

The Christmas Miracle

Have you experienced a Christmas miracle? Many people look for something out of the ordinary, something miraculous to set apart Christmas from every other time of the year. Movies portray people sacrificing for others, angels intervening in everyday life, and expressions of generosity and good will coming from unexpected sources. Expectations build for great and inspirational things.

It's not all fiction. There have been some amazing "miracles" at Christmastime. History records the Christmas truce of 1914 when German and allied troops entrenched against each other put down their weapons, exchanged gifts, and sang carols. Maybe you'll receive your own little "miracle" this year!

But if all a Christmas miracle means is some temporary surprise blessing, we're missing the point. The real Christmas miracle is something so out of the ordinary and so far beyond human expectation that only God Himself could bring it about. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). We could imagine that God might send His angels to earth, but who would ever dare to dream that God Himself, the Maker of heaven and earth, would even consider entering His creation, especially when humankind by nature wants nothing to do with Him?

Realistically, why would God care about what happens to you and me when we are so small and insignificant in the big picture? Yet He did care. He cared so much about every human being that He became one of us. *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons"* (Gal. 4:4-5). The Son of God became man to do in our behalf what we could never hope to do for ourselves. He came to be holy that we might be counted as righteous before the Father. He came to assume the blame for all our many faults and failings. The real Christmas miracle is that the Baby in the manger is the Son of God Himself who purely out of divine love came to give Himself for us that we might be called children of God and heirs of heaven.

December 24, 2023
Christmas Eve



Joy
TO THE
World



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✦ Order of Service ✦

P Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving, let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.

C **We have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

C *♫ Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant, Oh, Come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem; Come and behold Him, born the King of angels. Oh, come, let us adore Him. . .*

P The Lord be with you!

C **And with your spirit!**

P As the Lord Jesus once came in love and great poverty to be born in a manger in Bethlehem,

C **So now He comes to us in the richness of His Word.**

C *♫ God of God, Light of Light, Born of a virgin to earth He comes, Very God, Begotten, not created. Oh, come, let us adore Him...*

P As Jesus once came from heaven to earth to live with people,

C **So now He comes in the Word, to give the light of the Spirit.**

P As He came to heal, to forgive, and to save,

C **So now He comes to give us the same blessings of His love.**

P Let us praise the great name of the Lord.

C **Let us sing with our hearts the great songs of His Word.**

C *♫ Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above. Glory to God, in the highest. Oh, come, let us . . .*

P Let us now celebrate His birth.

C **And tell of His coming to the ends of the earth.**

P Let it be so. Amen!

C *♫ Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n. Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing. Oh, come...*

TENTH LESSON: John 1:1-14

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

The Benediction

Numbers 6:24-26

The blessing given by God for His people.

P The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace.

C **Amen!**

At this time, your candles will be lit, and the lights will be dimmed for the singing of "Silent Night."

TLH #646

"Silent Night"

1. Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

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

3. Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

P Thy Kingdom come...

C **This Christmas Eve we also pray, oh Lord, that Your kingdom would come not only to believers in Your Word, but to all who hear Your saving Gospel message that speaks of the birth and redemptive work of our Savior.**

P Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

C **This Christmas Eve we pause again, knowing that Your will is always better than our own will; that Your plan is always better than our own plan. Therefore, we ask that You alone would continue to direct our lives and help us always to follow You above everything else.**

P Give us this day our daily bread...

C **This Christmas Eve we remember all the physical blessings that You have provided for us throughout our lives. You have given us food and clothing—with these help us always to be content.**

P And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

C **This Christmas Eve we thank You, Lord, for canceling the debt of our sins. We know we are undeserving of Your love and mercy. But we ask that You would continually remind us of Your mercy so that we too may show that same mercy and forgiveness to all people.**

P And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...

C **This Christmas Eve we know that the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh will continue to try to rob us of the greatest gift that we have ever been given—our salvation in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we pray that you would help us to resist every temptation and that You would guard and protect our souls from the evil of this world. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

TLH #647

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

NINTH LESSON: Matthew 2:1-11

The Wise Men are led by the star to Jesus.

WS #715

"Where Shepherds Lately Knelt"

P Let us pray. Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen!

Mark 2:17

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus Likes the Broken Ones

Hymn: TLH #87

"Joy to the World"

First Lesson: Genesis 3:8-15

God announces in the Garden of Eden that the woman's Offspring will crush the serpent's head.

TLH #84:1,5

"Christians, Awake, Salute the Happy Morn"

Second Lesson: Genesis 22:15-18

God promises to faithful Abraham that through his offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

TLH #95:1,3-4

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

Third Lesson: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

TLH #103:1-3

"To Shepherds as They Watched by Night"

Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-4, 6-9

The spiritual peace which Christ will bring is portrayed by the total absence of violence.

TLH #85:1-3

"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

Fifth Lesson: Isaiah 60:1-6, 19

The prophet in exile foresees the coming of the glory of the Lord.

TLH #106:1,4

"The People That in Darkness Sat"

Sixth Lesson: Luke 1:26-35, 38

The angel Gabriel greets the blessed Virgin Mary.

TLH #90:1-3,7-8

"Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising"

Seventh Lesson: Matthew 1:18-23

The angel tells Joseph of the birth of Jesus.

Children of Faith

"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 bright 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 'til 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.*

Eighth Lesson: Luke 2:1-14

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

Pastor: And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Men: Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called

Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.

Women: So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.



Pastor: Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

Children: Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

All: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

WS #706

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

✠ **The Offering of Thankful Hearts** ✠

Responsive Lord's Prayer

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- P** Our Father, who art in Heaven...
- C** **This Christmas Eve we thank and praise You for Your Fatherly love that has and continues to comfort our lives with the joy that we have as Your dear children.**
- P** Hallowed be Thy name...
- C** **This Christmas Eve we worship and praise Your most holy name. For as You have reminded us that every knee will bow when You send Your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ to return for the Judgment of the world,**