

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020



History of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

In 1880, an Anglican minister named E.W. Benson designed a special service for his church, which met in a large wooden shed in Truro, England. Nine Christmas carols were sung and various members of the churches adapted the services for their own use.

In 1918, the service was held for the first time at King's College in Cambridge, England and a tradition was born. The service gained wider popularity during the First World War as an opportunity in the midst of the despair of war to hear from Holy Scripture the unfolding story of the loving purposes of God. The choir began to broadcast the service on the BBC in 1928, a tradition that continued annually until the present, now with a listening audience of millions worldwide. The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is now a beloved favorite in thousands of churches around the world.

Through this service, millions have been comforted and encouraged through the years. As we worship tonight, let us hear again the loving purposes of God as seen through the windows of words of scripture and song.



Order of Worship
www.crosssound.org

OPENING PRAYER

Let it be our joy tonight to prepare ourselves to hear the message of the angels in heart and mind to go even to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to be, and with the shepherds and the wise men adore the Child lying in his mother's arms.

Let us read and mark in God's word the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of human sin to the glorious redemption brought to us by this Holy Child; and in company with the whole Church let us make this our church glad with our songs of praise:

But first let us pray:

For the needs of the whole world;

For peace and good will over all the earth.

For this, O Lord, we pray.

Lord, hear our prayer.

And let us remember the poor and the helpless:

The cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick in body and in mind and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the elderly and the little children and all who know not the loving kindness of the Lord.

For this, O Lord, we pray.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us also remember all those who have gone before us in the faith;

Those who rejoice in Christ with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which none can number, whose hope was in Jesus Christ: and let us pray that we may be counted among that fellowship of the saints, receiving grace to offer unto God our service, living in unity and fellowship with all his people, and giving honor to all that he has made.

For this, O Lord, we pray.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray together as Christ taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

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 world Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see Thee,
Dayspring from on high appear;
Come, thou promised rod of Jesse,
Of Thy birth we long to hear;
O'er the hills the angels singing,
News, glad tidings of a birth:
"Go to Him, your praises bringing,
Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness,
He whose glories knew no end;
By His life He brings us gladness,
Our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend;
Leaving riches without number,
Born within a cattle stall;
This the ever-lasting wonder:
Christ was born the Lord of all!

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.

FIRST LESSON (GENESIS 3:8-19)

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

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.”

To the woman he said,
“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from
the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’
“Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

Let all Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Let all mortal flesh keep silence
and with fear and trembling stand
Ponder nothing earthly minded
for with blessing in his hand
Christ our God to Earth descendeth
our full homage to demand

King of kings yet born of Mary,
as of old on Earth he stood
Lord of Lords in human vesture
in the body and the blood
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way
As the light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day
That the powers of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away

At his feet the six wing-ed seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye
Veil their faces to his presence
as with ceaseless voice they cry
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia Lord most high!

SECOND LESSON (GENESIS 22:15-18)

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

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, O Rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
That trust your mighty power to save;
bring them in vict'ry through the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, our Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thy advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations,
bind all people in one heart and mind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
and be Thyself our King of Peace!
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

THIRD LESSON (ISAIAH 9:2,6-7)

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned

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.

Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

FOURTH LESSON (ISAIAH 11:1-4,6-9)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the
LORD -

and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of
the earth.

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the
LORD as the waters cover the sea.

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear

It came upon a midnight clear
That glorious song of old
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold
“Peace on the earth, good will to men
From heaven’s all gracious King;”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O’er all the weary world
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing;
And ever o’er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

O ye, beneath life’s crushing load
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing.

FIFTH LESSON (LUKE 1:26-38)

In the sixth month, 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.”

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 be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name 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 the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.” “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.”

Then the angel left her.

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

Hark, the herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled”
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
“Christ is born in Bethlehem”
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ by highest heav’n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin’s womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris’n 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
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”

SIXTH LESSON (LUKE 2:1-7)

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 his 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. 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 room for them in the inn.

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?

(chorus)

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.

(chorus)

Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

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

(chorus)

Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

SEVENTH LESSON (LUKE 2:8-16)

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 the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

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

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

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

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

“All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace:
Good will to men from highest heav’n
Begin and never cease, Begin and never cease.”

EIGHTH LESSON (MATTHEW 2:1-12)

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 in the east 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 Christ was to be born. “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 be the
shepherd of my people Israel.’”

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 make a careful search 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 in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 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 and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King.
Let every 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 blessing 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.

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 you, O Israel!

NINTH LESSON (JOHN 1:1-14)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(Candle lighting) — 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,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleleulia
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the saviour 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.

Blessing

May the God of peace grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.