wrote “Hark, how all the welkin rings; Glory to the King of Kings. (‘Welkin’ is an old English word for the vault of the sky, or heaven, or cloud.) The melody comes from the composer Felix Mendelssohn, who thought that the melody would never be appropriate for “sacred words!” Little did he know that eight years after his death, the words to his melody would enshrine the highest Christology (doctrine about Jesus! Although the carol speaks of angels “singing,” and their words are in poetic form, Luke simply writes that they “said” their words.

As you review the words of this carol in your mind, think about how the birth of Jesus meant that “God and sinners would be reconciled.” Think about Christ being the “everlasting Lord,” and the “desire of nations.” Reflect on the implications of these phrases: “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail th’ Incarnate Deity; Pleased as man with man to dwell; Jesus, our Emmanuel.” Or these: “Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.” Let these words fill your mind this Christmas day!

Do you think that you could use the words of this carol to share the complete Gospel?

## O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
And drive away the shades of night,  
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

## DAY 3

**Isaiah 7:14, 8:8, Matthew 1:19-23**

This is one of our most ancient carols, with words and music dating back to the 12th century. It is amazing to think, when we are singing it, that people have been singing it for nearly a thousand years! The original author, and the composer of the monastic chants upon which the melody is based, are lost to history.

Like the carol “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus,” this one expresses the longing for the coming of Messiah - “Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel.” At least five titles for Jesus are mentioned in the verses: “Emmanuel,” “Son of God,” “Rod of Jesse,” “Dayspring,” “Key of David.” (Additional verses add “Lord of might,” “Wisdom from on High” and “Desire of Nations.”) The only one that is repeated, however, is “Emmanuel,” which means “God with us,” as Matthew wrote.

“Emmanuel” (or “Immanuel”) is the name of the Messiah who was to be born to a virgin, Is. 7:14. It is His land, the land of Israel, which would be overrun by Assyria as Israel underwent God’s judgment, Is. 8:8. And Matthew makes the identification complete; Emmanuel is one of the names of Jesus, born to the virgin Mary. This name alone refutes all the sects and false religions of the world, all those which deny that Jesus is God Himself came into the world He created. It is His name of Incarnation, His name of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14), His name of the “Hypostatic Union” in which the very nature of God and the very nature of man come together without diminishing or elevating each other. It is this fact that the carol’s refrain calls us to celebrate - “Rejoice,” and “Rejoice!”

Can you name a couple of instances from Jesus’ life which indicated that He was indeed “God with us?”

## LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming  
From tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming  
As men of old have sung.  
It came, a flower-et bright,  
Amid the cold of winter  
When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
The Rose I have in mind.  
With Mary we behold it,  
The Virgin Mother kind.  
To show God's love aright,  
She bore to men a Saviour,  
When half spent was the night.

# DAY 4

## Isaiah 11:1-10

We don't know who wrote this beautiful carol, but we know that it dates from the early 16th century, some 500 years ago. To understand the words, we need to know something about biblical prophecy. Isaiah prophesied that a shoot would spring from the stem of Jesse; a branch from his roots would bear fruit. This "Branch" from the kingly line of David (Jesse's son) would be filled with the Spirit of Yahweh and would judge the righteous and the wicked. He would usher in a new age when the world would be restored and nations would submit to Him, and the earth would be "full of the knowledge of Yahweh." Isaiah was prophesying the appearance of the Messiah and His kingdom rule.

The writer of the carol has this Isaiah passage in mind when he speaks of a Rose ever blooming. He says that the Rose sprang from a tender stem of Jesse's lineage. This Stem or Branch is pictured as bearing one rose in the middle of winter - rare, unexpected, and welcome. In the second verse, the writer makes it explicit: "Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind; with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright, she bore to men a Savior, when half spent was the night."

It may seem strange to us to liken the appearance of Jesus the Messiah to a solitary rose blooming in midwinter, until we reflect on how unique and significant and precious that birth was that took place 2000 years ago in Bethlehem!

What thoughts would you have if, in your garden, you saw a rose blooming from a green branch in the middle of January?

## I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

I heard the bells on Christmas day their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

I thought how, as the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along th'unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

And in despair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said.  
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Till, ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

## DAY 5

**Isaiah 9:1-7, Luke 2:13-14, 2 Corinthians 13:11,  
Philippians 4:6-7, Revelation 1:4-6**

The words to this beautiful carol were written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow on Christmas day in 1863 after his son was severely injured in the Civil War and two years after his wife died in a fire. It has been set to a number of tunes.

Probably the melody most familiar to us is the one by John Baptiste Calkin that is found in hymnals and popularized by Mercy Me, Bing Crosby, Johnny Cash, and others.

The theme of the carol is peace on earth, the words which the heavenly host of angels gave to the shepherds, Luke 2:13-14. The puzzle for the shepherds, and the puzzle for the hymn writer Longfellow, is that there was and is no peace on earth. That is, not yet. For Longfellow, the nation was being torn apart by an unimaginably bloody civil war. For the shepherds, the rule of Rome and the resentment and resistance to it could not be escaped. In the third verse, Longfellow says “There is no peace on earth, for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth.” There are two other verses in his poem which are not usually sung, referring to the cannon and their earth-shaking noise that characterized Civil War battles. But then comes hope, as the bells pealed “more loud and deep.” “God is not dead,” they sing, “nor doth He sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail.” Someday the whole world will know peace, but it will only be when all sin is dealt with.

The Bible makes it clear that the baby Jesus is the Messiah, who indeed will bring peace on earth, but it will not be until He takes up His reign as the “Prince of Peace.” Until that time, personal peace is available! It is found in a restored relationship with God through the death of His Son for our sins.

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## DAY 5

(Continued from page 11)

For those who already believe, it is found in maintaining a close fellowship with Him through obedience and prompt confession of our sins, I John 1:9. It is the peace that Jesus left with His disciples before (John 14:27) and after John 20:21, 26, 29) His death and resurrection. Most of the New Testament letters begin with a prayer that we would experience this kind of peace and many end with a reference to it. It is the peace which passes all understanding, Philippians 4:6-7. It is the peace that we can experience every day of our lives.

What things in the world today tend to rob us of our peace? How should we deal with them?



**F̂OR TO US A CHILD  
IS BORN, TO US A  
SON IS GIVEN**

## ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

Once in royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattleshed,  
Where a mother laid her Baby in a manger for His bed;  
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And His shelter was a stable and His cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Savior holy.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,  
Through His own redeeming love;  
For that Child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heaven above;  
And He leads His children on to the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,  
We shall see Him, but in heaven,  
Set at God's right hand on high;  
When like stars His children crowned,  
All in white shall wait around.

## DAY 6

**Genesis 35:16-20, Ruth 1:22-2:1, 1 Samuel 16:10-13, 17:12-15,  
Micah 5:2-5a**

Once in Royal David's City' was written around 1848 by Cecil Frances Alexander, the wife of an Anglican pastor, who wrote many hymns for children. A year later Henry Gauntlett, an organist and prolific composer, set it to music. The carol's title speaks of Bethlehem, even though the city is not so named in any of the verses!

Bethlehem is called "Royal David's City" because king David was born there. Bethlehem is a very, very old place. On the way to Bethlehem, Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was not a significant city, but it was the site of many significant events, including the romance of Boaz and Ruth, and the birth of Obed, the father of Jesse who was the father of king David. As a young man, David tended his father's flocks at Bethlehem and was anointed king there by the prophet Samuel, I Samuel 16. By far the most significant event, of course, was the birth of King Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior.

Our carol exhibits a very high view of the Baby: "He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all." The fifth verse says that "our eyes at last shall see Him, through His own redeeming love; for that Child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above." The last verse says "Not in that poor lowly stable with the oxen standing by; we shall see Him, but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high."

Do you see any parallels between king David's anointing and the circumstances surrounding King Jesus' birth?

### **Family Activity:**

Have your kids make and decorate their own crowns. You can find templates online to print out. Talk about how King David is different than King Jesus.

## WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE

We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain

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's plain, gold I bring to crown Him again,  
King forever, ceasing never over us all to reign.

Refrain

Frankincense to offer have I, incense owns a Deity nigh;  
Prayer and praising, all men raising, worship Him, God on high.

Refrain

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Refrain

Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice;  
Alleluia, Alleluia! Peals through the earth and skies.

Refrain

## DAY 7

**Isaiah 60:6, Psalm 72:8-11,15, Matthew 2:11, John 19:38-40**

John Henry Hopkins, a rector of an Episcopal church in Pennsylvania, wrote the words and music for this carol in 1857 for a Christmas pageant in New York City. He meant for the first and fifth verses to be sung by a group, and the second through fourth verses to be sung in turn by three different male voices representing each of the “three kings” with their respective gifts.

We know the “kings” were Magi - something like scientists and astrologers and astronomers combined. Recent research identifies them as religious and political king makers from Persia. They would have been powerful, with very high standing in society, and so calling them “kings” is not completely inappropriate. We don’t know how many there were, but the assumption has been made that there were three, because Matthew mentions their three gifts. The names assigned to them are traditional, not biblical. The valuable gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh are highly suggestive: Gold is a fit gift for a king; frankincense speaks of prayers and worship of God; and myrrh was used for embalming human bodies.

The theology of the carol is thoroughly biblical: It calls Jesus “Deity,” “God on high,” and “King and God and Sacrifice” (maybe reflecting the three gifts?). No cultist who understands the words can sing this with sincerity.

If you were to have offered a gift to the baby Jesus from what you currently have in your home, what would you give Him? Why?

### **Family Activity:**

Ask your kids who they are excited to give gifts to. If they don’t have anyone in mind, help them to think about who they can give to this Christmas season.



**I BRING YOU GOOD  
NEWS OF GREAT  
JOY THAT WILL BE  
FOR ALL PEOPLE**

# JOY

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Behold

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

The First Noel

Mary's Boy Child

Away in a Manger

Joy to the World

## O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels:

### Refrain

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing all ye bright hosts of heav'n above;  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest:

### Refrain

Yes, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

### Refrain

## DAY 8

**Matthew 2:2, 7-12, 14:32-33, 28:9, John 9:35-38, Hebrews 1:6,  
Revelation 4:9-11, 5:9-14**

This carol dates back to the 18th century, if not well before, and has a long and complex history. We cannot say for certain who the lyricist and who the composer were. The words were originally in Latin (*Adeste, fideles*) and have been translated and adapted in many ways.

Over and over this carol invites us, even exhorts us, to worship Jesus (to “adore Him”). The Magi came and worshipped, and we are likewise urged to “come to Bethlehem” and worship. The main Greek word for “worship” is to “kiss toward” - that is, to prostrate oneself before another and kiss their feet, or the hem of their garment, or the ground upon which they stand. Of course, it is not the physical posture or the act of prostrating or kissing that is most important; it is the posture of the heart, the humbling and submission of the will, the love and adoration of the emotions, the honor and respect that one desires to give. Jesus was worshipped by the Magi, by people throughout His ministry, and by His disciples both before and after His death and resurrection. Mark 5:6 tells us that even the demon-possessed man worshipped Him, and Hebrews tells us that angels do so. In John’s Revelation, the “Living Creatures” and the 24 Elders and the angels, and every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them worship the Lamb. Amen and amen!

What events or sights or thoughts prompt you to worship Jesus?

# BEHOLD

Behold the King has come  
Divinity incarnate  
Creator of the world  
Breathing our air  
Behold what light has come  
And the dark cannot contain it  
The Savior of the world  
Is finally here

## Refrain

Oh, come let us adore Him  
Come, let us adore Him  
For He alone is worthy  
Christ the Lord

Behold, the Father's love  
Beyond all comprehension  
He gave His only Son  
To die in our place  
Go see the empty tomb  
He's not there, for He is risen  
Every heart prepare Him room  
Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven

## Refrain

We give You all the glory  
We give You all the glory  
We give You all the glory  
Christ the Lord

We praise Your name (we praise Your name forever)  
We praise Your name (we praise Your name forever)  
Jesus, we praise Your name forever  
Christ The Lord

## Refrain

## DAY 9

**Zechariah 9:9, John 1:29, Hebrews 1:6,  
Revelation 4:9-11, 5:9-14**

This is a fresh iteration of the classic hymn, “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” repurposed and refocused by Phil Wickham. You can hear the echoes of that classic hymn, both lyrically and musically, in multiple places throughout this song. However, where the original song focuses on our participation in adoring Christ, this new version places our attention on the object of our worship, the one we are to “behold.”

Jesus truly is worthy of beholding, of worshipping and giving all the glory. As in many songs about Christ’s coming, this song focuses on the glorious and perplexing reality of divinity incarnate. God himself, the creator of the world, came and lived life as a human, breathing our air and being the ultimate example of the love of God the Father.

One unique element of this song is the way it shows us how Christmas and Easter are inextricably linked. The birth of Jesus that we celebrate in winter was for the purpose of him eventually dying on the cross and raising from the tomb in spring. Jesus’ coming brought the eternal light of God into the dark and broken world. We can adore the humility of the baby who was born in a manger for the purpose of walking in our world on a path to the cross and empty tomb. From the beginning, God the Father had this plan, that he would send his Son to be born in our likeness, to live the perfect life we never could have lived, to die the death that we deserved, and to be raised again to glorious strength on our behalf to the glory of God. Let us adore him, Christ the LORD!

How does the reality of the cross at Easter affect your ability to adore the birth of Jesus at Christmas?

# GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN

God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay;  
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day;  
To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray.

Refrain

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;  
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God, our heavenly Father a blessed angel came;  
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same;  
How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.

Refrain

“Fear not, then,” said the angel, “Let nothing you affright,  
This day is born a Savior of a pure Virgin bright,  
To free all those who trust in Him from Satan's power and might.”

Refrain

Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place, And with true  
love and brotherhood each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface.

Refrain

# DAY 10

## Luke 2:1-18

This is a traditional English carol dating back at least to the 16th century. Charles Dickens used its opening lines in his 1843 story “A Christmas Carol,” where Scrooge takes offense at hearing it. It has gained renewed popularity with the acapella group Pentatonix on their No. 1 Christmas album and on YouTube (nearly 40 million views); then it appeared in the 2018 movie “The Grinch,” the highest grossing holiday film of all time. This should be heartening to us, because the verses of the carol repeat the account of Luke 2:1-18 in an accurate and nearly complete way.

Notice the comma in the title: The gentlemen are not merry nor are they tired! To “rest you merry” means to “cause you to continue (rest) pleasant or prosperous.” Maybe the closest modern phrase might be “God bless you, Gentlemen.” The last verse repeats the idea with the phrase “God send you a happy new year.” What is the reason for these good wishes? It is that Jesus was born! In modern terms, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season!” There is no justification for “dismay” in this life, and particularly at Christmas time, because “Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day to save us all from Satan’s power when we were gone astray.” This “blessed Babe” was the “Son of God by name.” He was “born a Savior of a pure virgin bright, to free all those who trust in Him from Satan’s power and might.” (How’s that for a summary of the Gospel?!)

The last verse tells us how we should celebrate the season - with singing of praises and with true love and brotherhood, rather than with dismay. “This holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface” seems to say that any other way to approach Christmas “defaces” what is the most glorious thing that has ever happened.

How is Christmas commonly “defaced” in our world today?

### **Family Activity:**

As you read Luke 2:1-18, have your family act it out. Someone can play multiple parts if needed.

## THE FIRST NOEL

The first Noel 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

Refrain

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star  
Shining in the east, beyond them far,  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

And by the light of that same star  
Three Wise Men came from country far;  
To seek for a king was their intent,  
And to follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain

Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord  
Who hath made heaven and earth of naught,  
And with His blood mankind hath bought.

Refrain

# DAY 11

**Numbers 24:17, Matthew 2:1-12**

The origin of this carol is unknown, but it is believed to date back to the 13th or 14th century, perhaps arising from the “Miracle Plays” which dramatized Bible stories in medieval Europe. “Noel” (or “Nowell”) is the French word for Christmas, arising from the Latin word “natalis” which means “birthday.” The “First Noel” is the birthday of Jesus, the day of His birth, the very first “Christmas.”

The carol tells the story of the shepherds and Wise Men as they learned of the birth of the “King of Israel” and went to see Him. The second, third, and fourth verses deal with the star. The second verse presumes that the shepherds saw the star, although Scripture doesn’t affirm this. We don’t know how widely the star was seen. For many years scholars and others have tried to figure out what the star was – a comet, a planet, a conjunction of a planet and a star, a supernova, etc. What we do know is that God caused it to appear to the Magi in their homeland, and used it to accomplish His purposes! It not only convinced the Magi to go to Jerusalem and seek out this new King, but its reappearance over Bethlehem confirmed for them God’s leading and brought them great joy, Mt. 2:10. It’s also highly suggestive that Jesus Himself is called a star in Numbers 24:17!

What “signs” have you seen that have confirmed for you God’s specific leading and brought you joy?

## **Family Activity:**

Head outside at night and look up at all the stars. Have your kids try to find the brightest star in the sky and count as many stars as they can.

## MARY'S BOY CHILD

Long time ago in Bethlehem so the Holy Bible say, Mary's Boy Child,  
Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day!

Hark! Now hear the angels sing: "A New King born today,  
And man will live forevermore because of Christmas Day!"

Trumpets sound and angels sing, listen to what they say,  
That man will live forevermore because of Christmas Day!

While shepherds watched their flocks by night  
They saw a bright new shining star,  
And heard a choir from heaven sing the music came from afar.

Now Joseph and his wife Mary came to Bethlehem that night.  
They found no place to bear her Child, not a single room was in sight.

Hark! Now hear the angels sing: "A New King born today,  
And man will live forevermore because of Christmas Day!"

By and by they found a little nook in a stable all forlorn.  
And in a manger cold and dark Mary's little Boy Child was born.

Hark! Now hear the angels sing: "A New King born today, And man  
will live forevermore because of Christmas Day!"

## DAY 12

**John 3:14-17, 36, 4:13-14, 10:27-28, 11:25-26,  
Romans 6:23, 1 John 5:13**

Like “Mary, Did You Know?,” this song is more modern, written by the composer and musician Jester Hairston in 1956. His song has a calypso rhythm because he originally wrote the tune for a birthday party attended by West Indians. “Mary’s Boy Child” has been performed and recorded countless times by many artists. A single has twice been at the top of the UK Singles Chart.

Hairston tells the Christmas story from the point of the angel’s announcement until the shepherds find “Mary’s little boy” in a “stable all forlorn.” A memorable line, repeated four times, is this: “Man will live forevermore, because of Christmas Day.” It seems rare for a carol to emphasize eternal life, but this line is ‘spot on.’ If it weren’t for Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection, there would be no eternal life for any man, woman, or child. Among the many things that Christmas means, this is not the least – Christmas means we can have eternal life!

Do you think that Mary or Joseph or the shepherds or the wise men knew that the birth of Jesus would ultimately mean they could have eternal life?

Why or why not?

### **Family Activity:**

Memorize Romans 6:23 as a family focusing on the “gift of God”.

Optional: Have your kids open a small gift from you.

## AWAY IN A MANGER

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;  
The stars in the 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 Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my cradle, till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me I pray;  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And take us to heaven, to live with Thee there.

# DAY 13

**Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 13:53-58**

“Away in a Manger” is very familiar in our country, but it is not well-known elsewhere. Although some hymnals attribute the carol to Martin Luther, it is almost certainly not his. Possibly James R. Murray wrote it for a volume of children’s songs he published in 1887. There have been about forty different melodies attached to the words, and the most familiar one to us is anonymous. The simplicity of the melody and the words have made this little carol beloved in countless families.

The carol emphasizes the lowliness of Jesus’ birth. Instead of a palace, the future King of Kings was born in a stable. Instead of an elaborate crib, He was placed in a feeding trough. Instead of courtly attendants and servants and physicians, there were only cattle softly lowing. The carol also seems to imply that instead of a gilded ceiling, the place of Jesus’ birth was open to the night sky. But one thing is dubious – “no crying He makes.” Probably the baby Jesus cried normally, just as all human infants cry, for it’s their only means of communication! We needn’t think that all crying is due to personal sin.

The humbleness of Jesus’ birth, the “ordinariness” of His family and surroundings, was a stumbling block to those whose hearts were closed, Matthew 13:55-58. They expected that a powerful king who could deliver them from Rome would have had a far more impressive origin. They thought that someone who apparently had the great wisdom and miraculous powers of a mighty prophet couldn’t possibly come from an ordinary human family, especially a family that was familiar to them. And so their preconceived ideas, born of arrogance and pride, prevented them from believing in Jesus.

What preconceived ideas of people today prevent them from believing in Jesus?

### **Family Activity:**

Find some paper and draw the manger scene. Look online for examples.

## JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior 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.

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.

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.

## DAY 14

**Genesis 3:17-18, Psalm 65:9-13, 96:11-12, 98:1-9**

This carol was authored by the great hymn writer Isaac Watts in 1719. Watts wrote some 750 hymns, and also a textbook on logic which was used at Oxford for 100 years. “Joy to the World” was set to its famous melody by someone unknown, maybe in the 19th century. The carol is the “most published Christmas hymn in North America.” If you can play the D major scale on the piano, you can play this carol, for the first two phrases follow the notes down the scale, as “the Lord comes” and as “the Savior reigns.” Then, as “earth receives her King,” the notes rise back up to the top of the scale.

Watts’ poem relies primarily on Psalm 98, which looks forward prophetically to the time when the Messiah King will rule the earth and the creation will rejoice along with all of Messiah’s subjects. The carol is almost a prayer that this would happen – that earth would receive her King (Who had come) and that every heart would make room for Him. When Jesus appeared in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, many hearts did indeed make room for Him, but many more did not, and His earthly kingdom reign was postponed. But the great thing is that His sacrificial death and His resurrection made it possible that every heart could do so. The third verse speaks to this: “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.” Jesus will completely reverse the curse on man and on his world one day, and so we can rejoice and celebrate the “wonders of His love!”

Do you think that man’s sin has affected the physical world? How so?

### **Family Activity:**

Write down and cut out each letter from this line in the song: “Joy to the World, the Lord Has Come.” Mix the letters up and see how quickly your kids can put the letters back in order. For extra fun, join in the competition and see how quickly you can do it.



**YOU WILL FIND A  
BABY WRAPPED IN  
SWADDLING  
CLOTHES & LYING  
IN A MANGER**

# REFLECTION

What Child Is This?

Mary, Did You Know?

O Holy Night

I Wonder as I Wander

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Some Children See Him

The Holly and the Ivy

## WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.

Refrain

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,  
Come rich and poor, to own Him;  
The King of kings, salvation brings,  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Refrain

## DAY 15

**Matthew 1:1, 18-25, Luke 2:26-33**

William Chatterton Dix wrote the words to this carol in 1865 and someone paired it with the lovely music of “Greensleeves.” Dix was the manager of an insurance company in England when he fell severely ill, leaving him bedridden and depressed. While he was recovering, he read the Bible and underwent a spiritual revival. Evidently, this carol was written out of that experience. “Greensleeves” is an ancient melody, dating back to the 16th century. The music is a fitting setting for Dix’s poem, with the joyful refrain answering the serious questions in the first two verses. What Child is this? He is Christ the King.

The third verse encourages us to “own” the Child, that is, to enthrone Him into our lives. Here He is called the “King of kings” (Christ, the Messiah), who “brings salvation” (Jesus, Savior). He is King - Christ, and He is Savior - Jesus. This is why the New Testament writers so often refer to Him as “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus.”

From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, God has been on a two-fold “recovery” program. He is re-establishing His sovereign reign, the Kingdom theme, and He is saving sinners who reject Him, the Redemption theme. You can see this in Matthew 1:1, where Jesus Christ is both the “Son of David” (the Kingdom theme) and the “Son of Abraham” (the Redemption theme). The angel’s message to Joseph in Matthew emphasizes the Redemption theme, and the angel’s message to Mary in Luke 2 emphasizes the Kingdom theme.

Do you think that modern Christianity emphasizes the Redemption theme over the Kingdom theme? Why or why not?

## MARY, DID YOU KNOW?

Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?  
Mary did you know that your baby boy  
would save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?  
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?  
Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?  
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God

Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?  
Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the Lamb

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?  
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?  
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am  
Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?  
Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Oh  
Mary did you know?

## DAY 16

**Luke 2:15-19**

This is a modern carol that has already become part of our bank of beloved Christmas music. The lyrics were written by Mark Lowry in 1984 and the music composed by Buddy Greene in 1991. Hundreds of artists have recorded it, and YouTube tallies almost 300 million views of the Pentatonix recording of it. Lowry describes his thinking: “I just tried to put into words the unfathomable. I started thinking of the questions I would have for her if I were to sit down and have coffee with Mary. You know, ‘What was it like raising God?’ ‘What did you know?’ ‘What didn’t you know?’”

The song asks Mary if she knows a number of things about Jesus and what He will do – that He would perform miracles, that He would save her and others, that He would one day rule the nations. We don’t know, of course, how much Mary knew. She knew what the angel had said to her and to Joseph. She knew what Elizabeth and Zacharias had said about her Baby. She knew what the shepherds must have said about the angel’s announcement. And later she would know what the Magi said, and what Anna and Simeon prophesied about Him. She was certainly putting this all together with Old Testament prophecies. There was more than enough to meditate on!

Perhaps the most striking words in this piece are these: “Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God?”

It is good to think about the questions as we sing this, and to reflect on the possible answers. What can you do this Christmas season to better appreciate the things that Mary must have “pondered in her heart?”

## O HOLY NIGHT

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!  
Long lay the world, in sin and error pining,  
'Till He appear'd and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!  
O night divine! O night, O night divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,  
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.  
So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,  
Here came the wise men from the Orient land.  
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger,  
In all our trials born to be our friend.  
He knows our need, to our weakness no stranger;  
Behold your King! Before the Lowly bend!  
Behold your King! Your King! Before Him bend.

## DAY 17

**Hebrews 2:9-18, 4:14-16**

This carol is surely the most popular Christmas solo ever written. In 1847, it was composed in French by Cappeau de Roquemaure and given its melody by Adolphe Charles Adam. The original French poem is more theologically specific than our current English version. It mentions the “stain of original sin,” the “wrath of the Father” and that Jesus “suffers and dies.” (See the “Literal English Translation” in Wikipedia’s article on “O Holy Night.”)

Our version celebrates the night of Jesus’ birth and likens the significance of His birth to a “new and glorious morn.” The second verse emphasizes the humanity of the Savior who was “born to be our friend,” and who “knows our need” and is “no stranger” to our needs, a fact which the writer of Hebrews makes very clear.

What does the fact that Jesus was fully and completely human mean to you personally?

## I WONDER AS I WANDER

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,  
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.  
For poor on'ry people like you and like I . . . .  
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,  
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.  
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,  
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,  
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,  
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,  
He surely could have it, 'cause He was the King.

## DAY 18

**Exodus 6:6-8, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, John 3:16-17,  
1 John 4:7-11**

This haunting carol comes from deep in the Appalachian culture. John Jacob Niles, the “Dean of American Balladeers,” in July of 1933 attended a meeting of revivalists in North Carolina where a poor unwashed little girl sang the first three lines of this song. According to Niles’ autobiography, he left the meeting with the “three lines of verse, a garbled fragment of melodic material – and a magnificent idea.” From these he constructed the carol.

The first and last verses say “I wonder as I wander out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die, for poor or ’nry people like you and like I” (the first three lines). The second and third verses speak of the humbleness of Jesus’ birth when, if He so chose, He could have had anything He wanted, for “He was the King.”

We do wonder at times why Jesus did what He did, in becoming a man and dying on a cross, separated from His Father, to bear the penalty of our sins. Perhaps the best answer as to why He did it is that He simply chose to do so, out of His love. This is also why God chose Israel to be His special people. It wasn’t because of their great numbers or impressive accomplishments. It was simply because He chose to do so!

Can you think of a time you did something special for someone, not for any particular reason other than the prompting of love?

### **Family Activity:**

Talk as a family and decide what you can do for one or more of your neighbors. Ideas: bake cookies, sing Christmas carols, buy them a gift, or bring them a card. Be ready to share with your neighbors why you celebrate Christmas.

## O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

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.

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 men on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is giv'n!  
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.

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 Emmanuel.

## DAY 19

**John 1:9-13, 2 Corinthians 9:15, Ephesians 2:4-9**

Phillips Brooks, who wrote these words, was a highly regarded pastor in Boston in the 19th century. In 1865, at the age of thirty, he took a pilgrimage to Israel. While there, he rode on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to minister at a midnight service around Christmas time. Several years later he wrote a poem about it to tell to the children of his church. On a Saturday in 1868 he asked Lewis Redner, the church organist, to put the words to music. The very next day the music and the words were ready for the Sunday classes.

This carol is somewhat unusual with its quiet and even romantic words and music and with its emphasis on silence. With the words “How still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by,” we can almost see Phillips Brooks approaching Bethlehem on a starry night with only the sound of the horse’s hooves striking the ground. Brooks then likens his silent approach to Bethlehem with Jesus’ “silent” approach into the world – “How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv’n!” And then he likens this silent approach to the entrance of Jesus into a believing heart – “No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still, the Dear Christ enters in.” Finally, there is rejoicing in the last verse, after we have prayed “Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today!”

The receiving of Jesus Christ as Savior does not require noise, or activity, or effort, or outward display. It requires only the faith of an open heart. And often, silence is the most conducive venue in which that step of faith can take place.

If you had been there at the manger scene, would you have spoken or would you have been silent? Why?

### **Family Activity:**

See how long your family can sit in silence. You can make goofy faces at each other and see who makes noise first.

## SOME CHILDREN SEE HIM

Some children see Him lily white, the baby Jesus born this night.

Some children see Him lily white, with tresses soft and fair.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown,

The Lord of heav'n to earth come down.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown, with dark and heavy hair.

Some children see Him almond-eyed,

This Savior whom we kneel beside.

Some children see Him almond-eyed, with skin of yellow hue.

Some children see Him dark as they,

Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray.

Some children see him dark as they, and, ah! they love Him, too!

The children in each different place

Will see the baby Jesus' face

Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace, and filled with holy light.

O lay aside each earthly thing

And with thy heart as offering,

Come worship now the infant King.

'Tis love that's born tonight!

## DAY 20

**Isaiah 42:1-7, 59:20-60:3, Luke 1:78-79**

This very pointed carol has become more popular over the years. It was composed by Alfred Burt, the son of a pastor who composed carols as Christmas messages to his congregation every year. Alfred took over the tradition in 1941. Using words supplied by Wihla Hutson, the organist at the family church, Alfred also composed a carol every year. His mother, the pastor's wife, selected art work, put the carols on Christmas cards and addressed them. Their Christmas card list grew to 450! This carol was on the 1951 Christmas card.

The carol describes how various ethnic children see the baby Jesus: Some see Him “lily white,” some “bronzed and brown,” some “almond eyed,” and some “dark as they.” The third verse draws a conclusion: “The children in each diff’rent place will see the Baby Jesus’ face like theirs, but bright with heav’nly grace . . . O lay aside each earthly thing, and with thy heart as offering, come worship now the Infant King . . .” It is certainly true that we tend to see Jesus as looking like ourselves, but the important truth here is that Jesus came to die for all mankind – for all human races, Jews and everyone else (“Gentiles”). This was made plain in Isaiah 42 and 60, long before He was born. One of the glories of the New Testament churches was that racial distinctions became irrelevant in light of the coming of Jesus.

If Jesus had come as a man of a race different from your own, would your thoughts about Him be any different? Why do you think Scripture doesn't describe His physical appearance?

## THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,  
Of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown:

Refrain

The rising of the sun and the running of the deer,  
The playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.  
The holly bears a blossom, as white as the lily flower,  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to be our sweet Savior:

Refrain

The holly bears a berry, as red as any blood,  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to do poor sinners good:

Refrain

The holly bears a prickle, as sharp as any thorn,  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ on Christmas Day in the morn.

Refrain

The holly bears a bark, as bitter as any gall,  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to redeem us all:

Refrain

Repeat vs. 1 and refrain.

## DAY 21

**Luke 1:34-35, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Matthew 27:29, 48  
Revelation 19:12, 16**

This carol is a traditional English folk-carol with unknown origins. We know that it dates back at least to the early 18th century. The religious associations of holly and ivy are not limited to Christianity, but go way back to the Druids in Gaul and the Romans in Italy. Like a number of our Christmas customs, Christianity took over their pagan associations and gave them new or more significant meanings. This carol is a good example.

The “white as the lily flower” of the holly, verse 2, reminds us of the purity and holiness of the Lord Jesus, born of a virgin, so He could “be our Savior.” The red holly berry speaks of the blood of Christ as He died to “do poor sinners good,” vs. 3 of the carol. The holly “bears a prickle as sharp as any thorn,” verse 4, reminding us of the crown of thorns placed on Jesus’ head prior to His crucifixion. The holly “bears a bark as bitter as any gall,” vs. 5, reminding us of the bitter drink offered Jesus on the cross, “to redeem us all.” And over and over, the carol asserts that of all the trees in the wood, and indeed over the “rising of the sun” and the “running of the deer,” and over the music of mankind, the holly tree stands supreme. It “bears the crown” – not only the crown of thorns, but the crown of the King of Kings!

Did Jesus Himself talk about symbols relating to His life or death?

### **Family Activity:**

Have your kids draw a picture of the cross. Then, write on or around the cross some reasons why your family is thankful for Jesus’ death on the cross.



**GLORY TO GOD IN  
THE HIGHEST, &  
ON EARTH PEACE  
AMONG THOSE  
WITH WHOM HE  
IS PLEASED**

# SALVATION

Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Holy

Silent Night

Angels We Have Heard On High

## THOU DIDST LEAVE THY THRONE

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room  
For Thy holy nativity:

### Refrain

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee.  
Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But of lowly birth didst Thou come to earth, and in greatest humility:

### Refrain

The foxes found rest, and the birds their nest  
In the shade of the forest tree;  
But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God,  
In the deserts of Galilee:

### Refrain

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word  
That should set Thy people free;  
But with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn,  
They bore Thee to Calvary:

### Refrain

When the heavens shall ring, and the angels sing,  
At Thy coming to victory,  
Let Thy voice call me home, saying "Yes there is room,  
There is room at My side for thee."

My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus, when Thou comest and callest for  
me.

## DAY 22

**Luke 2:7, Philippians 2:1-11**

Emily Elliott wrote this carol in the mid-19th century for the children in her father's parish in Brighton, England. An organist and composer of 100 hymn tunes, Timothy R. Matthews composed the music especially for Elliot's words.

Elliott wrote the carol to clarify the meaning of the Nativity, building on Luke 2:7 which says there was no room for the family in the inn. The carol skillfully contrasts the splendor of heaven with the actual circumstances of Jesus' birth, life, and crucifixion. Speaking to Jesus, the carol says "Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown when Thou camest to earth for me." The second verse says that although "Heaven's arches rang" with angels singing about His "royal degree," He came to earth with a "lowly birth" and in "greatest humility."

Notice how personal the carol is, with the repetitions of "me" and "my." The point is that although there was no room in the inn, there is room in the writer's heart for Him. "O come to my heart, Lord Jesus; there is room in my heart for Thee."

Why did God have His Son, the coming King, born in such humble circumstances, rather than in a setting befitting Him?

# HOLY

The highest of thrones You left for a manger  
Born as the hope of man  
The perfect solution for our redemption  
Fulfilling the Fathers plan

## Refrain

Holy  
Oh my God You're holy  
You're the one and only  
Worthy of all praise  
Glory  
I give all the glory  
To the one and only  
Name above all names

Shepherds and angels  
Together in worship  
Welcome You with a song  
And still on the earth we  
Join with the heavens  
Adoring You Christ the LORD

## Refrain

Jesus Christ the chosen one  
There's no one like You LORD  
Jesus Christ the saving lamb  
Our praise is Yours alone

## Refrain

## DAY 23

**Isaiah 6:1-7, Philippians 2:5-7, John 6:38-40**

“Holy” is a newer song written by David Leonard. The chorus for the song was originally written as a song for Easter, extolling praise to the holiness and glory of God in light of salvation. However, after thinking through the height and depth of God’s character shown in the chorus, he realized that the song fit so well with Christmas.

There is something incredibly beautiful about pairing the perfect holiness of God – that characteristic that sets him apart and so high above us – and matching that with the humility of the incarnation. In any worldly context, these characteristics shouldn’t coexist, and yet in the birth of Jesus Christ we can respond with awe and wonder at the fact that the infinite, holy, glorious God of the universe humbled himself to be born as a helpless baby. We see these two realities held in tension throughout the song — from Jesus came from “the highest of thrones” to “a manger,” and both “shepherds” and “angels” were worshipping together.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ – that God came to us — is the reality that sets our faith apart from any other religion. It is not our job to work hard to be good enough to reach God. Instead, he saw it fit, out of the abundance of his love and grace, to come down to us. It was the perfect solution that fulfilled the Father’s plan that Jesus would enter into our experience to rescue us from sin and the death that we deserve.

Together, we can join with the shepherds and angels and followers of Christ throughout history who have all raised their voices in praise to God who is holy, worthy of all praise, come to us as Jesus Christ the chosen one.

List out a few characteristics connected to the holiness of God. How does your perspective of Jesus as a baby change in light of these attributes?

## SILENT NIGHT

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.

Silent night! Holy Night! Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav’nly hosts sing Alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior is born, Christ, the Savior is born.

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.

## DAY 24

**Malachi 4:2, Isaiah 42:6, 60:19, Psalm 27:1, Luke 1:78-79,  
John 1:9, 3:19, 8:12, 12:35-36**

This is surely the most beloved Christmas carol in the world, having been translated into 140 languages, and being declared an “intangible cultural heritage” by UNESCO. The story of its creation is well-known. Joseph Mohr, a young priest at Oberndorf near Salzburg, Austria, wrote the words in 1816. Before Christmas Eve in 1818, river flooding had damaged the church organ so Mohr took the words to Franz Gruber, an organist in a nearby village, and Gruber composed the music. The completed carol, accompanied by guitar, was then used at the Christmas Eve Mass. The organ builder who maintained the Oberndorf organ liked the song and took it to his town, where several folk singing groups began performing it, and from there it spread all the way to the United States by 1839.

Like the carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” this carol paints a picture of a quiet, calm, silent evening with the virgin Mary tending the sleeping infant. The second verse, however, is not so quiet, as it describes the interruption of the shepherd’s calm by the “heavenly hosts singing Alleluia,” and their joyful announcement that “Christ the Savior is born.” The third verse speaks of “radiant beams” from the holy face of the child. We might take issue with the idea that there were actually beams of light emanating from Jesus’s face, but we must not forget that this Baby is the Light of the world!

If you could skillfully paint the baby Jesus, how would you show that He is the Light of the world?

## ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Glo - - - - -ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?

Refrain

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Refrain

See Him in a manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.

Refrain

## DAY 25

**Luke 1:30-35, 2:13-14, Mark 11:1-10**

Probably sometime in the 18th century this carol was composed in French by persons unknown. It is widely sung every Christmas time.

This carol gives the singer an opportunity to learn a little Latin! “Gloria in excelsis Deo” means “glory to God in the Highest,” the words which the heavenly host of angels sang to the shepherds. These words of praise affirm that the God we worship, and that the shepherds worshipped, is the one and only true God (the “Highest”), and that He is the One responsible for the conception and birth of Jesus the Messiah and Savior into the world. This is what Gabriel said to Mary before Jesus was conceived: Mary’s baby would be the “Son of the Highest.”

We find similar words of praise in another significant setting, the Triumphal Entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. The crowds going before and after Jesus were shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest!” “Hosanna,” one of the few Hebrew words in our language, literally means “Save us.” By New Testament times, it was a shout of joy and praise to God. As Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, the great crowds were echoing the words of the crowd of angels at Jesus’ birth: “Praise to God in the highest!” Unfortunately, the nation as a whole did not share this sentiment, and instead of crowning Jesus King, they crucified Him, little knowing that, by their actions, He would be the Savior of all who trusted in Him.

One other occurrence of the word “highest” is in Luke 6:35. What insight about “the Highest” do you find there?



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① DECEMBER 23

3:30PM | 5PM

① DECEMBER 24

11AM | 12:30PM | 2PM | 3:30PM

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