

CHRISTMAS SEASON BOOK

including

The Advent Season, with Latter-day Saint Scriptural Readings

and

Daily Christmas Scripture Passages, Carols, and Stories for December 1–26, 28, and January 6

The Advent Season

From the Eric and Elaine Huntsman Family

The term "advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "appearance." Advent is the season marking the four Sundays before Christmas and developed as a way of helping Christians prepare not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in his First Coming but also to help them look forward to his glorious Second Coming. Although Advent customs may be foreign to many Latter-day Saints, we have found that, like so many seasonal traditions, they are a wonderful way to turn our attention more fully to the true meaning of Christmas



Elements of Advent liturgy existed by the time of Gregory the Great (Roman pope, A.D. 590–604), and much of the celebration was formalized during his papal reign. Many familiar Advent traditions, however, originated in Germany, where Martin Luther encouraged its continued observance as a way of teaching children and families more about the significance of the coming of Jesus Christ. It is still widely celebrated by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and other high church traditions and has become a common celebration in many Christian faith communities throughout the world.

One of the best known Advent customs is the lighting of the candles in an Advent wreath, a simple or decorated evergreen wreath with four candles placed in the circle and a single white candle in the center. The wreath itself represents the never-ending circle of God's love, that he is the same and forever in his love towards his people. The green of the wreath, as in the Christmas tree, represents the hope of eternal life that comes through Christ and serves a reminder of the freshness of God's love and promises. The light of the candles reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World, that his birth represented the coming of the light into darkness, and that we are called to reflect that light in our lives.

The outer candles are purple, the color of royalty, although customarily the third one is rose or pink. Traditions differ regarding the symbolism of the candles. One is that they represent the hope, love, joy, and peace that come through Jesus Christ. Each Sunday before Christmas an additional candle is lit, creating a beautiful stepped-effect as the previous weeks' candles burn down further. Scriptures can be read and carols sung as part of the lighting, which we do before family prayer. The four candles can also represent the different Old Testament covenants that God made with his servants, beginning with Noah and continuing through Abraham, Moses, and David. The central white candle is known as the Christ candle. It is lit on Christmas Eve and

Christmas Day and represents the new covenant made possible through Christ.

The scriptures below for each candle come from the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the New Testament. While not all families may wish to observe such Advent customs formally, we hope that the scriptures and thoughts that we have selected for each of the Sundays of Advent will be uplifting and provide meaningful reflection on the season.

Each weekly Advent post will be divided into sections. The first section, The Promised Advent, will review prophecies of the nativity of Christ. Then in a section called On The Eve of His Coming we will then bring the story into the gospels by reflecting the experiences of Zacharias, Mary, Elisabeth, and Joseph as they witnessed the realization of these prophecies. For each of these vignettes I have included pictures of the sites in the Holy Land where, by tradition, they are believed to have occurred. The next section will then reflect upon how Jesus fulfills that day's Advent theme, whether it by Hope, Love, Joy, or Peace. The final section, Looking Forward to Christ's Second Advent, will consist of a scripture looking forward to Jesus' promised Second Coming and the blessings that will be realized at his return.



First Advent: Hope

"Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God . . . And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)

While the four Advent themes of hope, love, joy, and peace are sometimes recalled in different orders, hope is almost always the theme celebrated on the First Sunday of Advent. As the first candle of an Advent wreath is lit, a family choosing to use this custom as a way of preparing for Christmas can thus use the occasion to remember how the Christmas Story recalls the birth of the Promised King, an event prophesied and hoped for from the time of Adam until that first Christmas.

An example of this hope is reflected in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus as well as the angel's message to Joseph, promising the birth of Immanuel, or "God with us" (Matthew 1:1-23). But the celebration of Advent does not just remember Jesus' first coming. It can also celebrate his presence and importance in our lives now while also helping us look forward to his second coming.

Reading scriptures that reflect these aspects of the hope that we have in Jesus is a valuable part of a family celebration of Advent. Traditionally Advent scriptures are drawn from Old Testament prophecies that were taken to anticipate the coming of Christ. In our family we draw passages from the New Testament and the Book of Mormon as well, some of which, also look forward to the Second Coming or the promises that will come to us in the next life.

The Promised Advent

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; *because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn . . . " (Isaiah 61:1–3, emphasis added)

"For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and *we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming*; and not only



The first Sunday of Advent is when we set up our Nativity

we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name . . .” (Jacob 4:4–5, emphasis added)



A plaque with the Benedictus in `En Kerem

On the Eve of His Coming: The Annunciation to Zacharias and the Benedictus

I suggest that after discussing that week's theme families also consider reading each week one of the familiar parts of Luke 1 and Matthew 1 that lead up to the actual birth of Jesus. This helps set the realization of the prophecies of Jesus' birth into the immediate context of their fulfillment, and it also adds to the excitement of the Christmas season as we join Zacharias and Elisabeth and then Mary and Joseph in their experiences.

For the first week of Advent, I recommend reading the Annunciation to Zacharias, focusing on how the promise of John the Baptist's birth revolved around how he would prepare the way of the Lord (Luke 1:5–17). This can be followed by the Benedictus, Zacharias' prophetic blessing to his son, which focuses above all on the salvation that the promised Messiah was to bring (Luke 1:67–79).

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;
for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David;
As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets,
which have been since the world began:
That we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all that hate us;
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant;
The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,
that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies
might serve him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before him,
all the days of our life.

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest:
for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
by the remission of their sins,
Through the tender mercy of our God
whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:67–79)

The Hope That Christ Brings

“Therefore Being Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, *and rejoice in hope of the*

glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: *knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope*: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:1–5, emphases added)

"And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that *ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal . . .*" (Moroni 7:41, emphasis added)

Looking Forward to Christ's Second Advent



"Watch ye therefore: *for ye know not when the master of the house cometh*, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." (Mark 13:35–36, emphasis added)

"*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

The traditional Anglican collect from the Book of Common Prayer reads:

> *Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

This is a lovely literary reflection on both the first and the second Advent of Jesus.

Music for Advent

Music is an important part of the celebration of Advent as it is of the Christmas season generally. In some traditions only carols especially meant for Advent are sung in the weeks leading up to Christmas, with Christmas carols themselves being reserved for Christmas Eve and the "Twelve Days of Christmas" that begin with Christmas Day. However, families can use any familiar carols for their home celebrations, though our family always opens our Christmas season by singing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," which is the traditional carol for the beginning of

Advent. The original Latin text dates back as early as the reign of Charlemagne (771–814). The English text and the tune that is now familiar were not published until 1854, though the melody seems to have been based on an earlier French original.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.

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 vict'ry o'er the grave.

Chorus

O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here,
And drive away the shades of night,
And pierce the clouds and bring us light.

Chorus

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height
In ancient times did'st give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.

Chorus



SECOND ADVENT: LOVE



Love infuses Luke's narrative in the first chapter of his Gospel. Implicit in the story of Zacharias and Elisabeth is their love for each other. The miracle of human conception and birth underlies their story as well as that of Mary, reminding us of the love that parents have for their children. Further, these three characters, as well as Joseph from Matthew 1, exhibit great love for the Lord, trusting in his promises and being willing to be obedient to his commands. But above all, interwoven into their stories is God's great love for them and for all humanity. Indeed, this love, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God, underlies the entire story of Jesus' birth, sacrifice, and resurrection, for God so loved the world that he sent his Only Begotten Son (see 1 Nephi 11:22; 14:26; John 3:16–17). This love was not only manifest at Jesus' birth and with his Atonement; it can and should be present in our lives now, and it will fill the world with his return when he establishes his millennial reign, ruling with love as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The second candle of an Advent wreath can be used to celebrate this love that God has shared with us in the person of his Son Jesus. This love is also found in Christ's love for us, and indeed, God calls upon us to share this pure love of Christ, or charity (Moroni 7:47–48), with others not only at Christmas time but always (see *God So Loved the World*, 62).

The Promised Advent

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee*. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands . . ." (Isaiah 49:13–16, emphasis added).

"And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins . . . And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh . . . And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: *Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men*; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things" (1 Nephi 11:14–22, emphases added).

On the Eve of His Coming: The Annunciation to Mary

As we draw closer to Christmas on the Second Sunday of Advent, I suggest that families also read the story of the annunciation to Mary. This brings the promises of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon to the very verge of realization even as it focuses on the miracle of the incarnation.



And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Then said Mary unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" And the angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."



And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:26–38)

The combination of these scriptures about the promised advent that focus on love together with the story of Gabriel's annunciation to Mary find musical expression in the traditional Advent hymn *Veni, Redemptor Gentium* or "Redeemer of Nations, Come." Composed by St. Ambrose of Milan c. 397, I share a translation of just the first three verses here:

Redeemer of the nations, come;
Virgin's Son, here make Thy home!
Marvel now, O heaven and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood;
By the Spirit of our God
Was the Word of God made flesh,
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
Of the virgin undefiled!
Though by all the world disowned,
Still to be in heaven enthroned.

Though much of the video footage from "The Nativity Story" used with this song comes from later in the Infancy Narrative, the words of Amy Grant's contemporary song, "Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)" also beautifully catches Mary's perspective as she accepted her divine call with faith.

I have traveled many moonless nights
Cold and weary with a babe inside
And I wonder what I've done
Holy Father you have come
And chosen me now
To carry your son

I am waiting in a silent prayer
I am frightened by the load I bear
In a world as cold as stone
Must I walk this path alone
Be with me now
Be with me now

Breath of heaven
Hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven
Breath of heaven
Lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven

Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of your plan
Help me be strong
Help me be
Help me

The Love That Christ Brings

"*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16–17, emphasis added).

"*But charity is the pure love of Christ*, and it endureth forever . . . wherefore, my beloved brethren, *pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love*, which he has bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ . . ." (Moroni 7:47–48a, emphasis added).

Looking Forward to Christ's Second Advent

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [and daughters] of God . . . Beloved, now are we the sons [and daughters] of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1–2).

The traditional Anglican collect for Second Advent from the Book of Common Prayer reads:

> *Merciful God, who didst send thy messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Music for Advent

One of the earliest Christmas carols is "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (*Corde natus ex parentis*), a Latin poem written by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, who lived between A.D. 348 and about 405. Later sing to the haunting Medieval plainchant *Divinium mysterium*, the five of its original nine verses that appear below beautifully capture the second Advent theme of love, Jesus' premortal divinity, the miracle of his conception, and the praise and honor that we owe him:

Of the Father's love begotten
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega —
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see
evermore and evermore.

O that birth forever blessed,
when a virgin, blest with grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Savior of our race;
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

This is he whom seers in old time
chanted of with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected;
let creation praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.

Let the heights of heaven adore him;
angel hosts, his praises sing:
powers, dominions, bow before him
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice in concert ring
evermore and evermore.

Christ, to you, with God the Father
and the Spirit, there shall be
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and the shout of jubilee:
honor, glory, and dominion
and eternal victory
evermore and evermore.

Different carols recalling the love and adoration that we feel toward God and his Son can be sung as part of a family celebration of Advent. Though neither of these is strictly an Advent carol, two of our favorites are "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "O Holy Night" because of their references to our symbolically coming to adore the baby King at his birth. Although the exact origins of the text of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and its tune are uncertain, the earliest Latin text, Adeste fideles, is attributed to John Francis Wade, an English Catholic who wrote it about 1742. We like to sing this carol on the Second Sunday of Advent because its chorus, which repeats the phrase "Oh, come, let us adore him," reflects the love that we feel for Jesus.

"O Holy Night" similarly reflects the theme of adoration with its refrain that begins with "fall on

your knees." Originally a French song with words by Placide Cappeau (1808–77) and a musical setting by Adolphe Adam (1803–56), its title in that language is *Cantique de Noèl* or *Minuit Chrétiens.* In addition to the adoration expressed in its repeated chorus, "O Holy Night" also accords well with the Advent theme of love in its final verse. (see *God So Loved the World*, 63).

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 soul rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Fall on your knees
Oh hear the angel voices
Oh night divine
Oh night when Christ was born
Oh night divine
Oh 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 come the wise men from Orient land
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend

Truly He taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name



THIRD ADVENT: JOY



Luke's account of the Savior's birth, complete with the angel's annunciation of "good tidings of great joy," provides one of the most joyful scenes in scripture. Traditionally the third Sunday of Advent is known as *Gaudete Sunday*, from the Latin injunction "Rejoice!" Frequently read on this Sunday is the verse, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). While the entire season leading up to a Christmas is a joyful period today, historically Advent was largely a solemn season of preparation, but *Gaudete Sunday* was a welcome reminder that the Christmas message was, in fact, one of happiness and rejoicing.

As a result, the third candle in many Advent wreaths is often pink or rose-colored, setting it off from the other three purple candles. However, I find another useful image in the pink candle, choosing to see it as representing the blood of Christ that he would shed in his Passion, reminding us in the midst of Christmas preparations that Jesus came into the world foremost as a sacrifice. Nevertheless, the sorrow of Christ's suffering and death is blotted out as we triumph in his resurrection, and we anticipate the return of Jesus in his Second Coming with joy *(Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 94).

The Promised Advent

- "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth" (Isaiah 12:2–5, emphasis added)
- "And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come *to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy*. For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, *that they may also be filled with joy*. For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay . . . And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary." (Mosiah 3:3–8, emphases added)

On the Eve of His Coming: The Visitation and the *Magnificat*

Early in her pregnancy, Mary traveled to the hill country of Judea, where her relative Elisabeth

lived. Upon her arrival, both Elisabeth and her yet-unborn son John received witnesses from the Holy Ghost that Mary's child was the promised Savior, a testimony that filled them with joy. In turn Mary responded with an inspired, poetic song of praise, known traditionally as the Magnificat.



The hill country of Judah at `En Kerem



Elaine and Rachel at the Church of the Visitation

"*And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."*

And Mary said,

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers,
to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.



The Church of the Visitation at `En Kerem

And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house." (Luke 1:39–56)

The Joy that Christ Brings

- "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, *but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, *and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*" (John 16:20–22, emphasis added)
- "*And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy*; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one." (3 Nephi 28:10, emphasis added)

Looking Forward to Christ's Second Advent

- "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice*, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls . . . But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, *when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy*." (1 Peter 1:6–9, 4:13, emphases added)

The traditional Anglican collect for Third Advent from the Book of Common Prayer reads:

> *Stir up thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*

Music for Advent (see *Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 93–94)

The best known carol that sings of joy is, of course, "Joy to the World." The text is a Christian paraphrase of Psalm 98 by Isaac Watts (1674–1748), and it was firmly associated with the hymn tune "Antioch" by Lowell Mason (1792–1872) in 1836. Popular with many Christian groups, different churches have adjusted the lyrics slightly to accord with their own beliefs or sensitivities. Latter-day Saints are no different, following the lead of W. W. Phelps and changing "and heaven and nature sing" in the last three lines of the first verse to "and saints and angels sing." Because it is both familiar and fun to sing, our family always sings this carol at the end of

our third Advent celebration.

While “Joy to the World” may be a natural and easy Christmas carol to sing in connection with this Advent theme, I am personally attracted to “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring,” even though it is not strictly a Christmas song. From Bach’s cantata *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*, the English rendition most commonly sung certainly catches the joy and mystery found in the Incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus Christ:

Jesu, joy of man’s desiring,
Holy wisdom, love most bright;
Drawn by Thee, our souls aspiring
Soar to uncreated light.
Word of God, our flesh that fashioned,
With the fire of life impassioned,
Striving still to truth unknown,
Soaring, dying round Thy throne.



Third Advent 2020

Because I like to link the pink of the third candle to both the Advent theme of joy and the anticipation of Jesus’ saving blood, I also like to at least read through or think about the words of the carol “The Holly and the Ivy.” This traditional English carol was set to a French melody by Cecil Sharp (1859–1924) in 1861. Employing pre-Christian symbols, it nonetheless powerfully anticipates the Passion of Christ:

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.

Oh, 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 lily flower;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Savior.

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

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

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

FOURTH ADVENT: PEACE



The Babe of Bethlehem, who came as the True King of Israel, stood in marked contrast to Herod the Great, the technical "King of the Jews" at the time. Jesus was, as Isaiah prophesied, above all a "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). However, the peace that Jesus brings to our lives is more often internal and spiritual than it is external and temporal.

While the prophesies of Isaiah describe an era of world peace that Christ will establish in the Millennium with his Second Advent, the joyful message of both Christmas and Easter is that we can have peace in this life now, regardless of the earthly circumstances in which we may find ourselves. War, terrorism, crime, and social injustice and violence may destroy outward peace, and the loss of loved ones, grief, disappointments, faded faith, and a host of worries can crumble our inner peace. But through Jesus Christ, we can be reconciled to God, having peace of conscience and the quiet, strengthening support of his spirit in times of trouble and heartache. Then, once we are at peace with God, we can work, heart by heart, at being at peace with those around us.

In the New Testament, Paul describes "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), and in the Doctrine and Covenants we are promised that we can have "peace in this world" as well as "eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). Accordingly, on the last Sunday of Advent, which is the last Sunday before Christmas itself, we celebrate the peace that the birth of Jesus promised and the Atonement of Christ accomplished.

The Promised Advent

- "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: *But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . .*" (Isaiah 11:1–4, emphasis added)
- "And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. *For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people*; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people; For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead." (Mosiah 15:18–20, emphasis added)

On the Eve of His Coming: The Annunciation to Joseph



The Church of St. Joseph in Nazareth

Although it is not known exactly when the angel came to Joseph, the fact that it happened after Mary "was found with child" places it securely after Gabriel's annunciation to Mary and probably after she returned from her visitation to Elisabeth, when her pregnancy would have been obvious.

One can only imagine the emotional turmoil that Joseph felt as he struggled with the knowledge that his fiancee was pregnant. The angel's message no doubt brought peace to this good man, who had already shown that he was eager to do the right thing by Mary and the child.

When as . . . Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son . . . (Matthew 1:18–25)



With Elaine and Samuel in front of the Holy Family

Joseph and Jesus, Our Children and Us (from *God So Loved the World*, 34)

The story of how Joseph the Carpenter accepted, protected, raised, and no doubt loved a precious child who was not his own is one that stirs the heart. In many traditions, his goodness and faithful discharge of his special mission has earned him the title Saint Joseph, and he is honored together with Mary and the Baby Jesus as part of a Holy Family. After the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke and the brief story of the boy Jesus in the temple, Joseph is never heard of again. Passing references to Jesus' supposed father (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 6:42) together with his absence otherwise later in the Gospels seem to suggest that he was no longer alive when the adult Jesus began his public ministry. We are left instead with the impression of a very good man, the loving husband of a special woman and the guardian of a precious child.



Guido Reni, "Saint Joseph with the Infant Jesus"

Those who have adopted or fostered the children of others may identify particularly with Joseph. But those of us who have biological children of our own or even those who have not yet been blessed with any children can still learn a dear lesson from the example of Joseph. In a real sense, none of our children are our own. Priceless spirit children of heavenly Parents, all children on this earth are only here on loan from a loving God who trusts all of us—parents, grandparents, family, friends, and even strangers—to protect, care for, teach, and love them.

Occasionally on Christmas Eve I give each member of my family a card depicting Mary with Jesus or Joseph with Jesus. We each take some time to write on the back of it some gift that we will give the Savior that coming year. Without fail, looking at an artistic depiction of Joseph fills me with a great sense of duty and gratitude. Looking at the image of Mary underscores for me that Elaine is not just my wife; she is herself a daughter of God. Thinking of how I hope some man will one day treat my own daughter, Rachel, I realize how my Father in Heaven wants me to treat Elaine. In other words, God is not just my Heavenly Father; he is, in a sense, also my father-in-law! And as I look at my own precious children, I feel, like Joseph, that I have been entrusted with a great treasure. Recognizing that Joseph was a strong, responsible, and loving man who sought and received revelation to care for his family, I am inspired to emulate those qualities. In those moments, the gift I hope to give my Lord that year is to be more like Joseph the Carpenter.

The Peace that Christ Brings



- "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)
- "Therefore being justified by faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1–2, emphasis added)
- "Be careful for nothing (alt., "do not worry or be anxious about anything"); but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*." (Philippians 4:6–7, emphasis added)
- " . . . the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and *having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ* . . ." (Mosiah 4:3, emphasis added)
- "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and *you shall have peace in me*." (D&C 19:23, emphasis added)

Looking Forward to Christ's Second Advent

- "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:6–10, emphases added)
- "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:2–14, emphasis added)

The traditional Anglican collect for Fourth Advent from the Book of Common Prayer reads:

> *Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that thy Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Music for Advent

A fitting carol for the last Sunday of Advent is "It Came upon the Midnight Clear," the last verse of which speaks of the time "when the new heaven and earth shall own the Prince of Peace their king."

It came upon the 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 heav'n's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still thru the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hov'ring wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

For lo! the days are hast'ning on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heav'n and earth shall own
The Prince of Peace their King,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

As part of our recognizing and honoring Joseph, I love the song, "Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine." In *Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 36, I wrote: "One of the most popular Christmas songs in Germany, this tune has been sung to two different texts, Resonet in laudibus, the earliest copy of which dates to between 1355 and 1360, and Joseph, *Lieber Joseph Mein*, which may be as old as 1400. Frequently sung after the Reformation in Lutheran communion services on Christmas Eve, it was also sung at weddings because the loving relationship between Joseph and Mary seemed to typify the ideal Christian marriage. In harmony with Matthew's focus on the figure of Joseph the Carpenter, the role the lyrics paint for Joseph is a fitting tribute to the man chosen to be the protector of the Son of God."

As we quickly approach Christmas Eve, I am always stirred by one of the oldest Christmas texts, *Corde natus ex parentis* or "Of the Father's Heart Begotten" written by Aurelius Prudentius c. 348–413. Best known for its setting to the Medieval chant "Divinum Mysterium," J. M. Neale's English rendition is deeply moving and catches the mystery of the Incarnation.

Of the Father's love begotten
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega —
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been, and
that future years shall see evermore and
evermore.

O that birth forever blessed,
when a virgin, blest with grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the
Savior of our race;
and the babe, the world's Redeemer, first
revealed his sacred face, evermore and
evermore.

This is he whom seers in old time chanted of
with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets promised
in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected; let creation
praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.

Let the heights of heaven adore him; angel
hosts, his praises sing: powers, dominions,
bow before him and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent, every voice in
concert ring evermore and evermore.

Christ, to thee, with God the Father and the
Holy Ghost to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving and the
shout of jubilee:
honor, glory, and dominion
and eternal victory
evermore and evermore.

Finally, a relatively recent composition, "Come, Lord Jesus," which was written for the Church's production of *Light of the World* wonderfully combines the themes of the first and second advents of Jesus Christ

1. Come, Lord Jesus, to the manger;
May we see thy tender face?
Great Creator, here a stranger,
Infant in this humble place.
Darkness scatter, morning swell;
Come, dear Lord Immanuel.
Come, Lord Jesus, to the manger;
Come, Lord Jesus, come!

2. Come, Lord Jesus, to the wounded,
Broken heart and bended knee.
Worthy Lamb, thy love unbounded,
Bid our souls to rest in Thee.
Come in glory to the earth;
Come to us to rule and reign.
Ready us to kneel and greet thee;
Come, Lord Jesus, come!

3. Come, Lord Jesus, great Redeemer,
Light of morning from the East.
We will be Thy children ever;
Dry our tears, all weeping cease!
Come in glory to the earth;
Come to us to rule and reign.
Ready us to kneel and greet thee;
Come, Lord Jesus, come!

CHRISTMAS EVE



The white "Christ candle" is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve, symbolizing that the True Light has come into the world to usher in the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah 31:31–34. The Lord himself referred to this covenant at the Last Supper when he said that the sacrament represented his "blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24). He thus made possible the blessings and promises of the "new and everlasting covenant" mentioned throughout latter-day revelation, whereby we are promised all that God has if we have faith in Christ and make sacred covenants of our own in his name.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31–34, emphases added)



In our family, the lighting of this candle is the culmination of our Christmas Eve activities. After a special dinner and the production of our annual Nativity play, written by our children themselves and based as much on tradition and scripture videos as upon the biblical texts, we light all five candles and have a more serious final Christmas reflection. After reading the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 1:13–14, we then read the familiar Christmas story from Luke 2:1–14 and sing "Silent Night" together.

> *. . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*
>
> *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David*

a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

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, good will toward men." (Luke 2:1–14)



But wherever we are, and at any time of the year, we can celebrate the birth of our King best by giving our lives and hearts to him. The lyrics of the Catalonian carol "What Shall We Give to the Babe in the Manger" beautifully review the nativity of our Lord but also point us forward to his life, death, and resurrection. Likewise, the words of the much-loved sacrament hymn, "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth," both recall the birth of the Son of God in a stable and point our minds forward to his glorious Second Coming, an important message of the Advent season.

What shall we give to the Babe in the manger, what shall we offer the child in the stall? Incense and spices and gold we've got plenty, are these the gifts for the King of us all?

What shall we give to the boy in the temple, what shall we offer the Man by the sea? Palms at his feet and hosannas uprising, are gifts for Him who will carry the Tree.

What shall we give to the Lamb who was offered, rising the third day and shedding His love? Tears for his mercy we'll weep at the manger, bathing the infant come down from above.

—"What Shall We Give to the Babe in the Manger?"
Traditional Catalonian Carol, arr. Mack Wilberg (from A Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas)

A new and sweetly stirring tradition that Elaine and I added to our final Advent celebration this past year was to end it with the singing of the sacrament hymn "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."



Its words by LDS apostle Parley P. Pratt (1807–1857) are set to a tune adapted from Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864). As Karen Davidson observes in her study of LDS hymns, "This hymn is a triumphant meditation on the paradoxes of the Savior's life and ministry . . . on the one hand are the poverty, pain, and submissiveness of the Savior's life; on the other hand are his sovereignty and power, the miracles of his atonement and resurrection" (Davidson, Our Latter-day Hymns, 196).

Jesus, once of humble birth,
Now in glory comes to earth.
Once he suffered grief and pain;
Now he comes on earth to reign.
Now he comes on earth to reign.

Once a meek and lowly Lamb,
Now the Lord, the great I Am.
Once upon the cross he bowed;
Now his chariot is the cloud.
Now his chariot is the cloud.

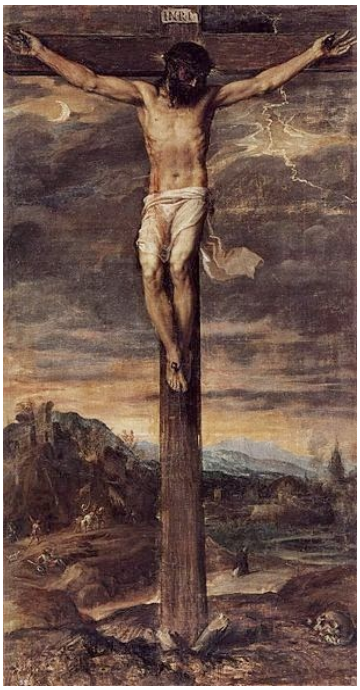
Once he groaned in blood and tears;
Now in glory he appears.
Once rejected by his own,
Now their King he shall be known.
Now their King he shall be known.

Once forsaken, left alone,
Now exalted to a throne.
Once all things he meekly bore,
But he now will bear no more.
But he now will bear no more.

Even as we joyfully celebrate the birth of our King, we should keep in mind why he was born into this world. As I wrote in God So Loved the World, "Rejoice in the sublime truth that God so loved the world that he sent his Only Begotten Son—as a gift at his birth, a sacrifice at his death, and a source of hope at his resurrection."

Pivotal for over a decade to my celebration of both Christmas and Easter are these inspired words of the late President Hinckley:

> This is the wondrous and true story of Christmas. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea is preface. The three-year ministry of the Master is prologue. The magnificent substance of the story is His sacrifice, the totally selfless act of dying in pain on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of all of us.
>
> The epilogue is the miracle of the Resurrection, bringing the assurance that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).
>
> There would be no Christmas if there had not been Easter. The babe Jesus of Bethlehem would be but another baby without the redeeming Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the triumphant fact of the Resurrection.

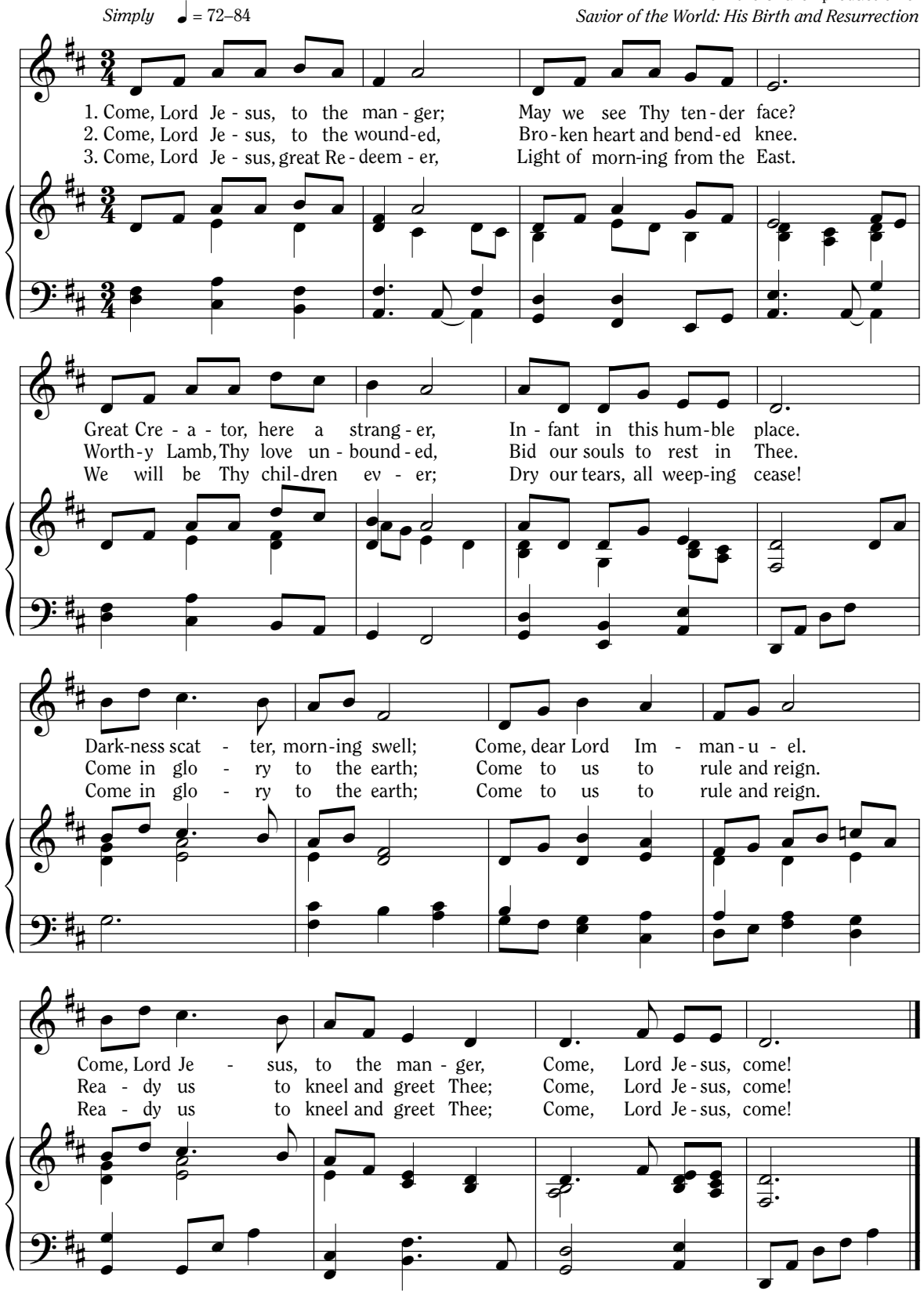


Titian, "Crucifixion"

President Gordon B. Hinckley
"The Wondrous and True Story of Christmas," *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 2

Come, Lord Jesus

From the Church production of
Savior of the World: His Birth and Resurrection



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December 1

The Words of Enoch, Which He Preached Recalling the Promises That God Made to Adam:

> "And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: 'I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.' And he also said unto him: 'If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men . . .
>
> "Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time." (Moses 6:51–52, 57)

Carol: "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Angels we have heard on high,
Singing sweetly o'er the plains,,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be?
Which inspire your joyous song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the new-born King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

"The Gift of the Magi"

by O. Henry

(shortened, American-English version)

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it in the smallest pieces of money—pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by negotiating with the men at the market who sold vegetables and meat. Negotiating until one's face burned with the silent knowledge of being poor. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but sit down and cry. So Della cried. Which led to the thought that life is made up of little cries and smiles, with more little cries than smiles.

Della finished her crying and dried her face. She stood by the window and looked out unhappily at a gray cat walking along a gray fence in a gray back yard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only one dollar and eighty-seven cents to buy her husband Jim a gift. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result.

Jim earned twenty dollars a week, which does not go far. Expenses had been greater than she had expected. They always are. Many a happy hour she had spent planning to buy something nice for him. Something fine and rare—something close to being worthy of the honor of belonging to Jim.

There was a tall glass mirror between the windows of the room. Suddenly Della turned from the window and stood before the glass mirror and looked at herself. Her eyes were shining, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Quickly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, Mister and Missus James Dillingham Young had two possessions which they valued. One was Jim's gold time piece, the watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in their building, Della would have let her hair hang out the window to dry just to reduce the value of the queen's jewels.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a brown waterfall. It reached below her knees and made itself almost like a covering for her. And then quickly she put it up again. She stood still while a few tears fell on the floor.

She put on her coat and her old brown hat. With a quick motion and brightness still in her eyes, she danced out the door and down the street. Where she stopped the sign read: "Madame Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." Della ran up the steps to the shop, out of breath.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

“I buy hair,” said Madame. “Take your hat off and let us have a look at it.”

Down came the beautiful brown waterfall of hair.

“Twenty dollars,” said Madame, lifting the hair with an experienced hand.

“Give it to me quick,” said Della.

The next two hours went by as if they had wings. Della looked in all the stores to choose a gift for Jim.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. It was a chain—simple round rings of silver. It was perfect for Jim’s gold watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be for him. It was like him. Quiet and with great value. She gave the shopkeeper twenty-one dollars and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents that was left.

When Della arrived home she began to repair what was left of her hair. The hair had been ruined by her love and her desire to give a special gift. Repairing the damage was a very big job.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny round curls of hair that made her look wonderfully like a schoolboy. She looked at herself in the glass mirror long and carefully.

“If Jim does not kill me before he takes a second look at me,” she said to herself, “he’ll say I look like a song girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?”

At seven o’clock that night the coffee was made and the pan on the back of the stove was hot and ready to cook the meat.

Jim was never late coming home from work. Della held the silver chain in her hand and sat near the door. Then she heard his step and she turned white for just a minute. She had a way of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: “Please God, make him think I am still pretty.”

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked thin and very serious. Poor man, he was only twenty-two and he had to care for a wife. He needed a new coat and gloves to keep his hands warm.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a dog smelling a bird. His eyes were fixed upon Della. There was an expression in them that she could not read, and it frightened her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor fear, nor any of the feelings that she had been prepared for. He simply looked at her with a strange expression on his face. Della went to him.

“Jim, my love,” she cried, “do not look at me that way. I had my hair cut and sold because I

could not have lived through Christmas without giving you a gift. My hair will grow out again. I just had to do it. My hair grows very fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let us be happy. You do not know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I have for you."

"You have cut off your hair?" asked Jim, slowly, as if he had not accepted the information even after his mind worked very hard.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Do you not like me just as well? I am the same person without my hair, right?

Jim looked about the room as if he were looking for something.

"You say your hair is gone?" he asked.

"You need not look for it," said Della. "It is sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It is Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it was cut for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the meat on, Jim?"

Jim seemed to awaken quickly and put his arms around Della. Then he took a package from his coat and threw it on the table.

"Do not make any mistake about me, Dell," he said. "I do not think there is any haircut that could make me like my girl any less. But if you will open that package you may see why you had me frightened at first."

White fingers quickly tore at the string and paper. There was a scream of joy; and then, alas! a change to tears and cries, requiring the man of the house to use all his skill to calm his wife.

For there were the combs—the special set of objects to hold her hair that Della had wanted ever since she saw them in a shop window. Beautiful combs, made of shells, with jewels at the edge—just the color to wear in the beautiful hair that was no longer hers. They cost a lot of money, she knew, and her heart had wanted them without ever hoping to have them. And now, the beautiful combs were hers, but the hair that should have touched them was gone.

But she held the combs to herself, and soon she was able to look up with a smile and say, "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

Then Della jumped up like a little burned cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She happily held it out to him in her open hands. The silver chain seemed so bright.

"Isn't it wonderful, Jim? I looked all over town to find it. You will have to look at the time a

hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim fell on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let us put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They are too nice to use just right now. I sold my gold watch to get the money to buy the set of combs for your hair. And now, why not put the meat on."

The magi were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Baby Jesus. They invented the art of giving Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two young people who most unwisely gave for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days, let it be said that of all who give gifts, these two were the wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

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December 2

Words of God to Moses about His Only Begotten:

> "And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all . . . And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten . . . For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:6, 33, 39)

A Prophecy of Moses, Which He Made to the Children of Israel:

> "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Carol: "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful"

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; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, Glory in the highest;
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n.
Son of the Father, Now in flesh appearing;
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

On the Symbolism of Christmas

"The Sixth Word" by Sherry Dillehay
Especially for Mormons, Vol. 2

Just a week before Christmas, I had a visitor. This is how it happened. I had just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door of the front room, and to my surprise, Santa Claus himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree. He placed his fingers over his mouth so I would not cry out.

"What are you doing . . ." I started to ask, but the words choked up in my throat as I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone—gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know.

He then answered me with a simple statement of "teach the children." I was puzzled. What did he mean? He anticipated my question and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood there bewildered, Santa said again, "Teach the children. Teach them the old meaning of Christmas - the meanings that Christmas nowadays has forgotten."

I started to say, "How can I. . ." when Santa reached into the toy bag and pulled out a brilliant shiny star.

"Teach the children the star was the heavenly sign of promise long ages ago. God promised a savior for the world and the star was a sign of the fulfillment of that promise. The countless shining stars at night—one for each man—now show the burning hope of all mankind." Santa gently laid the star upon the fireplace mantle and drew forth from the bag a glittering red Christmas tree ornament.

"Teach the children red is the first color of Christmas. It was first used by the faithful people to remind them of the blood which was shed for all the people by the Savior. Christ gave His life and shed His blood that every man might have God's gift of eternal life. Red is deep, intense, vivid - it is the greatest color of all. It is the symbol of the gift of God."

"Teach the children," he said as he dislodged a small Christmas tree from the depths of the toy bag. He placed it before the mantle and gently hung the red ornament on it. The deep green of the fir tree was a perfect background for the ornament. Here was the second color of Christmas.

"The pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round," he said. "This depicts the everlasting hope of mankind. Green is the youthful, hopeful, abundant color of nature. All the needles point heavenward—symbols of man's returning thought toward heaven. The great green tree has been man's best friend. It has sheltered him, warmed him, made beauty for him."

Suddenly, I heard a soft tinkling sound. "Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by

the sound of the bell it should ring for man to return to the fold - it means guidance and return. It further signifies that all are precious in the eyes of the Lord. As the soft sound of the bell faded into the night, Santa drew forth a candle. He placed it on the mantle and the soft glow from its tiny flame cast a glow about the darkened room. Odd shapes in shadows slowly danced and weaved upon the walls.

"Teach the children," whispered Santa, "that the candle shows man's thanks for the star of long ago. Its small light is the mirror of starlight. At first, candles were placed on the trees - they were like many glowing stars shining against the dark green. The colored lights have now taken over in remembrance."

Santa turned the small Christmas tree lights on and picked up a gift from under the tree. He pointed to the large bow and said, "A bow is placed on a present to remind us of the spirit of the brotherhood of man. We should remember that the bow is tied as men should be tied, all of us together, with the bonds of good will toward each other. Goodwill forever is the message of the bow."

Santa slung his bag over his shoulder and began to reach for the candy cane placed high on the tree. He unfastened it and reached out toward me with it. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherd's crook. The crook on the staff helps bring back the strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane represents the helping hand we should show at Christmas time. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brothers' keepers."

As Santa looked about the room, a feeling of satisfaction shone in his face. He read wonderment in my eyes, and I am sure he sensed admiration, for this night.

He reached into his bag and brought forth a large holly wreath. He placed it on the door and said, "Please teach the children the wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love; it never ceases, stops, or ends. It is one continuous round of affection. The wreath does double duty, it is made of many things and in many colors. It should remind us of all the things of Christmas."

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December 3

The Covenant of the LORD, Which He Made with David:

> " . . . I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." (2 Samuel 7:12–14)

> "I have made a covenant with my chosen,
> I have sworn unto David my servant,
> Thy seed will I establish for ever,
> and build up thy throne to all generations.
>
> "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
> and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
> His seed also will I make to endure for ever,
> and his throne as the days of heaven.
>
> "His seed shall endure for ever,
> and his throne as the sun before me.
> It shall be established for ever as the moon,
> and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Psalm 89:3–4, 28–29, 36–37)

Jesus Christ Was "the Son of David"

Carol: "Once In Royal David's City"

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
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 heav'n above,
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

A Different Kind of Christmas

by Lael J. Littke
(*Improvement Era*, December 1966)

Martha had tried to ignore the approach of Christmas. It was fairly easy, what with all the work to do around the cabin—the meals to prepare, the rugs to braid to cover the earthen floors, the lye soap to make, the snow to keep cleared away from the door, and the myriad of other things necessary to sustain life in the bleak valley. She would have kept it almost entirely out of her thoughts if Jed had not come eagerly into the cabin one day, stomping the snow from his cold feet as he said in an excited voice, "Martha, we're going to have a Christmas tree this year anyway. I spotted a cedar on that rise out south of the wheat field, over near the Norton's place. It's a scrubby thing, but it will do, since we can't get a pine. Maybe Christmas will be a little different here, but it will still be the kind of Christmas we used to have."

It was a two-day journey from their home on the floor of the wide valley to the mountains where there were pine trees, and none of the settlers felt they could spare the time that busy first year to go after trees. Besides, the snow was too high to do any unnecessary travel.

As she shook her head, Martha noticed that Daniel glanced quickly up from the corner where he was playing, patiently tying together some sticks with bits of string left over from the quilt she had tied a few days earlier. She drew Jed as far away from the boy as possible.

"I don't want a tree," she said. "We won't be celebrating Christmas. Even a tree couldn't make it the kind of Christmas we used to have."

Jed's face set in lines that were becoming familiar. "Martha, we've got to do something. For the boy, at least. Children set such a store by Christmas."

"Don't you think I know? All those years of fixing things for Maybelle and Stellie. I know all about kids and Christmas." She stopped and drew a deep breath, glancing over to see that Daniel was occupied and not listening. "But I can't do those things for him. It would be like a knife in my heart, fixing a tree and baking cookies and making things for—for another woman's child when my own girls are back there on that prairie."

"Martha, Martha," Jed said softly. "It's been almost a year and a half. That's all over, and Danny needs you. He needs a Christmas like he remembers."

She turned her back to his pleading face. "I can't," she said. "Besides, what could he remember? He was only a little more than five when his own mother died, and I don't think his pa did much last Christmas."

Jed touched her shoulder gently. "I know how hard it is for you, Martha. But think of the boy." He turned and went back out into the snowy weather.

Think of the boy. Why should she think of him when her own children, her two blue-eyed, golden-curled daughters, had been left beside the trail back there on that endless, empty prairie? The

boy came to her not because she wanted him but because she couldn't say no to the bishop back in Salt Lake City last April before they came to settle in this valley. Bishop Clay had brought Daniel to her and Jed one day and said, "I want you to care for this lad. His mother died on the trek last summer and his father passed away last week. He needs a good home."

Jed had gripped the bishop's hand and with tears in his eyes thanked him, but Martha had turned away from the sight of the thin, ragged, six-year-old boy who stood before them, not fast enough, however, to miss the sudden brief smile he flashed at her, a smile that should have caught her heart and opened it wide. Her heart was closed, though, locked tightly around the memory of her two gentle little girls. She didn't want a noisy, rowdy boy banging around, disturbing those memories, filling the cabin with a boy's loud games.

Yet she had taken him, because she felt she had no choice. Faced with the bishop's request—more of an order, really—and Jed's obvious joy, she couldn't refuse. He came with them out to this new valley west of the Salt lake settlement and had proved himself a great help to Jed, despite his young age. Sometimes Martha felt pity for him, but she didn't love him.

With Jed it was different. He had accepted Daniel immediately as his own son and enjoyed having the boy with him. They had a special relationship, a secret sharing that sometimes shut Martha out and made her wonder once, when she could bear to think of it, how Jed had felt about somehow seeming to be just outside the charmed circle she and her daughters had formed. Not that she really resented Jed and Daniel's relationship—she was glad Jed gave the boy some attention since she so often ignored him—but sometimes she felt that Jed had grown to love the boy more than he did her. She told him as much one evening after the man and boy had come laughing together into the cabin only to sober up when they saw her, but not before one of those quick smiles from Daniel, the smile she was never sure had actually been there, it was gone so fast.

When Daniel went back outside for a bucket of water, Martha spoke to Jed. "Seems as if you enjoy the boy's company more than you do mine these days."

Jed didn't look her quite squarely in the eye. "That's not so, Martha."

"The two of you laughing together all the time. You never laugh with me anymore."

His voice was quiet. "You don't seem to find much to laugh about lately, Martha."

It was true, of course. When the girls were with them they had been a happy family, laughing at humor and hardship alike. It just seemed as if all her laughter had also been buried on that grim morning back on the desolate prairie.

"I'm sorry, Jed," Martha said. "I just can't seem to forget my girls. I can't feel that close to that boy. He's always so serious around me. Almost like he's afraid. Calls me 'Aunt Martha.' I notice he calls you 'Pa.' Did you tell him to call you that?"

"No. He just started doing it. He's just a little fellow, Martha, but he knows how people feel about him. He needs more than just a full stomach and a place to sleep."

"I know," she said. "I know."

She was ashamed that she could deny love to a child. Any child. She tried harder after that, but she found she was always comparing him with her daughters. They had been soft and yielding, a pleasure to hold close. Daniel was bony and wiry, and his small body was hard-muscled from the work he did with Jed. The girls had been golden-curled and had taken pride in keeping their little pinafores neat and clean. Daniel was always grimy; he seemed to attract dirt, and his shirt always hung out from his overalls. The girls had liked to play quietly in the house with their rag dolls. Daniel preferred the outdoors, where he had full-scale, one-man battles, playing the parts of both settlers and Indians and making enough noise for any real fight.

It seemed as if he was always doing something to plague her. Not intentionally, to be sure. At least Jed said not. Just the high spirits and imagination of a boy, Jed said. There was the time he took her best tied quilt outside to build a tepee by the creek bank. By the time she found it, it was muddy and bedraggled and had to be laboriously washed.

Another day he got into the trunk she had brought across the plains and was playing with the carved wooden animals Grandpa Elliot had made for Maybelle and Stellie. She couldn't bear to see them in his hands and had scolded him soundly for opening the trunk. Another day he pulled up most of the flowers she had grown from the precious seeds brought from Nauvoo. He said he wanted to surprise her by pulling the weeds, but he couldn't tell which were weeds and which were flowers. He broke precious dishes and tore clothes that could not easily be replaced. And so Martha told Jed that she wanted him to take Daniel back to Salt Lake on his next trip for supplies and to give him back to Bishop Clay.

Jed looked at her for a long time before he answered, "Yes, maybe that would be best. For the boy's sake. I'll take him when I go in January."

Daniel seemed to sense something, because he tried to please her after that and was careful not to annoy her. When winter came and he had to be indoors much of the time, he tried to play quietly, although occasionally the natural inclinations of a boy took over and he had to be reprimanded. Martha wished that Sister Norton had been able to establish the school for the children of the settlers, but she had been unable to get any slates or copy books and had decided to wait until the next fall.

Daniel mentioned Christmas only once. One day it was too cold and snowy to play outside, and he had been humming softly to himself as he played in his corner. Suddenly he looked up at Martha and asked, "Can you sing, Aunt Martha?"

Martha paused and straightened up from the table where she was kneading bread. She used to sing for her girls all the time. "No, I can't, Daniel," she said. "Not any more."

"My mother used to sing a pretty song at Christmas," he said. "I wish I could remember it."

He said nothing more, and she did not question him. She didn't want to stir up any further memories of Christmas, since she didn't intend to observe the day. Perhaps he did recall snatches of past Christmases, but certainly he wouldn't remember enough that it would make any difference to him.

Martha couldn't help thinking of Christmases past as the day approached. Three years ago had been the best one, before the persecution of the Saints in Nauvoo got so bad. Maybelle had been seven then, and Stellie five. She had made rag dolls for them with pretty, flouncy dresses and cunning little bonnets. That was the year Grandpa Elliot had given them the carved animals and had also carved a beautiful little toy horse and carriage for Maybelle, promising Stellie he'd make her one when she was seven. Dwelling as she did in her past memories, Martha paid very little attention to Daniel those last few days before Christmas. He went in and out with Jed and she didn't attempt to keep track of him. On the day before Christmas Jed went through the deep snow to do some chores for Brother Norton, who was ill. Daniel was alone outside most of the day, although he made several rather furtive trips in and out of the cabin. On one trip he took the sticks he had been tying together.

Toward evening Martha went out to the stable to milk Rosie, since Jed had not yet returned. As she approached, she saw there was a light inside. Opening the door softly, she peered within. Daniel had lit the barn lantern, and within its glow he knelt in the straw by Rosie's stall. In front of him were the sticks he had tied together, which Martha recognized now as a crude cradle. It held Stellie's rag doll, all wrapped up in the white shawl Martha kept in her trunk, the shawl she had used to wrap her babies. Her impulse was to rush in and snatch it, but she stopped, because the scene was strangely beautiful in the soft light from the lantern. Rosie and the two sheep stood close by, watching Daniel. He seemed to be addressing them when he spoke.

"The shepherds came following the star," he was saying. "And they found the baby Jesus who had been born in a stable." He paused for a moment, then went on. "And his mother loved him."

Martha felt suddenly that she couldn't breathe. Another mother, another day, had loved her little boy and had told him the beautiful story of the Christ Child with such love that he hadn't forgotten it, young as he was. And she, Martha, had failed that mother.

In the silence she began to sing. "Silent night," she sang. "Holy night."

Daniel didn't move until the song was finished. Then he turned with that quick, heart-melting smile. "That's the one," he whispered. "That's the song that my mother used to sing to me."

Martha ran forward and gathered the boy into her arms. He responded immediately, clasping her arms tightly around her. "Danny," Martha said, "it's beautiful. Your cradle and little scene here."

"You never called me Danny before," he murmured, his head against her neck.

"I didn't do a lot of things," she said. As she held him close, the bands around her heart seemed to loosen and break. "Danny," she said, sitting on the edge of Rosie's manger, "let's go in and get the cabin ready for Christmas. Maybe it isn't too late for Jed—for Pa—to get that tree. It might be a little different kind of Christmas, but it will still be a little like the Christmases we used to know. We'll set up your cradle with the Christ Child in it under the tree, because that's what Christmas is all about."

"Do you mind it being different?" Danny asked. "I mean with a boy instead of your girls?"

Martha wondered how long it would take her to make up to him for the hurts she had inflicted these

many months.

“No,” she said. “After all, the Baby Jesus was a boy.”

“That’s right,” he said wonderingly.

“I’ll open my trunk,” said Martha. “We’ll get out those carved animals to put around your manger scene. We’ll string some dried berries to put on the tree, and when it’s all done the three of us will sing ‘Silent Night’ and Pa will tell us the story of the Christ Child.”

She thought about the lovely little carved horse and carriage Maybelle had loved so much, and knew it would be the perfect gift to put under the tree for Danny’s Christmas morning.

She set him down on the floor and put her arm around his shoulders. “Merry Christmas,” she said. “Merry Christmas, Danny.”

He looked up at her with a smile that did not fade quickly away this time, a sweet smile full of the love he had been waiting to give her.

“Merry Christmas,” he said, and then added softly, “Mother.”

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December 4

A Psalm Attributed to David:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory." (Psalm 24:9–10)

Carol: "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night"

While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
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, in David's town this day,
Is born of David's line
The Savior who is Christ the Lord,
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."

Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God who thus
Addressed their joyful song:
"All glory be to God on high
And on the earth be peace.
Goodwill henceforth from heav'n to men
Begin and never cease."

The Cobbler and His Guest

A Yuletide Legend Retold by Anne M. Boyles

There once lived in the city of Marseilles an old shoemaker, loved and honored by his neighbors, who affectionately called him “Father Martin.”

One Christmas Eve, as he sat alone in his little shop reading of the visit of the Wise Men to the infant Jesus, and of the gifts they brought, he said to himself. “If tomorrow were the first Christmas, and if Jesus were to be born in Marseilles this night, I know what I would give Him!” He rose from his stool and took from a shelf overhead two tiny shoes of softest snow- white leather, with bright silver buckles. “I would give Him those, my finest work.”

Replacing the shoes, he blew out the candle and retired to rest. Hardly had he closed his eyes, it seemed, when he heard a voice call his name: “Martin! Martin!”

Intuitively he felt a presence. Then the voice spoke again, “Martin, you have wished to see Me. Tomorrow I shall pass by your window. If you see Me, and bid Me enter, I shall be your guest at your table.”

Father Martin did not sleep that night for joy. And before it was yet dawn he rose and swept and tidied up his little shop. He spread fresh sand upon the floor, and wreathed green boughs of fir along the rafters. On the spotless linen-covered table he placed a loaf of white bread, a jar of honey, and a pitcher of milk, and over the fire he hung a pot of tea Then he took up his patient vigil at the window.

Presently he saw an old street-sweeper pass by, blowing upon his thin, gnarled hands to warm them. “Poor fellow, he must be half frozen,” thought Martin. Opening the door he called out to him, “Come in, my friend, and warm, and drink a cup of hot tea.” And the man gratefully accepted the invitation.

An hour passed, and Martin saw a young, miserably clothed women carrying a baby. She paused wearily to rest in the shelter of his doorway. The heart of the old cobbler was touched. Quickly he flung open the door.

“Come in and warm while you rest,” he said to her. “You do not look well,” he remarked.

“I am going to the hospital. I hope they will take me in, and my baby boy,” she explained. “My husband is at sea, and I am ill, without a soul.”

“Poor child!” cried Father Martin. “You must eat something while you are getting warm. No, Then let me give a cup of milk to the little one. Ah! What a bright, pretty fellow he is! Why, you have put no shoes on him!”

“I have no shoes for him,” sighed the mother sadly. “Then he shall have this lovely pair I finished yesterday.” And Father Martin took down from the shelf the soft little snow-white shoes he had admired the evening before. He slipped them on the child’s feet...they fit perfectly. And shortly the poor young mother left, two shoes in her hand and tearful with gratitude.

And Father Martin resumed his post at the window. Hour after hour went by, and although many people passed his window, and many needy souls shared his hospitality, the expected Guest did not appear.

“It was only a dream,” he sighed, with a heavy heart. “I did not believe; but he has not come.”

Suddenly, so it seemed to his weary eyes, the room was flooded with a strange light. And to the cobbler’s astonished vision there appeared before him, one by one, the poor street-sweeper, the sick mother and her child, and all the people whom he had aided during the day. And each smiled at him and said. “Have you not seen me? Did I not sit at your table?” Then they vanished.

At last, out of the silence, Father Martin heard again the gentle voice repeating the old familiar words. “Whosoever shall receive one such in My name, receiveth Me...for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was athirst, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in...verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.”

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December 5

A Prophecy of Isaiah:

> "Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

> " . . . Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:23b)

Carol: "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.

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.

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

It Takes A Child

Holiday Stories and Poems, The Great American Craft Show*: Although the magazine that originally printed the story is no longer in business, the publisher has graciously given permission to reprint the following shortened version. This is a first-person account from a mother about her family as they ate dinner on Christmas Day in a small restaurant many miles from their home. Nancy, the mother, relates:*

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly eating and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, "Hi there." He pounded his fat baby hands on the highchair tray. His eyes were wide with excitement and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin. He wriggled and giggled with merriment. I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man with a tattered rag of a coat; dirty, greasy and worn. His pants were baggy with a zipper at half-mast and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and his nose was so varicose it looked like a road map. We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster," the man said to Erik. My husband and I exchanged looks, "What do we do?"

Erik continued to laugh and answer, "Hi, hi there." Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby.

Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, "Do ya know patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo." Nobody thought the old man was cute. He was obviously drunk. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments. We finally got through the meal and headed for the door.

My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door. "Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik," I prayed. As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to sidestep him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby's "pick-me-up" position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man's.

Suddenly a very old smelly man and a very young baby consummated their relationship. Erik in an act of total trust, love, and submission laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labor—gently, so gently, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back.

No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time! I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms for a moment, then his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, "You take care of this baby." Somehow I managed, "I will," from a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest—unwillingly,

longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby, and the man said, “God bless you, ma’am, you’ve given me my Christmas gift.” I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car.

My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, “My God, my God, forgive me.”

I had just witnessed Christ’s love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, a mother who saw a suit of clothes. I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking, “Are you willing to share your son for a moment?” —when He shared His for all eternity. The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, “To enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children.”

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December 6

A Prophecy of Isaiah:

> "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isaiah 9:6–7a)

Carol: "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 Saints and angels sing,
And Saints and angels sing,
And Saints, and Saints and angels sing.

Rejoice! Rejoice when Jesus reigns,
And Saints 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 will sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He'll come and make the blessings flow
Far as the curse was found,
Far as the curse was found,
Far as, far as the curse was found.

Rejoice! Rejoice in the Most High,
While Israel spreads abroad
Like stars that glitter in the sky,
And ever worship God,
And ever worship God,
And ever, and ever worship God.

Christmas Day in the Morning

by Pearl S. Buck

He woke suddenly and completely. It was four o'clock, the hour at which his father had always called him to get up and help with the milking. Strange how the habits of his youth clung to him still! Fifty years ago, and his father had been dead for thirty years, and yet he waked at four o'clock in the morning. He had trained himself to turn over and go to sleep, but this morning, because it was Christmas, he did not try to sleep.

Yet what was the magic of Christmas now? His childhood and youth were long past, and his own children had grown up and gone. Some of them lived only a few miles away but they had their own families, and though they would come in as usual toward the end of the day, they had explained with infinite gentleness that they wanted their children to build Christmas memories about their houses, not his. He was left alone with his wife.

Yesterday she had said, "It isn't worth while, perhaps—"

And he had said, "Oh, yes, Alice, even if there are only the two of us, let's have a Christmas of our own."

Then she had said, "Let's not trim the tree until tomorrow, Robert—just so it's ready when the children come. I'm tired."

He had agreed, and the tree was still out in the back entry.

He lay in his big bed in his room. The door to her room was shut because she was a light sleeper, and sometimes he had restless nights. Years ago they had decided to use separate rooms. It meant nothing, they said, except that neither of them slept as well as they once had. They had been married so long that nothing could separate them, actually.

Why did he feel so awake tonight? For it was still night, a clear and starry night. No moon, of course, but the stars were extraordinary! Now that he thought of it, the stars seemed always large and clear before the dawn of Christmas Day. There was one star now that was certainly larger and brighter than any of the others. He could even imagine it moving, as it had seemed to him to move one night long ago.

He slipped back in time, as he did so easily nowadays. He was fifteen years old and still on his father's farm. He loved his father. He had not known it until one day a few days before Christmas, when he had overheard what his father was saying to his mother.

"Mary, I hate to call Rob in the mornings. He's growing so fast and he needs his sleep. If you could see how he sleeps when I go in to wake him up! I wish I could manage alone."

“Well, you can’t, Adam.” His mother’s voice was brisk. “Besides, he isn’t a child any more. It’s time he took his turn.”

“Yes,” his father said slowly. “But I sure do hate to wake him.”

When he heard these words, something in him woke: his father loved him! He had never thought of it before, taking for granted the tie of their blood. Neither his father nor his mother talked about loving their children—they had no time for such things. There was always so much to do on a farm.

Now that he knew his father loved him, there would be no more loitering in the mornings and having to be called again. He got up after that, stumbling blind with sleep, and pulled on his clothes, his eyes tight shut, but he got up.

And then on the night before Christmas, that year when he was fifteen, he lay for a few minutes thinking about the next day. They were poor, and most of the excitement was in the turkey they had raised themselves and in the mince pies his mother made. His sisters sewed presents and his mother and father always bought something he needed, not only a warm jacket, maybe, but something more, such as a book. And he saved and bought them each something, too.

He wished, that Christmas he was fifteen, he had a better present for his father. As usual he had gone to the ten-cent store and bought a tie. It had seemed nice enough until he lay thinking the night before Christmas, and then he wished that he had heard his father and mother talking in time for him to save for something better.

He lay on his side, his head supported by his elbow, and looked out of his attic window. The stars were bright, much brighter than he ever remembered seeing them, and one star in particular was so bright that he wondered if it were really the Star of Bethlehem.

“Dad,” he had once asked when he was a little boy, “what is a stable?”

“It’s just a barn,” his father had replied, “like ours.”

Then Jesus had been born in a barn, and to a barn the shepherds and the Wise Men had come, bringing their Christmas gifts!

The thought struck him like a silver dagger. Why should he not give his father a special gift too, out there in the barn? He could get up early, earlier than four o’clock, and he could creep into the barn and get all the milking done. He’d do it alone, milk and clean up, and then when his father went in to start the milking, he’d see it all done. And he would know who had done it.

He laughed to himself as he gazed at the stars. It was what he would do, and he mustn’t sleep too sound.

He must have waked twenty times, scratching a match each time to look at his old watch—midnight, and half past one, and then two o'clock.

At a quarter to three he got up and put on his clothes. He crept downstairs, careful of the creaky boards, and let himself out. The big star hung lower over the barn roof, a reddish gold. The cows looked at him, sleepy and surprised. It was early for them too.

"So, boss," he whispered. They accepted him placidly and he fetched some hay for each cow and then got the milking pail and the big milk cans.

He had never milked all alone before, but it seemed almost easy. He kept thinking about his father's surprise. His father would come in and call him, saying that he would get things started while Rob was getting dressed. He'd go to the barn, open the door, and then he'd go to get the two big empty milk cans. But they wouldn't be waiting or empty; they'd be standing in the milk house, filled.

"What the—" he could hear his father exclaiming.

He smiled and milked steadily, two strong streams rushing into the pail, frothing and fragrant. The cows were still surprised but acquiescent. For once they were behaving well, as though they knew it was Christmas.

The task went more easily than he had ever known it to before. Milking for once was not a chore. It was something else, a gift to his father who loved him. He finished, the two milk cans were full, and he covered them and closed the milk house door carefully, making sure of the latch. He put the stool in its place by the door and hung up the clean milk pail. Then he went out of the barn and barred the door behind him.

Back in his room he had only a minute to pull off his clothes in the darkness and jump into bed, for he heard his father up. He put the covers over his head to silence his quick breathing. The door opened.

"Rob!" his father called. "We have to get up, son, even if it is Christmas."

"Aw-right," he said sleepily.

"I'll go on out," his father said. "I'll get things started."

The door closed and he lay still, laughing to himself. In just a few minutes his father would know. His dancing heart was ready to jump from his body.

The minutes were endless—ten, fifteen, he did not know how many—and he heard his father's footsteps again. The door opened and he lay still.

"Rob!"

"Yes, Dad—"

"You son of a—" His father was laughing, a queer sobbing sort of a laugh. "Thought you'd fool me, did you?" His father was standing beside his bed, feeling for him, pulling away the cover.

"It's for Christmas, Dad!"

He found his father and clutched him in a great hug. He felt his father's arms go around him. It was dark and they could not see each other's faces.

"Son, I thank you. Nobody ever did a nicer thing."

"Oh, Dad, I want you to know—I do want to be good!" The words broke from him of their own will. He did not know what to say. His heart was bursting with love.

"Well, I reckon I can go back to bed and sleep," his father said after a moment. "No, hark—the little ones are waked up. Come to think of it, son, I've never seen you children when you first saw the Christmas tree. I was always in the barn. Come on!"

He got up and pulled on his clothes again and they went down to the Christmas tree, and soon the sun was creeping up to where the star had been. Oh, what a Christmas, and how his heart had nearly burst again with shyness and pride as his father told his mother and made the younger children listen about how he, Rob, had got up all by himself.

"The best Christmas gift I ever had, and I'll remember it, son, every year on Christmas morning, so long as I live."

They had both remembered it, and now that his father was dead he remembered it alone: that blessed Christmas dawn when, alone with the cows in the barn, he had made his first gift of true love.

Outside the window now the great star slowly sank. He got up out of bed and put on his slippers and bathrobe and went softly upstairs to the attic and found the box of Christmas-tree decorations. He took them downstairs into the living room. Then he brought in the tree. It was a little one—they had not had a big tree since the children went away—but he set it in the holder and put it in the middle of the long table under the window. Then carefully he began to trim it.

It was done very soon, the time passing as quickly as it had that morning long ago in the barn. He went to his library and fetched the little box that contained his special gift to his wife, a star of diamonds, not large but dainty in design. He had written the card for it the day before. He tied the gift on the tree and then stood back. It was pretty, very pretty, and she would be surprised.

But he was not satisfied. He wanted to tell her—to tell her how much he loved her. It had been a long time since he had really told her, although he loved her in a very special way, much more than he ever had when they were young.

He had been fortunate that she had loved him—and how fortunate that he had been able to love! Ah, that was the true joy of life, the ability to love! For he was quite sure that some people were genuinely unable to love anyone. But love was alive in him, it still was.

It occurred to him suddenly that it was alive because long ago it had been born in him when he knew his father loved him. That was it: love alone could waken love.

And he could give the gift again and again. This morning, this blessed Christmas morning, he would give it to his beloved wife. He could write it down in a letter for her to read and keep forever. He went to his desk and began his love letter to his wife: “My dearest love…”

When it was finished he sealed it and tied it on the tree where she would see it the first thing when she came into the room. She would read it, surprised and then moved, and realize how very much he loved her.

He put out the light and went tiptoeing up the stairs. The star in the sky was gone, and the first rays of the sun were gleaming in the sky.

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December 7

A Prophecy of Isaiah:

> "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD ; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . ." (Isaiah 11:1–4a)

Carol: "It Came upon a Midnight Clear"

It came upon the 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 heav'n's all gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still thru the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hov'ring wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

For lo! the days are hast'ning on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heav'n and earth shall own
The Prince of Peace their King,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Now I Understand, Now I See Why

Louis Cassels

Some people have a big problem figuring out why God had to become a man to save the world from its sin. This is one of my all-time-favorite modern day parables that explains the reason beautifully. Years ago, this story was made into a short cartoon that appeared in prime time TV.

Once upon a time, there was man who looked upon Christmas as a lot of humbug. He wasn't a scrooge. He was a very kind and decent person, generous to his family, upright in all his dealings with other men.

But he didn't believe all that stuff about the incarnation that churches proclaim at Christmas. And he was too honest to pretend that he did.

"I am truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, who was a faithful churchgoer. "But I simply cannot understand this claim that God became man. It doesn't make any sense to me."

On Christmas Eve, his wife and children went to church for the midnight service. He declined to accompany them.

"I'd feel like a hypocrite," he explained. "I'd much rather stay at home. But I'll wait up for you."

Shortly after his family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window and watched the flurries getting heavier and heavier.

"If we must have a Christmas," he reflected, "it's nice to have a white one."

He went back to his chair by the fireside and began to read his newspaper.

A few minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. It was quickly followed by another, then another. He thought that someone must be throwing snowballs at the window.

When he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in the storm, and in a desperate search for shelter had tried to fly through his window.

I can't let those poor creatures lie there and freeze, he thought. But how can I help them?

Then he remembered the barn where the children's pony was stabled. It would provide a warm shelter. He quickly put on his coat and boots and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on the light.

But the birds didn't come in.

Food will bring them in, he thought. So he hurried back to the house for bread crumbs, which he sprinkled on the snow to make a trail in the barn. To his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the snow.

He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction—except into the warm, lighted barn.

They find me a strange and terrifying creature, he said to himself, and I can't seem to think of any way to let them know they can trust me. If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety.

Just at that moment the church bells began to ring. He stood silently for a while, listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas.

Then he sank to his knees in the snow.

"Now I understand," he whispered. "Now I see why you had to do it."

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December 8

A Prophecy of Isaiah:

> "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the LORD , make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:1–5)

Carol: "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 angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem!
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!

Hail! the heav'nborn 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!

A Brother Like That

Don Clark

Paul received an automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it.

"Is this your car, Mister?" he asked.

Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish . . . " He hesitated. Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that."

Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he added, "Would you like to take a ride in my automobile?"

"Oh yes, I'd love that."

After a short ride, the boy turned and with his eyes aglow, said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big automobile. But Paul was wrong again.

"Will you stop where those two steps are?" the boy asked.

He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

"There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas, and it didn't cost him a cent. And some day I'm gonna give you one just like it . . . then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when he had said: "It is more blessed to give . . ."

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December 9

The Words of Micah Regarding Where the Messiah Would Be Born:

> "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

Carol: "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.

Mr. Jinks Hands Out The Holly

The Children's Friend, December 1958

David had just finished making a snowman. He was very large and round with the jolliest face ever. He wore a high hat and a red plaid muffler, although why any snowman should want a muffler, David didn't quite know. He only knew that it seemed to suit Mr. Jinks.

Of course his name was Mr. Jinks because that was what David named every snowman he had ever made. He had made several—three this very winter, but not one of them had seemed as handsome and jolly looking as the present Mr. Jinks. "I'm glad that you're close to the sidewalk," David told him, "because you look as if you were wishing everyone a Merry Christmas."

He had just added another coal button when the parcel-post truck drove up and the driver carried a huge box into the house. "I'll bet that's the holly Grandpa sent from Oregon," David called, following the man into the house.

"Yes, I'm sure it is," replied his mother. When they had opened the box she said, There's an extra lot this year. We can make wreaths for every one of the front windows." David helped, and when all the wreaths had been made, there was a large basket of small pieces left over.

"I wonder what we can do with these?" she said. "They are much too pretty to be thrown away."

"I know!" cried David. "I'll let Mr. Jinks give them away. He can help make a merry Christmas for everyone who passes."

"I think that's a lovely idea," Mother agreed. "And I'm sure that Mr. Jinks will think so, too."

First David made a sign which read "Merry Christmas. Help yourself." Then he took the basket of holly out and propped it up in front of the snowman. After that he stood in one of the front windows to watch the people pass.

Mr. Bromley the banker, was the first one to come by. He was walking very fast and looking straight ahead. David was very much afraid that Mr. Bromley was going to pass right by without so much as a glance. But no, he saw the sign and stopped long enough to put a sprig of holly in his buttonhole. David could see a smile on the banker's face, and he couldn't remember ever having seen him smile before. But then, he reminded himself that he didn't see Mr. Bromley very often and that maybe it worried him to have so much money in the bank that belonged to other people.

Next came Mrs. Ross, who worked in the bakery. She was walking slowly, as if she was very tired. "I guess that she has been making hundreds of fruit cakes," said David to himself. When she noticed Mr. Jinks' smiling face, she smiled back and took a sprig of holly. Then she walked

along as if she weren't nearly so tired.

Some boys with ice skates came next. They each took some holly and called to the snowman, "Thanks, old fellow. A Merry Christmas to you, too."

David watched people go by until it grew too dark for him to see any longer. Almost everyone had stopped to pick up a sprig of holly. "Mr. Jinks sure made a merry Christmas for a lot of people," he said to his mother. "So he did," she smiled. "With the help of you and Grandpa."

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December 10

The Words of Jeremiah:

> "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD , that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jeremiah 23:5–6; cf. 33:14–15)

Carol: "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains"

Far, far away on Judea's plains,
Shepherds of old heard the joyous strains:

Glory to God, Glory to God,
Glory to God in the highest;

Peace on earth, goodwill to men;
Peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Sweet are these strains of redeeming love,
Message of mercy from heav'n above:

Lord, with the angels we too would rejoice;
Help us to sing with the heart and voice:

Hasten the time when, from ev'ry clime,
Men shall unite in the strains sublime:

Keeping Baby Warm

by Lynda H. Laughlin

It was an inexpensive dime-store Nativity set, and he was only three years old. His back was toward me, but I could see that his chubby hands were busily working on something at the old table.

"What are you doing?" I asked him impatiently, annoyed at him for touching the decorations when he had been told not to.

As I started toward the scene of his latest mischief, he turned toward me with wide blue eyes filling and a single tear starting down his cherubic cheek. Then I saw it. A carefully folded tissue had been tenderly placed over the small ceramic infant.

"Baby Jesus was cold, Mommy," he whispered.

Ten years have passed, and the tiny Nativity set has been replaced by a much larger one. But this year, as every year, I found a carefully folded tissue covering the baby Jesus. I think I know who did it, and I hope that he never stops.

A Christmas Prayer

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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December 11

Nephi, Writing of the Words of Lehi, Which He Gave to His Family While Traveling in the Wilderness:

> "Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world. And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world." (1 Nephi 10:4–5)

Carol: "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"

God rest ye 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.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Israel, this blessèd Babe was born,
And laid within a manger upon this blessèd morn;
The which His mother Mary did nothing take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

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

The Christmas Room

by Gillette Jones

Joan's family was the wealthiest in town, Barbara's one of the poorest. But one thing Joan's family didn't have was a Christmas room. So she came over to see. Would she ridicule it? Would she sneer? Would she laugh?

When I arrived at my daughter's on Christmas Eve, the children ran to the door with shouts and kisses, giving me a greeting that would make any grandma glad. Then, struggling with my bags, they took me to the guest room. I stopped short at the door of the room, staring at the sign that hung there. In red and green crayon it read: The Christmas Room. My throat ached for a moment, as I remembered . . .

Our daughter, Barbara, was only nine when she began to realize we were quite poor. In Barbara's class was one girl who took special delight in tormenting her. It was an odd friendship between Barbara and Joan. Joan came from the wealthiest family in town, one of the few that hadn't been affected by the Depression. Joan was outgoing, Barbara quiet and shy. Joan was all ups and downs: one minute befriending Barbara, treating her to candy, giving her a toy—the next, bragging extravagantly, teaching Barbara to be ashamed of our house.

We kept hoping Barbara would overcome her shyness and make other friends, but she continued to tag after Joan, in spite of the hurts she suffered. Joan, delighting in Barbara's vulnerability, kept her on a string at her side.

Christmas was coming. I knew ours would be a lean one indeed unless we used a great deal of imagination. Early in November we started planning. Barbara helped me look for recipes that were inexpensive. We colored Epson salts and put it in pretty bottles for bath salts for her grandmothers. We took scraps of velvet and transformed ordinary boxes into jewel boxes for the grandfathers' stickpins. We spent hours in the little spare room, laughing at each new touch of imagination.

The lumpy old daybed became littered with gay scraps of paper as we cut pictures from last year's Christmas cards to decorate our packages. We had a wonderful time together.

One day in early December. Barbara went to Joan's house after school and returned looking sad. "What's the trouble?" I asked her.

"Oh, nothing."

"There is something," I said. "Is Joan bragging again?"

"It's not that. I'm sort of used to that." She hesitated, then said, "Mom, I told a fib today."

I was thankful she found it disturbing at least.

“But that Joan!” Her voice had an edge of bitterness. “She’s always talking about the Blue Room and the company who sleeps there. Today she asked me, ‘Where does your company sleep?”’

We never had overnight company. It was hard enough to feed ourselves on Jim’s meager salary. And our homely little spare room was just that. It had two old pieces of furniture in it—a daybed and a wobbly end table.

Barbara went on. “I told Joan we don’t have much company, and her eye brow went up. Mom, I just couldn’t stand that look again. So I told her, ‘We have something you don’t. We have a Christmas room.”’

Her feet shuffled. “I didn’t mean to fib, but you should have seen how surprised she looked. I never saw Joan stuck before. She really didn’t know what to say.”

“But dear, you weren’t fibbing,” I said. “We do have a Christmas room. But if it will make it more official, we’ll make a sign for the door.”

She brightened. “Oh, could we?”

“We’ll do it today.”

The sign was barely dry and hung when Joan arrived. She had rarely come to our house, always preferring to take Barbara to her house, where there were lots of toys to play with. Now she stood at our door, asking to see the Christmas room.

Barbara looked at me. “May I show her?”

“I guess so,” I answered. “If everything is wrapped, that is.” Barbara went to check on the condition of packages while I explained to Joan, “The room is full of surprises and we can’t let any secrets out.”

Barbara hurried back into the room. “It’s OK.”

I held my breath. Joan would see only a small, dingy room with a cracked ceiling and a homemade sign on the door. She would not see or feel the special qualities that room held for us.

They were gone so long I finally went into the hallway and peered in. Joan was looking at our creche-paper figures we had cut and stood on the end table.

“We have china figures,” she said. “Imported.”

I started to speak but just then Joan moved to the packages that were lined up on the daybed. She touched them. one by one, lingering over the one with the paper sled on it. That was one Barbara had done from colored paper. She had filled the sled with miniature packages.

Joan turned to Barbara. “We don’t have surprises. I always know everything.”

“How?” Barbara asked. “Do you peek?”

Joan shook her had. “They ask what I want—and I get it.”

Barbara said impulsively, “I’ll give you a surprise.”

Joan shrugged. “If you want.”

Barbara nodded solemnly, before I could stop her.

During the next week we tossed ideas about, rejecting them all. There seemed nothing we could give this child who had everything. At last we settled somewhat apprehensively on giving her one afternoon a week at our house, helping to make surprises. I wasn’t at all sure she’d think it was a present.

She did come, however. The first time we made cookies and wrapped some for her mother. The next week it was fancy matchboxes for her father. The week before Christmas Barbara gave her a box to open. Joan tore at the paper, but when she had the lid off she didn’t know what the contents were. Barbara looked disappointed, and I added, “It’s corn—for popping.”

I tried to force gaiety into my words. It wasn’t easy when Barbara’s face said plainly that she wished we had given Joan something different, something better.

When the corn was popped, Joan tasted it and remarked, “I could never make this. It’s too messy for our house.”

I glanced quickly at Barbara, but she was busy showing Joan how the corn could be dyed pink or blue with food coloring.

“Later, we’ll string it for the Christmas tree,” she explained.

Joan worked at it, occasionally holding up the colorful string without comment. I couldn’t tell whether she was having fun. But suddenly I knew I wanted her to—very much.

“They’ll never hang this on our tree,” she snorted.

“Would you like to come hang it on our tree?” I ventured.

Her sudden tears alarmed me. “Could I?” she asked. “I can never help trim ours. I might break things.” She pushed back her chair. ‘’I’d better go now.”

She got her coat and hat quickly, but in the Christmas room she had a long moment of hesitation

about whether to actually take home the things she'd made for her parents. At last she decided. She picked them up.

We watched her leave, clutching her small surprises. Both of us hoped that her parents would not laugh at her offerings.

Barbara turned big eyes toward me and whispered, "I used to be jealous of her."

That was long ago, when Barbara was very young. It had been a childhood thing, important at the time but long forgotten, I'd thought. Now once again I stood facing a sign on a door that read, The Christmas Room.

I stepped into a pleasant room with pale blue walls and crisp curtains, not at all like our homely old spare room. On the window seat there were packages wrapped with special touches of childish imagination. The children ran to them.

"I made this!" Ronnie cried proudly.

"You're going to love mine, Grandma," Paula shouted.

There was no financial need for Barbara to do with her children what we had done—but I was so glad she had. She'd been young that year of the Christmas room, yet even then she must have known that a Christmas room is a room for people, for thoughts of others, a room in the heart.

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December 12

From the Vision of Nephi, the Son of Lehi:

> "And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white.
>
> "And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: 'Nephi, what beholdest thou?' And I said unto him: 'A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.' Ad he said unto me: 'Knowest thou the condescension of God?' And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me: 'Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.'
>
> "And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: 'Look!' And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: 'Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!'" (1 Nephi 11:13–21a)

Carol: "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?
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 Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
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.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

The C-C-Choir Boy
by Fred Bauer

Everyone was surprised—everyone except Mrs. Brown, the choir director—when Herbie showed up in November to rehearse for the church's annual Christmas cantata.

Mrs. Brown wasn't surprised because she had persuaded Herbie to "at least try." That was an accomplishment, for lately he had quite trying nearly everything—reciting in class, playing ball, or even asking his brothers or sisters to pass the potatoes at the family dinner table.

It was easy to understand why: he stuttered. Not just a little either, and sometimes when his tongue spun on a word, like a car on ice, the kids laughed. Not a big ha-ha laugh, but you can tell when people are laughing at you even if you are only nine years-old.

Mrs. Brown had figured that Herbie could sing with the other tenors—Charley and Billy—and not have any trouble, which is exactly the way it worked. Billy was given the only boy's solo, and the rest of the time the three of them sang in unison . . . until, that is, Charley contracted the measles. Even so, Billy had a strong voice, and Herbie knew that he could follow him.

At 7:15, the night of the cantata, a scrubbed and combed Herbie arrived at the church, wearing a white shirt, a new blue and yellow bow tie, and his brown suit. Mrs. Brown was waiting for him at the door.

"Billy is home with the flu," she said. "You'll need to sing the solo."

Herbie's face grew pale. "I c-c-can't," he stuttered.

"We need you," she insisted.

It was unfair! He wouldn't do it. She couldn't make him! All these thoughts tumbled through Herbie's mind until Mrs. Brown told him this:

"Herbie, I know that you can do this—with God's help. Across from the choir loft is a stained glass window showing the manger scene. When you sing the solo, I want you to sing it only to the Baby Jesus. Forget that there is anyone else present. Don't even glance at the audience."

She looked at her watch. It was time for the program to begin.

"Will you do it, Herbie?"

Herbie studied his shoes. "I'll t-t-try," he finally answered in a whisper.

A long 20 minutes later, it came time for Herbie's solo. Intently, he studied the stained glass

window with the manger scene. Mrs. Brown nodded, and he opened his mouth, but at that exact instant, someone in the congregation laughed.

"H-H-Hallelujah," he stammered. Mrs. Brown, who was accompanying on the piano, stopped playing and started over again. Again Herbie fixed his eyes on the Christ Child. Again he sang.

"Hallelujah, the Lord is born!" his voice rang out, clear and confident. And the rest of his solo was just as perfect. After the program, Herbie slipped into his coat and darted out the back door—so fast that Mrs. Brown had to run to catch him. From the top of the steps, she called, "Herbie, you were wonderful! Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas to you, Mrs. Brown," he shouted without a stutter. Then, turning, he ran off into the night through ankle-deep snow—without boots. But then he did not need them. His feet weren't touching the ground.

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December 13

The words of Nephi, the Son of Lehi, towards the end of his Record:

> "For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins." (2 Nephi 25:19, 26)

Carol: "O Holy Night"

O Holy night, the stars are brightly shining
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till He appeared and the soul felt His worth
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices
For yonder beams a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees! Oh, 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 come the wise men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, our weakness is no stranger,
Behold your King! Before him lowly bend!
Behold your King! Before him lowly bend!

Truly he taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus rise we
Let all within us praise His holy name

Christ is the Lord, Then ever, ever praise we
His pow'r and glory ever more proclaim
His pow'r and glory ever more proclaim

Bethann's Christmas Prayer

by Marilyn Morgan Helleberg

"Put that doll down!" growled Mrs. Skorp, owner of Willow Creek's only store. "You'll break her!"

"Oh no," said Bethann. "I wouldn't hurt her. I love her!"

"Love her, do you? Well, you'd better get over that in a hurry." Mrs. Skorp whisked the doll out of Bethann's arms. "That's the most expensive doll in the store, and with your dad laid off . . ."

"It's o.k.," said Bethann, her wistful brown eyes scanning the drawn face of the middle-aged shopkeeper. "I won't touch her again until she's mine. She's my Christmas prayer!"

"Oh? I suppose you've been talking to Jesus again?"

"Why, yes! I have!" Bethann's pale, plain looking face took on a sudden glow.

"Last night I talked to Him a long time — and when I went to sleep, an angel with golden wings floated down on a cloud and told me I could have one Christmas prayer answered this year. I could have anything I asked for — but only one thing. I've asked for Betsy."

"Betsy?!?"

"Yes, that's what I've named her."

Mrs. Skorp tossed her hands over her head and walked away. "Angels now!" she muttered.

By the time she got home, Bethann was near to tears. "I can't stand her, Mommie! Mrs. Skorp is the meanest lady in the whole world!"

"Don't be too hard on her, dear," said her mother. "Mrs. Skorp used to be a very nice lady . . . before the accident."

"The accident?"

"Yes. It was before you were born. The Skorps were driving home from Kansas City after spending Christmas with relatives, when they hit a patch of ice and went off the road. Mr. Skorp was killed instantly, and their baby daughter died a couple of days later. Mrs. Skorp wasn't even hurt — at least, her body wasn't."

"I didn't even know she had a baby," said Bethann, fingering the hem of her skirt.

"After that, Mrs. Skorp just kind of dried up. She stopped going anywhere, closed herself off from everybody, even quit going to church. Some say she's been mad at God ever since."

"I've never heard of anyone being mad at God," said Bethann.

At bedtime, she knelt down and started talking with her Friend. "Lord, You know Mrs. Skorp—the one with the pinched up face and the screechy voice? You probably haven't heard from her lately because, well, I guess she's been mad at You for a long time. Anyway, Lord, I've been thinking, and I've figured out a way to get her over being mad at You. So if You don't mind, I'd like to take back that Christmas prayer for my Betsy doll. Instead, Lord, would You please send Mrs. Skorp a new baby girl? Then maybe she won't be mad at You anymore. Thank You, Jesus."

After school the next day, Bethann stopped at the store again, only this time, she was very careful to not even look at Betsy.

"Mrs. Skorp, I talked to Jesus again last night. . ." The tall, gaunt lady grunted and turned away, but Bethann continued. "I asked Him to give you a new baby girl."

"You WHAT?!" said Mrs. Skorp, wheeling around. "You really have lost your senses! Besides, if there is a God, He sure doesn't answer prayers. Now you get home!"

On the day before Christmas, Bethann made a paper card for Mrs. Skorp. The shopkeeper was alone in the store when Bethann tiptoed in. The woman was staring at a framed picture, clutching it so tightly Bethann saw that her knuckles were white.

"I brought you a Christmas card, Mrs. Skorp." Surprised, the woman laid the picture on the counter and reached for the card,

She opened it and read the childish scrawl: "Jesus loves you. And so do I. Bethann."

Mrs. Skorp coughed and turned away. That was when Bethann sneaked a look at the picture on the counter. She saw a beautiful, smiling young woman holding a curly haired baby in her arms.

"Is that your baby that died?" asked Bethann.

Mrs. Skorp slumped into the old library chair and put her head in her hands. "Her name was Betsy," she said.

Bethann stared at her. Betsy, just like the doll Bethann had named.

The woman's body began to shake as deep, low sobs poured out of her. The little girl tiptoed over and put her hand timidly on Mrs. Skorp's knee.

“I asked Jesus to send you a new little girl to love,” said Bethann. “Are you crying because He didn’t answer my prayer?”

“No,” said Mrs. Skorp. She scooped Bethann up into her lap, pressing the little head close to her heart and rocking back and forth, back and forth, in the straight chair.

“No, my little . . . darling. I’m crying because . . .because He did.”

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December 14

The Words of Jacob, the Son of Lehi, to the People at the Temple in the Land of Nephi:

> "For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. . ." (Jacob 4:4–5a)

Carol: "Bring a Torch Jeanette Isabella"

Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella
Bring a torch, to the cradle run!
It is Jesus, good folk of the village;
Christ is born and Mary's calling;
Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother
Ah! ah! beautiful is her Son!

It is wrong when the Child is sleeping
It is wrong to talk so loud;
Silence, all, as you gather around.
Lest your noise should waken Jesus.
Hush! hush! see how fast He slumbers!
Hush! hush! see how fast He sleeps!

Hasten now, good folk of the village;
Hasten now the Christ Child to see.
You will find Him asleep in the manger;
Quietly come and whisper softly,
Hush! hush! Peacefully now He slumbers.
Hush! hush! Peacefully now He sleeps.

Softly to the little stable.
Softly for a moment come;
Look and see how charming is Jesus
How He is white, His cheeks are rosy!
Hush! hush! see how the Child is sleeping;
Hush! hush! see how He smiles in his dreams.

Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella;
Bring a torch, come swiftly and run.
Christ is born, tell the folk of the village;
Jesus is sleeping in His cradle.
Ah, ah, beautiful is the Mother;
Ah, ah, beautiful is her Son.

Several authors have commented that the song evokes the tradition of erecting a crèche, or even a small town containing a crèche, to honor the Christ Child. Some have also given inspiration to the creation of the song from a painting by Georges de La Tour (1593 - 1652) in the 17th Century which depicted a Nativity scene where two young girls quietly watch the Infant. No source has specified which painting this is; perhaps it is "Le Nouveau-Né" (a.k.a. "The New Born" or "The Newborn"), circa 1645.

According to both William Simon and Nancy J. Skarmeas, the tune to this carol has been known since the 14th Century—not as a sacred hymn, but as a lively dance. Both state that the carol, with words and music, first appeared in a compilation of Christmas music, Cantiques de Premiere Advenement de Jesus-Christ, published in 1553 by a wealthy French count whose hobby was the collection of Christmas music.

Pattern of Love

by Jack Smith

I didn't question Timmy, age nine, or his seven year-old brother, Billy, about the brown wrapping paper they passed back and forth between them as we visited each store.

Every year at Christmas time, our service club takes the children from poor families in our town on a personally conducted shopping tour. I was assigned Timmy and Billy, whose father was out of work. After giving them the allotted $4.00 each, we began our trip. At different stores I made suggestions, but always their answer was a solemn shake of the head, no. Finally I asked, "Where would you suggest we look?"

"Could we go to a shoe store, sir?"answered Timmy. "We'd like a pair of shoes for our Daddy so he can go to work."

In the shoe store the clerk asked what the boys wanted. Out came the brown paper. "We want a pair of work shoes to fit this foot," they said.

Billy explained that it was a pattern of their Daddy's foot. They had drawn it while he was asleep in a chair.

The clerk held the paper against a measuring stick and then walked away. Soon he came back with an open box. "Will these do?" he asked.

Timmy and Billy handled the shoes with great eagerness. "How much do they cost?" asked Billy.

Then Timmy saw the price on the box. "They're $16.95!" he said in dismay. "We only have $8.00"

I looked at the clerk, and he cleared his throat. "That's the regular price," he said, "but they are on sale $3.98, today only."

Then with shoes happily in hand the boys bought gifts for their mother and two little sisters. Not once did they think of themselves.

The day after Christmas the boy's father stopped me on the street. The new shoes were on his feet, gratitude was in his eyes. "I thank the Lord for people who care," he said.

"And I thank Jesus for your two sons," I replied. "They taught me more about Christmas in one evening than I had learned in a lifetime."

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December 15

The Testimony of Jacob, the Son of Lehi, to Sherem:

> " . . . Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ. And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost." (Jacob 7:11–12)

Carol: "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 Saints and angels sing,
And Saints and angels sing,
And Saints, and Saints and angels sing.

Rejoice! Rejoice when Jesus reigns,
And Saints 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 will sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He'll come and make the blessings flow
Far as the curse was found,
Far as the curse was found,
Far as, far as the curse was found.

Rejoice! Rejoice in the Most High,
While Israel spreads abroad
Like stars that glitter in the sky,
And ever worship God,
And ever worship God,
And ever, and ever worship God

In Another Stable

David Niven

This story is written by David Niven, a famous actor from years ago who appeared in more than sixty movies.

It took place on Christmas Eve 1939. I had just arrived in England from Hollywood to volunteer for the British Army. Having had some previous military experience, I was commissioned a second lieutenant and given command of a platoon. We were about to be sent to France, and no one was very happy about it. Most of the men had been conscripted from good civilian jobs; this was the "phony war" period before the big German attack of the following spring, and it all seemed a big waste of time to most of them.

Being commanded by a Hollywood actor was an additional irritant for them and made the whole thing seem even more ridiculous. The men were not mutinous, but they were certainly forty of the least well-disposed characters I ever have been associated with, let alone been in command of.

We were not permitted liberty on that Christmas Eve because we were due to leave England and our families the next day—a fine prospect for the holidays. The entire platoon was billeted in the shabby stables of a farm near Dover.

I could sense the hostility in every soldier. The air was thick with sarcastic cracks about my bravery in various motion pictures.

It so happens that every night of my life I have knelt down by my bed and said a simple prayer. But that night I was faced with a difficult decision. If I suddenly knelt in prayer, here in front of these men, it occurred to me that forty tough soldiers would take it as a final evidence of Hollywood flamboyance.

On the other hand, I have always felt it wrong to avoid saying my prayers because the situation was not convenient. Besides, here it was the eve of Christ's birth.

Finally I summoned up my courage and knelt by my bunk. As I prayed there was some snickering at first, but it soon died away.

When I finished and lay down on the straw, I looked rather sheepishly around the stable and saw at least a dozen soldiers kneeling quietly and praying in their own way.

It was not the first time God had entered a stable—and touched the hearts men.

* * * * * * *

December 16

The Words of Malachi:

> "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 3:1)

Carol: "I Heard the Bells"

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

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'un broken song
Of peace on earth, good will 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, good will 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, good will 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, good will to men!

Special Delivery
By Mrs. Charles Stephan

Delivery boys come in all shapes and sizes—and in a variety of speeds and attitudes, too. Some come to the door like beleaguered deliverers of doom while others come on the bound, as though there were more rewards to work than the pay.

David Ward, of Memphis, Tennessee, is the latter kind. Weekdays after school and Saturdays, David pedals his bike for the Speedway Drug Store. And David's a good sort for the job. When he delivers a prescription and says, "I hope you're feeling better," in that polite, concerned way of his, somehow you do feel better.

Last year on a Saturday night before Christmas, David, who was thirteen then, received his weekly salary as usual. But he didn't go home. He had a special delivery of his own to make.

First he went down to the lot where the Christmas trees were being sold. When he'd given a number of the trees his careful inspection, he bought one and loaded it on his bicycle. Then he wheeled it over to 605 Life-Street, the home of a steady customer, Mrs. Brady Neals. She was seventy-one. And she had been blind for thirty-seven years.

"It's me, Mrs. Neals, David from Speedway," he said when she came to the door. And then David walked in and set up the tree and talked cheerily as he trimmed it with the lights and decorations he had brought along.

Mrs. Neals could hardly speak. Even as David was leaving she could only mumble her thanks.

But the old lady was thrilled, she kept reaching out to touch the tree's branches and to breathe its forest-fresh fragrance. "I'm seventy-one years old," she kept saying over and over, "I'm seventy-one years old, and I've never had a tree."

Delivery boys come in all shapes and sizes, and some of them bring more to their jobs than work.

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December 17

The Words of the Angel to King Benjamin:

> "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.
>
> "And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men. And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.
>
> "And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary."
> (Mosiah 3:5–8)

Carol: "O, Come, All Ye Faithful"

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; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, Glory in the highest;
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n.
Son of the Father, Now in flesh appearing;
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

O Antiphons[1]

For the Final Days of Advent

O Sapientia.

O Wisdom, who didst issue out of the mouth of the most High, and dost reach from one end of the world to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Proverbs 8:1, 22–32

[1] The O Antiphons, also known as the great Os, are Magnificat antiphons used at Vespers of the last seven days of Advent in Western Christian traditions. They are referred to as the "O Antiphons" because the title of each one begins with the vocative particle "O." Each antiphon is a name of Christ, one of his attributes mentioned in Scripture. In the Catholic Roman Rite, the O Antiphons are sung or recited at Vespers from 17 December to 23 December inclusive. Some Anglican churches (e.g. the Church of England) also use them, either in the same way as modern Roman Catholics, or according to a medieval English usage.

The hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (in Latin, Veni Emmanuel) is a lyrical paraphrase of these antiphons. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
O_Antiphons)

A String of Blue Beads

Fulton Oursler

One of the loveliest of all Christmas short stories was penned by Fulton Oursler. Oursler's story reminds us that possessions without someone to share them with are hollow and meaningless. He also reminds us once again that one can't pay more than "all one has" for a gift.

Pete Richards was the loneliest man in town on the day Jean Grace opened his door. You may have seen something in the newspapers about the incident at the time it happened, although neither his name nor hers was published, nor was the full story told as I tell it here.

Pete's shop had come down to him from his grandfather. The little front window was strewn with a disarray of old-fashioned things: bracelets and lockets worn in days before the Civil War, gold rings and silver boxes, images of jade and ivory, porcelain figurines.

On this winter's afternoon a child was standing there, her forehead against the glass, earnest and enormous eyes studying each discarded treasure as if she were looking for something quite special. Finally she straightened up with a satisfied air and entered the store.

The shadowy interior of Pete Richards' establishment was even more cluttered than his show window. Shelves were stacked with jewel caskets, dueling pistols, clocks, and lamps, and the floor was heaped with andiron and mandolins and things hard to find a name for.

Behind the counter stood Pete himself, a man not more than thirty but with hair already turning gray. There was a bleak air about him as he looked at the small customer who flattened her ungloved hands on the counter.

"Mister," she began, "would you please let me look at that string of blue beads in the window?"

Pete parted the draperies and lifted out a necklace. The turquoise stones gleamed brightly against the pallor of his palm as he spread the ornament before her.

"They're just perfect," said the child, entirely to herself. "Will you wrap them up pretty for me, please?"

Pete studied her with a stony air. "Are you buying these for someone?"

"They're for my big sister. She takes care of me. You see, this will be the first Christmas since Mother died. I've been looking for the most wonderful Christmas present for my sister."

"How much money do you have?" asked Pete warily.

She had been busily untying the knots in a handkerchief and now she poured out a handful of

pennies on the counter.

“I emptied my bank,” she explained simply.

Pete Richards looked at her thoughtfully. Then he carefully drew back the necklace. The price tag was visible to him but not to her. How could he tell her? The trusting look of her blue eyes smote him like the pain of an old wound.

“Just a minute,” he said, and turned toward the back of the store. Over his shoulder he called, “‘What’s your name?” He was very busy about something.

“Jean Grace.”

When Pete returned to where Jean Grace waited, a package lay in his hand, wrapped in scarlet paper and tied with a bow of green ribbon. “There you are,” he said shortly. “Don’t lose it on the way home.”

She smiled happily at him over her shoulder as she ran out the door. Through the window he watched her go, while desolation flooded his thoughts. Something about Jean Grace and her string of beads had stirred him to the depths of a grief that would not stay buried. The child’s hair was wheat yellow, her eyes sea blue, and once upon a time, not long before, Pete had been in love with a girl with hair of that same yellow and with eyes just as blue. And the turquoise necklace was to have been hers.

But there had come a rainy night—a truck skidding on a slippery road—and the life was crushed out of his dream.

Since then Pete Richards had lived too much with his grief in solitude. He was politely attentive to customers, but after business hours his world seemed irrevocably empty. He was trying to forget in a self-pitying haze that deepened day by day.

The blue eyes of Jean Grace jolted him into acute remembrance of what he had lost. The pain of it made him recoil from the exuberance of holiday shoppers. During the next ten days trade was brisk; chattering men swarmed in, fingering trinkets, trying to bargain. When the last customer had gone, late on Christmas Eve, he sighed with relief. It was over for another year, but for Pete Richards the night was not quite over.

The door opened and a young woman hurried in. With an inexplicable start, he realized that she looked familiar, yet he could not remember when or where he had seen her before. Her hair was golden yellow and her large eyes were blue. Without speaking, she drew from her purse a package loose unwrapped in its red paper, a bow of green ribbon with it. Presently the string of blue beads lay gleaming again before him.

“Did this come from your shop?” she asked.

Pete raised his eyes to hers and answered softly, “Yes, it did.”

“Are the stones real?”

“Yes. Not the finest quality—but real.”

“Can you remember who it was you sold them to?”

“She was a small girl. Her name was Jean. She bought them for her older sister’s Christmas present.”

“How much are they worth?”

“The price,” he told her solemnly, “is always a confidential matter between the seller and the customer.”

“But Jean has never had more than a few pennies of spending money. How could she pay for them?”

Pete was folding the gay paper back into its creases, re-wrapping the little package just as neatly as before.

“She paid the biggest price anyone can ever pay,” he said. “She gave all she had.”

There was a silence then that filled the little curio shop. He saw the far away steeple, a bell began ringing. The sound of the distant chiming, the little package lying on the counter, the question in the eyes of the girl, and the strange feeling of renewal struggling unreasonably in the heart of the man, all had come to be because of the love of a child.

“But why did you do it?”

He held out the gift in his hand.

“It’s already Christmas morning,” he said. “And it’s my misfortune that I have no one to give anything to. Will you let me see you home and wish you a Merry Christmas at your door?”

And so, to the sound of many bells and in the midst of happy people, Pete Richards and a girl whose name he had yet to hear, walked out into the beginning of the great day that brings hope into the world for us all.

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December 18

The Words of Alma to the People of Gideon:

> "But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying—Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.
>
> "And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God." (Alma 7:9–10)

Carol: "Oh, Hush Thee, My Baby"

Oh, hush thee, my baby; a story I'll tell
How little Lord Jesus on earth came to dwell;
How in a far country, 'way over the sea,
Was born a wee baby, my dear one, like thee.

> Lullaby, baby, lullaby dear.
> Sleep, little baby; have nothing to fear.
> Lullaby, baby, lullaby dear.
> Jesus will care for his little one here.

The story was told by the angels so bright,
As round them was shining a heavenly light.
The stars shone out brightly, but one led the way
And stood o'er the place where the dear baby lay

The shepherds here found him, as angels had said,
The poor little stranger, no crib for a bed.
Down low in a manger so quiet he lay.
This little child Jesus, asleep on the hay.

O Adonai

O Lord and Ruler of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in a burning bush, and didst give him the law on Sinai: Come and deliver us with an outstretched arm.

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Isaiah 43:1–7.

Trouble at the Inn
by Dina Donahue

For many years now, whenever Christmas pageants are talked about in a certain little town in the Mid-west, someone is sure to mention the name of Wallace Purling. Wally's performance in one annual production of the nativity play has slipped into the realm of legend. But the old-timers who were in the audience that night never tire of recalling exactly what happened.

Wally was nine that year and in the second grade, though he should have been in the fourth. Most people in town knew that he had difficulty in keeping up. He was big and clumsy, slow in movement and mind. Still, Wally was well liked by the other children in his class, all of whom were smaller than he, though the boys had trouble hiding their irritation when Wally would ask to play ball with them, or any game, for that matter, in which winning was important.

Most often they'd find a way to keep him out, but Wally would hang around anyway—not sulking, just hoping. He was always a helpful boy, a willing and smiling one, and the natural protector of the underdog. Sometimes if the older boys chased the younger ones away, it would always be Wally who'd say, "Can't they stay? They're no bother."

Wally fancied the idea of being a shepherd with a flute in the Christmas pageant that year, but the play's director, Miss Lumbard, assigned him to a more important role. After all, she reasoned, the Innkeeper did not have too many lines, and Wally's size would make his refusal of lodging to Joseph more forceful.

And so it happened that the usual large, partisan audience gathered for the town's yearly extravaganza of beards, crowns, halos and a whole stageful of squeaky voices. No one on stage or off was more caught up in the magic of the night than Wallace Purling. They said later that he stood in the wings and watched the performance with such fascination that from time to time Miss Lumbard had to make sure he didn't wander on stage before his cue.

Then the time came when Joseph appeared, slowly, tenderly guiding Mary to the door of the inn. Joseph knocked hard on the wooden door set into the painted backdrop. Wally the innkeeper was there, waiting.

"What do you want?" Wally said, swinging the door open with a brusque gesture.

"We seek lodging, somewhere to stay."

"Seek it elsewhere." Wally looked straight ahead but spoke vigorously. "The inn is filled."

"Sir, we have asked everywhere in vain. We have traveled far and are very weary."

"There is no room in this inn for you." Wally looked properly stern.

“Please, good innkeeper, this is my wife, Mary. She is heavy with child and needs a place to rest. Surely you must have some small corner for her. She is so tired.”

Now, for the first time the Innkeeper relaxed his stiff stance and looked down at Mary. With that, there was a long pause, long enough to make the audience a bit tense with embarrassment.

“No! Begone!” the prompter whispered from the wings of the stage.

“No!” Wally repeated automatically. “Begone!”

Joseph sadly placed his arm around Mary, and Mary laid her head upon her husband’s shoulder as the two of them started to move away. The Innkeeper did not return inside his inn, however. Wally stood there in the doorway, watching the forlorn couple. His mouth was open, his brow creased with concern, his eyes filling unmistakably with tears. And suddenly this Christmas pageant became different from all the others.

“Don’t go, Joseph,” Wally called out. “Bring Mary back.” And Wallace Furling’s face grew into a bright smile. “You can have my room.”

Some people in town thought that the pageant had been ruined. Yet there were others—many, many others—who considered it the most Christmas of all Christmas pageants they had ever seen.

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December 19

The Words of Samuel the Lamanite to the People of Zarahemla:

> "And behold, he said unto them: Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.
>
> "And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day. Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born.
>
> "And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you. And behold this is not all, there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven. And it shall come to pass that ye shall all be amazed, and wonder, insomuch that ye shall fall to the earth. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life." (Helaman 14:2–8)

Carol: "Stars Were Gleaming"

Stars were gleaming, shepherds dreaming;
And the night was dark and chill.
Angels' story rang with glory;
Shepherds heard it on the hill.
Ah, that singing! Hear it ringing,
Earthward winging, Christmas bringing!
Hearken! We can hear it still!
Hearken! We can hear it still!

See the clearness and the nearness
Of the blessed Christmas star.
Leading, guiding; wise men riding
Through the desert dark and far.
Lovely showing, sharing, growing,
Onward going, gleaming, glowing,
Leading still our Christmas star!
Leading still our Christmas star!

O Radix Jesse

O Root of Jesse, who standest for an ensign to the peoples, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, and to whom the Gentiles shall pray: Come and deliver us, and do not delay.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
From every foe deliver them
That trust thy mighty power to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Isaiah 11:1–9.

I Knew You Would Come

by Elizabeth King English

Herman and I locked our general store and dragged ourselves home. It was 11:00p.m., Christmas Eve of 1949. We were dog tired. We had sold almost all of our toys; and all of the layaways, except one package, had been picked up.

Usually we kept the store open until everything had been claimed. We wouldn't have woken up happy on Christmas knowing that some child's gift was still on the layaway shelf. But the person who had put a dollar down on that package never returned.

Early Christmas morning we and out twelve-year old son, Tom, opened gifts. But I'll tell you, there was something humdrum about this Christmas. Tom was growing up; I missed his childish exuberance of past years.

As soon as breakfast was over Tom left to visit his friend next door. Herman mumbled, "I'm going back to sleep. There's nothing left to stay up for." So there I was alone, feeling let down.

And then it began. A strange, persistent urge. It seemed to be telling me to go to the store. I looked at the sleet and icy sidewalk outside. That's crazy, I said to myself. I tried dismissing the urge, but it wouldn't leave me alone. In fact, it was getting stronger. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, and I got dressed.

Outside, the wind cut right through me and the sleet stung my cheeks. I groped my way to the store, slipping and sliding. In front stood two boys, one about nine, and the other six. What in the world?

"See, I told you she would come!" the older boy said jubilantly. The younger one's face was wet with tears, but when he saw me, his sobbing stopped.

"What are you two doing out here?" I scolded, hurrying them into the store. "You should be at home on a day like this!" They were poorly dressed. They had no hats or gloves, and their shoes barely held together. I rubbed their icy hands, and got them up close to the heater.

"We've been waiting for you," replied the older boy. "My little brother Jimmy didn't get any Christmas." He touched Jimmy's shoulder. "We want to buy some skates. That's what he wants. We have these three dollars." he said, pulling the bills from his pocket.

I looked at the money. I looked at their expectant faces. and then I looked around the store. "I'm sorry," I said, "but we have no—" Then my eye caught sight of the layaway shelf with its lone package. "Wait a minute," I told the boys. I walked over, picked up the package, unwrapped it and, miracle of miracles, there was a pair of skates!

Jimmy reached for them. Lord, let them be his size. And miracle added upon miracle, they were his size.

The older boy presented the dollars to me. "No," I told him, "I want you to have these skates, and I want you to use your money to get some gloves."

The boys just blinked at first. Then their eyes became like saucers, and their grins stretched wide when they understood I was giving them the skates. What I saw in Jimmy's eyes was a blessing. It was pure joy, and it was beautiful. My spirits rose.

We walked out together, and as I locked the door, I turned to the older brother and said, "How did you know I would come?"

I wasn't prepared for his reply. His gaze was steady, and he answered me softly. "I asked Jesus to send you."

The tingles in my spine weren't from the cold. God had planned this. As we waved good-bye, I turned home to a brighter Christmas.

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John William Waterhouse, "The Annunciation"

December 20

The Annunciation to Mary:

> "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.'
>
> "And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, 'Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'
>
> Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.'
>
> "And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:26–38)

Carol: "Lo, How a Rose E're 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 flow'ret 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.

O flow'r, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispel in glorious splendour
The darkness ev'ry where.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death now save us,
And share our ev'ry load.

O Clavis David

O Key of David, and Scepter of the house of Israel; who openest and no one shutteth, who shuttest and no one openeth: come and bring the prisoners out of the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

O come, thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Isaiah 22:20–24.

To See Again

Gary B. Swanson

We all take our senses for granted, placing, instead, undue value on monetary things. We'd be happy, we say, if Publisher's Clearing House made us multimillionaires. But multimillionaires are rarely very happy, so something must be wrong with that assertion. This little story reminds us that some things dwarf mere money.

The mother sat on the simulated-leather chair in the doctor's office, picking nervously at her fingernail. Wrinkles of worry lined her forehead as she watched five-year-old Kenny sitting on the rug before her.

He was small for his age and a little too thin, she thought. His fine blond hair hung down smooth and straight to the top of his ears. But white gauze bandages encircled his head, covering his eyes and pinning his ears back.

In his lap he bounced a beaten-up teddy bear. It was the pride of his life yet one arm was gone and the other missing. Twice his mother had tried to throw it away and replace it with a new one, but he had fussed, so she had relented. She tipped her head slightly to the side and smiled at him. *It's really about all he has, she sighed to herself.*

A nurse appeared in the doorway. "Kenny," she announced, and the young mother scooped him up and followed the nurse toward the examining room. The hallway smelled of rubbing alcohol and bandages. Children's crayon drawings lined the walls.

"The doctor will be with you in a moment," the nurse said with an efficient smile. "Please be seated."

The mother placed Kenny on the examining table. "Be careful, honey, not to fall off."

"Am I up very high, Mother?"

"No, dear, but be careful."

Kenny hugged his teddy bear tighter. "Then I don't want Grr-face to fall either."

The mother smiled. The smile twisted at the corners into a frown of concern. She brushed the hair off the boy's face and caressed his cheek, soft as thistledown, with the back of her hand. As the music drifted into a haunting version of "Silent Night," she remembered the accident for the thousandth time.

She had been cooking things on the back burner for years. But there it was, sitting right out in front, water almost boiling for oatmeal.

The phone rang in the living room. It was another one of those "free offers" that cost so much.

At the moment she returned the phone to the table, Kenny screamed in the kitchen, the galvanizing cry of pain that frosts a mother's veins.

She winced again at the memory of it and brushed aside a warm tear slipping down her cheek. Six weeks they had waited for this day to come. "We'll be able to take the bandages off the week before Christmas," the doctor had said.

The door to the examination room swept open, and Dr. Harris came in. "Good morning, Mrs. Ellis," he said brightly. "How are you today?"

"Fine, thank you," she said. But she was too apprehensive for small talk.

Dr. Harris bent over the sink and washed his hands carefully. He was cautious with his patients but careless about himself. He could seldom find time to get a haircut, and his straight black hair hung a little long over his collar. His loosened tie allowed his collar to be open at the throat.

"Now then," he said, sitting down on a stool, "let's have a look."

Gently he snipped at the bandage with scissors and unwound it from Kenny's head. The bandage fell away, leaving two flat squares of gauze taped directly over Kenny's eyes. Dr. Harris lifted the edges of the tape slowly, trying not to hurt the boy's tender skin.

Kenny slowly opened his eyes and blinked several times as if the sudden light hurt. Then he looked at his mother and grinned. "Hi Mom," he said.

Choking and speechless, the mother threw her arms around Kenny's neck. For several minutes she could say nothing, as she hugged the boy and wept in thankfulness. Finally, she looked at Dr. Harris with tear filled eyes. "I don't know how we'll ever be able pay you," she said. "Since my husband died, it's been hard on us."

"We've been over all that before," the doctor interrupted with a wave of his hand. "I know how this is for you and Kenny. I'm glad I could help."

The mother dabbed at her eyes with a welcome handkerchief, stood up, and took Kenny's hand. And just as she turned toward the door Kenny pulled up and stood for a long moment looking uncertainly at the doctor. Then he held his teddy bear up by its only arm to the doctor.

"Here," he said, "Take my Grr-face. He ought to be worth a lot of money."

Dr. Harris quietly took the broken bear in his hands. "Thank you, Kenny. This will more than pay for my services."

The last few days before Christmas were especially good for Kenny and his mother. They sat together through the long evenings, watching the Christmas tree twinkle on and off. Bandages

had covered Kenny's eyes for six weeks, so he seemed reluctant to close them to sleep at night. The fire dancing in the fireplace, snowflakes sticking to his bedroom window, the small packages under the tree—all the lights of the holiday fascinated him.

And then, on Christmas Eve, Kenny's mother answered the doorbell. No one was there, but a large package was on the porch, wrapped in metallic green paper with a broad red ribbon and bow. A tag attached to the package identified the box as intended for Kenny Ellis.

With a grin, Kenny tore the ribbon off the box, lifted the lid, and pulled out a teddy bear—his beloved Grr-face. Only it now had a new arm of brown corduroy and two new button eyes that glittered in the soft Christmas light. Kenny didn't seem to mind that the new arm did not match the other one. He just hugged the teddy bear and laughed.

Among the tissue in the box, the mother found a card. "Dear Kenny," it read, "I can sometimes help put boys and girls back together, but Mrs. Harris had to help me repair Grr-face. She's a better bear doctor than I am. Merry Christmas! Dr. Harris."

"Look Mother," Kenny smiled, pointing to the button eyes. "Grr-face can see again—just like me!"

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Joseph Brickey, "Annunciation to Joseph"

December 21

The Angel's Words to Joseph:

> "When as . . . Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
>
> "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.' Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.'
>
> "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son . . ." (Matthew 1:18–25)

Carol: "Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine"

Joseph dearest, Joseph mine,
Help to rock this child divine;
God has sent in his own time a Son of Man
A Son, a Babe,
The Holy One of Mary!

Joseph dearest, Joseph mine,
help to rock this child divine;
God doth give to thee and thine
His honored Son,
the Holy One of Mary

Joseph dearest, Joseph mine,
help to rock this child divine;
God in glory now doth shine
Upon the Babe,
the Holy One of Mary

Refrain:
For Christ our Lord is born this day,
Is born this day, Immanuel!
Precious Child born in lowly manger.
Ea, ea, Glory be on high,
Sing alleluia!

Bridge:
He came to us in Bethlehem,
He came to us a spotless gem,
He came to us our Lord to be
Little, humble Babe indeed,
Lovely Child be thou our need.

Sleep, thou dear and lovely one,
Come to earth as God's own Son,
for this day all love is won
with thee, the Son,
the Holy One of Mary.

Refrain

O Oriens

Day-Spring, radiant everlasting Light, and Sun of Righteousness: Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

O come, thou Day-spring from on high,
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.
Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Isaiah 42:1–7; Luke 1:78.

The Gift of Love

by Thomas S. Monson

When I was a very young bishop, in 1950, there was a tap at my door, and a good German brother from Ogden, Utah, announced himself as Karl Guertler.

He said, “Are you Bishop Monson?”

I answered in the affirmative.

He said, “My brother and his wife and their family are coming from Germany. They are going to live in your ward. Will you come with me to see the apartment we have rented for them?”

On the way to that apartment, he told me he had not seen his brother for something like 30 years. Yet all through the holocaust of World War II, his brother, Hans Guertler, had been faithful to the Church—an officer in the Hamburg branch.

I looked at that apartment. It was cold; it was dreary; the paint was peeling from the walls; the cupboards were bare. What an uninviting home for the Christmas season of the year! I worried about it, and I prayed about it, and then in our ward welfare committee meeting, we did something about it.

The group leader of the high priests said, “I am an electrician. Let’s put good appliances in that apartment.”

The group leader of the seventies said, “I am in the floor covering business. Let’s install new floor coverings.”

The elders quorum president said, “I am a painter. Let’s paint that apartment.”

The Relief Society representative spoke up, “Did you say those cupboards were bare?” (They were not bare very long, with the Relief Society in action.)

Then the young people, represented through the Aaronic Priesthood general secretary said, “Let’s put a Christmas tree in the home, and let’s go among our young people and gather gifts to place under the tree.”

You should have seen that Christmas scene, when the Guertler family arrived from Germany in clothing which was tattered and with faces which were drawn by the rigors of war and deprivation! As they went into their apartment they saw what had been in actual fact a transformation—a beautiful home.

We spontaneously began singing, “Silent night! Holy night! All is calm; all is bright.” We sang

in English; they sang in German. At the conclusion of that hymn, Hans Guertler threw his arms around my neck buried his face in my shoulder, and repeated over and over again those words which I shall never forget: “Mein Bruder, mein Bruder, mein Bruder”

As we walked down the stairs that night, all of us who had participated in making Christmas come alive in the lives of this German family, we reflected upon the words of the Master:

> “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

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Carl Bloch, “Meeting of Mary and Elisabeth”

December 22

The Visit to Elisabeth and the *Magnificat*:

> "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.'
>
> "And Mary said, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.'
>
> "And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house." (Luke 1:39–56)

Carol: "Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the heavens looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes;
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 fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

O Rex gentium

O King of the Nations, and their Desire; the Cornerstone who dost unite the divided into one: Come and save mankind, whom thou didst create out of clay.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid thou our sad divisions cease,
And be thyself our King of Peace.
    Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
    Shall come to thee, O Israel!

See Isaiah 45:8–13; Jeremiah 10:7.

Once in a Lifetime Christmas

by Will Wright

What is it about the Christmas season that turns some events into giggly, delightful memories that we cherish all our lives? I remember hearing a special Christmas-time story about just such an event. Perhaps in the story is the answer to my question.

The setting was a small farming community during the early 1930's. The country was experiencing the Great Depression. There were few dollars changing hands, and most people were grateful if they still had a home and regular meals. It was a better time to be a child than an adult. But the children also felt the economic sting—for most families even inexpensive things were no longer affordable.

When the children entered school that fall, most tried to squeeze into the clothes they wore when school let out three months earlier. The lucky ones had hand-me-downs from older brothers or sisters or neighboring families. During the Depression, some families had enough food to be able to spare some for the children's school lunches, but some did not have enough. Often the children would pool their lunches—they put all the lunches together and divided everything equally. That was the best way. It's hard to enjoy your lunch when your friends don't have one. In many ways it was a special time. Young people grew up a little sooner, and people learned to appreciate small things.

As the Christmas season approached, the memories of other Christmases prompted everyone to quicken their step, be happier, look forward to delightful times—to catch the Christmas Spirit. But the harsh economic realities of the time whispered into each ear: "Not this year . . . perhaps another year things will be better." That is a hard way to face the Christmas season for children. It is even harder for parents.

Now of all years for it to happen, it would have to happen this year. A new sled entered the market place—the Flexible Flyer! Wow! It was beautiful! It was red—bright red. A gleaming finish covered the graceful wood deck. Up front were the handlebars to steer this magnificent machine wherever its lucky owner would choose to go. This was the ultimate in sleds—the ultimate Christmas gift for a child in a snow-covered farming community with lots of hills and slopes.

The Flexible Flyer was prominently displayed in the local hardware store window. What a sight! What a delight! What an impossible dream! Neatly positioned by the sled was a reminder of the Depression. It was the price tag. $4.98! A small fortune in those days. Even though it was an impossible dream, that did not keep the children from thinking about the Flexible Flyer. By dreaming we can keep going; we can defy even a Great Depression and guide our very own Flexible Flyer down delightful snow-covered slopes and enjoy the crisp fresh air rushing by us as shiny sharp runners send a spray of snow arching from our path as we negotiate twisting turns and bumps and dips.

The school Christmas party was held as usual, and school was dismissed for the holidays. The children were happy to be out of school, but they did not look forward to Christmas Day with the same anticipation enjoyed in previous years. Money was very scarce. It was a year to be grateful for a warm bed and a tummy that was not hungry. Gifts and toys and Flexible Flyers would have to wait for better times. The children understood. They could see the struggle their parents were having. They did not want to see the hurt look in their parents faces that asking for toys and Flexible Flyers would bring. There will be other Christmases—someone will still be making Flexible Flyers then.

Now one of the young girls in that humble snow-covered farming community, let's call her Edith, had all of these thoughts running through her mind that Christmas. So when she went to bed on Christmas Eve, Edith was grateful for what she had, but she found it hard to anticipate Christmas morning any more than any other morning. She slept in later than most Christmas mornings. Edith thought, "That will be my gift to myself — to make up for the other gifts we can't afford this year—I'll sleep in this morning."

But Edith's mother called her and told her it was time to get dressed and meet the rest of the family at the Christmas tree, and as Edith walked into the room, she saw it! Chills ran up her spine! Her hand rushed to her mouth as she let out a high pitched squeal that only a young girl can duplicate. Edith crossed the living room in two leaps landing on her knees in front of the impossible dream at the base of the tree—a Flexible Flyer that had a large red bow on it and a little card that said "Edith" on it.

Edith stroked the smooth wood finish, she turned the handlebars from one side to the other, she hugged the sled as tears rolled down her face and then stared at her parents in disbelief. "But we don't have any money," cried Edith. Edith's mother and father felt tears swelling up in their eyes now. The dear price they had paid seemed worth it a thousand times over right now. It was a moment and a feeling that none of them would ever forget. Never!

There were other presents. Edith's mother had made Edith a beautiful dress. Her brother got the pair of cowboy boots he had wanted for a long time. It was a good Christmas in bad times. But through it all Edith was like a frog glued to a dozen springs—she could not be still. Her excitement was evident in every movement, look, and squeal. "A Flexible Flyer!"—she must have shrieked a hundred times before Christmas dinner was served.

After the noon-time Christmas dinner Edith's mother told her to dress as warm as she could, bring her Flexible Flyer, and meet the rest of the family at the sleigh by the barn. "There is another surprise in town," she said.

As they entered town, Edith saw the other surprise. An inclined portion of Main Street had been roped off to form a path several blocks long for sleds. Excited people were everywhere. It looked like the entire town was there. Edith saw Flexible Flyers scooting down every slope in sight. Several sleighs pulled by the horses were being used to pull the boys and girls on their sleds to the top of the barricaded street. Taking turns, down the hill they came in wild delight screeching

and screaming and yelling all the way. Near the end of the incline a crowd of parents cheered the group on. Hour after hour the group relished the magic of this special Christmas—the year the unaffordable Flexible Flyer found its way under dozens of Christmas trees. Each family that had bought a sled had to sacrifice to do so. But watching the ecstatic children flying down the hill was reward enough for their sacrifice. As an added bonus, there was deep satisfaction in being able to thumb your nose at hard times for one exceptional day.

As the exciting afternoon passed into evening, the wintry scene was lighted by the reflection of a full moon on the snow. Several small fires were started to warm the group. It grew quieter as the sledders grew tired from dozens of trips down the slope and the chill of the evening took hold. All were reluctant to end this magical day when an impossible dream came true for children and parents alike. Finally the group gave in to weariness, cold, and hunger. Off they went to their separate homes with their Flexible Flyers and their memories of a once in a lifetime Christmas.

Several days later Edith walked into the barn to watch her dad milk the cows. She noticed that their best milk cow was not in her stall. Dad explained that he had sold her just before Christmas. He had some flimsy excuse about her getting old. It was the way he groped for words and an explanation that gave the secret away. Edith felt a rush of emotion, and tears came into her eyes as the truth hit her—her parents had sold their best milk cow so they could give her a Flexible Flyer for Christmas. She ran from the barn and shed her tears where no one could see her. She better understood now how much her parents loved her and how much she loved them. It was a tender, growing, and character-building moment.

As Edith shared her new found truth with her best friend at school the next day, she learned that her friend's father had sold apples door to door in neighboring towns to get her Flexible Flyer money. In time, story after story surfaced to reveal how the entire community had combined in a joint effort of extra work, bargaining, selling, and sharing to buy Flexible Flyers. Sure, the children had all wanted the beautiful red sled displayed in the hardware store window, but none had dared to ask their parents for it because they knew the family could not afford such a luxury in those hard times. But in a secret plan the parents had combined in a dedicated effort of sacrifice and cooperation to provide a very special Christmas for their children.

A price of sacrifice and extra effort and increased hardship had been paid. It bought dozens of Flexible Flyers and hundreds of memories with a value beyond price. It also bought treasures not anticipated by the buyers.

As the children returned to school after the holidays they were different. Sure, they still had to share lunches and squeeze into clothes that did not fit quite right, and they had to do without things that they took for granted a few years before. What was different was the spirit and attitude the children displayed. The attitude of down-and-out was replaced with an attitude of can-do. They showed more appreciation to parents, friends, and teachers. They sensed the love and sacrifice of their parents and the community, and they felt a need to be better and to do better.

The parents felt the change, too. Not just in their children, the whole community changed. Everyone moved with more energy and determination. There were more smiles and greetings as people met on the street. The Great Depression of helplessness seemed to be replaced by a spirit of optimism. As it turned out, the price paid for this very special Christmas was small compared to the benefits received. While buying Flexible Flyers, they also bought a renewed spirit of optimism and determination and faith in individuals, families, and their community. This truly was a once in a lifetime Christmas.

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Robert Barrett, "The New Star"

December 23

The Words of the Lord to Nephi, the Son of Nephi, the Son of Helaman:

> "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given." (3 Nephi 1:13–14)

Carol: "Once within a Lowly Stable"

Once within a lowly stable,
Where the sheep and oxen lay,
A loving mother laid down her baby
In a manger filled with hay.
Mary was the mother there,
And the Christ that baby fair.

God sent us this loving baby
From his home in heav'n above,
And he came down to show all people
How to help and how to love.
This is why the angels bright
Sang for joy that Christmas night.

O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the One whom the Gentiles expect, and their Salvation:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

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

See Isaiah 33:20–22 and Isaiah 7:14

Unexpected Christmas

by Marguerite Nixon

We were well over half way to our farm in East Texas when the storm broke. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed, and a tree fell with a great ripping noise. When the rain poured in such a flood that we could not see the road, my husband drove off on to what seemed to be a bit of clearing deep in the piney woods.

As we waited, I sensed we would not get to the farm that night to celebrate Christmas Eve with our family. We were sitting there, miserable and dejected, when I heard a knocking on my window. A man with a lantern stood there beckoning us to follow him. My husband and I splashed after him up the path to his house.

A woman with a lamp in her hand stood in the doorway of an-old house; a boy of about twelve and a little girl stood beside her. We went in soaked and dripping, and the family moved aside in order that we might have the warmth of the fire. With the volubility of city people, my husband and I began to talk, explaining our plans. And with the quietness of people who live in the silence of the woods, they listened.

“The bridge on Caney Creek is out. You are welcome to spend the night with us,” the man said. And, though we told them we thought it was an imposition, especially on Christmas Eve, they insisted.

After we had visited a while longer, the man got up and took the Bible from the mantle. “It’s our custom to read the story from St. Luke on Christmas Eve,” he said, and without another word began:

“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger . . .”

The children sat up eagerly, their eyes bright in anticipation, while their father read on: “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.” I looked at his strong face. He could have been one of those shepherds.

When he finished reading and closed the Bible, the little children knelt by their chairs. The mother and father were kneeling, and without any conscious will of my own I found myself joining them. Then I saw my husband, without any embarrassment at all, kneel also.

When we arose after the prayer, I looked around the room. There were no brightly wrapped packages or cards, only a small, unadorned holly tree on the mantle. Yet the Spirit of Christmas was never more real to me.

The little boy broke the silence. “We always feed the cattle at 12 o’clock on Christmas Eve. Come with us.”

The barn was warm and fragrant with the smell of hay and dried corn. A cow and a horse greeted us, and there was a goat with a tiny, woolly kid that came up to he petted. This is like the stable where the Baby was born, I thought. Here is the manger, and the gentle animals keep watch.

When we returned to the house, there was an air of festivity and the serving of juice and fruitcake. Later, we bedded down on a mattress made of corn shucks. As I turned into a comfortable position, they rustled under me and sent up a faint fragrance exactly like that in the barn. My heart said, “You are sleeping in the stable like the Christ Child did.”

As I drifted into a profound sleep, I knew that the light coming through the old pine shutters was the Star shining on the quiet house.

The family all walked down the path to the car with us the next morning. I was so filled with the Spirit of Christmas they had given me that I could find no words. Suddenly I thought of the gifts in the back seat of our car for our family.

I began to hand them out. My husband’s gray woolen socks went to the man. The red sweater I had bought for my sister went to the mother. I gave away two boxes of candy, the white mittens, and the leather gloves while my husband nodded approval.

And when I was breathless from reaching in and out of the car and the family stood there loaded with the gaiety of Christmas packages, the mother spoke for all of them. “We thank you,” she said simply. And then she said, “Wait.”

She hurried up the path to the house and came back with a quilt folded across her arms. It was beautifully handmade; the pattern was the Star of Bethlehem. I looked up at the tall beautiful pines because my throat hurt, my eyes were filling with tears, and I could not speak. It was indeed Christmas.

Every Christmas Eve since then, I sleep under that quilt, the Star of Bethlehem, and in memory I visit the stable and smell again the corn shucks, and the meaning of Christmas abides with me once more.

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Carl Bloch, "The Holy Night"

December 24
CHRISTMAS EVE

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:1–7)

" . . . and he called his name JESUS." (Matthew 1:25b)

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, good will toward men.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8–16)

Carol: "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.

The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Eve

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.



Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, "Adoration of the Shepherds"

December 25
CHRISTMAS DAY

"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." (Luke 2:17–20)

Carol: "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 of earth, good will 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, good will 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, good will 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, good will 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, good will to men.

The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Christmas Night

by Max Lucado

I stumbled upon this gem many years ago when feeling sad and letdown at the end of a busy but happy Christmas season. It has now become an annual tradition to re-light the candles of our Advent wreath at the end of Christmas Day and read this story, which always makes me weep at the line "In the emotion of the father who is too thankful to finish the dinner table prayer." I have not been able to find it online again, but reproduce it here with all credit to Reverend Lucado.

It's Christmas night. The house is quiet. Even the crackle is gone from the fireplace. Warm coals issue a lighthouse glow in the darkened den. Stockings hang empty on the mantle. The tree stands naked in the corner. Christmas cards, tinsel, and memories remind Christmas night of Christmas Day.

It's Christmas night. What a day it has been! Spiced tea. Santa Claus.

Cranberry sauce. "Thank you so much." "You shouldn't have!" "Grandma on the phone." Knee-deep wrapping paper. "It just fits." Flashing cameras.

It's Christmas night. The tree that only yesterday grew from soil made gifts, again grows from the Christmas tree stand. Presents are now possessions. Wrapping paper is bagged and in the dumpster. The dishes are washed, and leftover turkey awaits next week's sandwiches.

It's Christmas night. The last of the carolers appeared on the ten o'clock news. The last of the apple pie was eaten by my brother-in-law. And the last of the Christmas albums have been stored away having dutifully perform their annual rendition of chestnuts, white Christmases, and red-nosed reindeer.

It's Christmas night.

The midnight hour has chimed and I should be asleep, but I'm awake. I'm kept awake by one stunning thought. The world was different this week. It was temporarily transformed.

The magical dust of Christmas glittered on the cheeks of humanity ever so briefly, reminding us of what is worth having and what we were intended to be. We forgot our compulsion with winning, wooing, and warring. We put away our ladders and ledgers, we hung up our stopwatches and weapons. We stepped off our racetracks and roller coasters and looked outward toward the star of Bethlehem.

It's the season to be jolly because, more than at any other time, we think of Him. More than in any other season, His name is on our lips.

And the results? For a few precious hours our heavenly yearnings intermesh and we become a chorus. A ragtag chorus of longshoremen, Boston lawyers, illegal immigrants, housewives, and a thousand other peculiar persons who are banking that Bethlehem's mystery is in reality, a reality.

“Come and behold Him” we sing, stirring even the sleepiest of shepherds and pointing them toward the Christ Child.

For a few precious hours, He is beheld. Christ the Lord. Those who pass the year without seeing Him, suddenly see Him. People who have been accustomed to using His name in vain, pause to use it in praise. Eyes, now free of the blinders of self, marvel at His majesty.

All of a sudden He’s everywhere.

In the grin of the policeman as he drives the paddy wagon full of presents to the orphanage.

In the twinkle in the eyes of the Taiwanese waiter as he tells of his upcoming Christmas trip to see his children.

In the emotion of the father who is too thankful to finish the dinner table prayer.

He’s in the tear of the mother as she welcomes home her son from overseas.

He’s in the heart of the man who spent Christmas morning on skid row giving away cold baloney sandwiches and warm wishes.

He’s in the solemn silence of the crowd of shopping mall shoppers as the elementary school chorus sings “Away in a Manger.”

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Emmanuel. He is with us. God came near.

It’s Christmas night. In a few hours the cleanup will begin—lights will come down, trees will be thrown out. Size thirty-six will be exchanged for size forty, eggnog will be on sale for half price. Soon life will be normal again. December’s generosity will become January’s payments, and the magic will begin to fade.

But for the moment, the magic is still in the air. Maybe that’s why I’m still awake. I want to savor the spirit just a bit more. I want to pray that those who beheld Him today will look for Him next August. And I can’t help but linger on one fanciful thought: if He can do so much with such timid prayers offered in December, how much more could He do if we thought of Him every day?

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December 26
St. Stephens Day[1]

"Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. (Acts 6:1–8 NRSV)

Carol: "Good King Wenceslas"

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even
Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel

"Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain
Right against the forest fence
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me bread and bring me wine
Bring me pine logs hither
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear him thither."
Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather

In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed
Therefore, every men, be sure
Wealth or rank possessing
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.

[1]December 26 is the traditional feast day of Stephen, the first Christian martyr who was stoned for his fearless testimony of Jesus Christ. Because he had been called to care for the poor widows of the Jerusalem church, he is the patron saint of those who provide charity to the needy, a later example of which was "Good King Wenceslas."



George Sheridan Knowles, "Good King Wenceslas"

The Story of Good King Wenceslas

Lloyd Newell, Music and the Spoken Word, December 22, 2019

At Wenceslas Square, in the heart of Prague, there is a statue of the Duke of Bohemia, affectionately known as good King Wenceslas. A caring Christian ruler and patron saint of the Czech Republic, Wenceslas has come to represent kindhearted generosity and selfless giving. And because these attributes are at the heart of Christmas, it's not surprising that good King Wenceslas is also the subject of a beloved Christmas carol.

The carol is based on a story set during a feast day shortly after Christmas. But King Wenceslas is not feasting; instead, he looks out the window onto the wintry landscape and discovers a poor man, gathering whatever meager firewood he can find in the deep snow. Filled with compassion, Wenceslas calls his page and tells him to bring food and wood for the destitute man. Then, instead of sending his page on the errand alone, Wenceslas leaves his comfortable home and goes with the page into the cold night to deliver the gifts personally.

At one point, the snow becomes so deep and the wind so fierce that the page wonders if he can carry on. But Wenceslas invites him to walk in his footsteps, and as he does, the page finds strength to endure. Together they brave the storm and fill the poor man's humble home with generous gifts.

Aren't we all somewhat like Wenceslas's page? We joyfully accept the invitation to generous giving that comes with the Christmas season. But sometimes meaningful giving, the kind that really makes a difference, requires sacrifice, and that can be difficult. When this happens, we can find strength as we walk in the steps of the Master Giver.

After all, as he once said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27).

This is why we honor good King Wenceslas more than a thousand years later: because he reminds us of the kindness and generosity of another king — one who also chose to be a servant, who lived among the poor and the weary so that he could give them relief. This is the king whose birth and life of service we celebrate at Christmas.



Léon Cogniet, Scene of Massacre of the Innocents

December 28

Childermas of "Feast of the Holy Innocents"[2]

"And when [the Magi] were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.' When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'" (Matthew 2:13–18)

Carol: "Coventry Carol"

Lullay, thou little tiny child
Sleep well, lully, lullay
And smile in dreaming, little one
Sleep well, lully, lullay

Oh sisters too, what may we do
To preserve on this day
This poor youngling for whom we sing
Sleep well, lully, lullay
Farewell, lully, lullay

Herod the king in his raging
Set forth upon this day
By his decree, no life spare thee
All children young to slay
All children young to slay

Then woe is me, poor child, for thee
And ever mourn and say
For thy parting, neither say nor sing
Farewell, lully, lullay
Farewell, lully, lullay

And when the stars fill darkened skies
In their far venture, stay
And smile as dreaming, little one
Farewell, lully, lullay
Dream now, lully, lullay

[2]December 28 is the traditional day that commemorates Herod's slaughter of all the baby boys two years old and younger. The traditional "Coventry Carol" that reflects the heart-rending sorrow felt by the mothers of the lost children speaks powerfully to any parent who has lost a child.

Sadness at Christmastime

Eric D. Huntsman, from *Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 114

The grief of the mothers of Bethlehem compels us to face a sad reality: what is such a joyous season for so many is often a cheerless or even depressing time for others. As Elder Jeffery R. Holland has written, "For many people in many places this may not be an entirely happy Christmas, one not filled with complete joy because of the circumstances facing a spouse or a friend, a child or a grandchild. Or perhaps that was the case another Christmas in another year, but one which brings a painful annual memory to us yet."[3] To the list of those who have lost a loved one or suffered some personal pain, I would add those who are alone, ill, or chronically depressed at Christmastime. Circumstances beyond our control often weigh heavily upon us, set in sharp contrast by the seeming joy of so many around us. And sometimes the sadness we feel is simply the regret and letdown that comes when a happy time comes to a necessary end and we are confronted with the monotony or dreary routine of day-to-day living.

In his short book, *Shepherds Why This Jubilee*, Elder Holland concludes by reflecting on a sad Christmas in his own life, recounting the year his own father suffered a heart attack following surgery right before Christmas. In the hospital early Christmas morning in 1976, facing the imminent loss of his father, the sound of a newborn baby jolted him out of his sorrow. Comparing the joy of that baby's parents to that of Mary and Joseph that first Christmas, Elder Holland considered the great plan of salvation that the Babe of Bethlehem, as the Man on the Cross, would effect for us. He wrote, "Temporary separation at death and the other difficulties that attend us as we all move toward that end are part of the price we pay for birth and family ties and the fun of Christmas together . . . These are God's gifts to us—birth and life and death and salvation, the whole divine experience in all its richness and complexity."[4]

Christmas may not always be happy. But the coming of Jesus into the world that wonderful night made possible the great suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord, which are the true tidings of great joy. Hopefully we can ameliorate our own sadness by serving and giving to others, lightening their burdens and easing their loneliness. Ultimately, however, we must with faith lay hold on the promise that joy—true joy without end—often lies ahead.

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[3]Jeffrey R. Holland, *Shepherds Why This Jubilee* (Salt Lake City: Eagle Gate, 2000), 59.

[4]Holland, *Shepherds Why This Jubilee*, 67–68, 71.



Jean Jouvenet, Adoration of the Magi

January 6
EPIPHANY

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. . . . And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:1–11)

Carol: "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.

O star of wonder, star of light,
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.

Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshiping God on high.

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

Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies

The Other Wise Man
by Henry Van Dyke

You know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East, and how they traveled from far away to offer their gifts at the manger-cradle in Bethlehem. But have you ever heard the story of the Other Wise Man, who also saw the star in its rising, and set out to follow it, yet did not arrive with his brethren in the presence of the young child Jesus? Of the great desire of this fourth pilgrim, and how it was denied, yet accomplished in the denial; of his many wanderings and the probations of his soul; of the long way of his seeking and the strange way of his finding the One whom he sought—I would tell the tale as I have heard fragments of it in the Hall of Dreams, in the palace of the Heart of Man.

In the days when Augustus Caesar was master of many kings and Herod reigned in Jerusalem, there lived in the city of Ecbatana, among the mountains of Persia, a certain man named Artaban. He, together with three companions among the wise men of Persia, had long awaited a new star that would appear when the Savior would be born. He watched at home in Persia, while his three friends observed the sky from Babylon.

One night the long-awaited star appeared, Artaban bowed his head. He covered his brow with his hands. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming, and I will go to meet him." While he was speaking he thrust his hand into the inmost fold of his girdle and drew out three great gems—one blue as a fragment of the night sky, one redder than a ray of sunrise, and one as pure as the peak of a snow-mountain at twilight—his gifts for the King.

Artaban rode his horse until he arrived, at nightfall on the tenth day, beneath the walls of populous Babylon. Artaban would gladly have turned into the city to find rest and refreshment for himself, but he knew that it was three hours' journey yet to the place he must reach by midnight if he would find his comrades waiting. So he did not halt but rode steadily across the fields.

Then the dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. His humble dress and the outline of his haggard face showed that he a Hebrew. The chill of death was in his lean hand as Artaban as he took it in his own. Artaban's heart leaped with resentment at the delay. How could he stay here in the darkness to minister to a dying stranger? If he lingered but for an hour, he could hardly reach his companions at the appointed time. They would think he had given up the journey and would go without him. He would lose his quest.

But if he went on now, the man would surely die. If Artaban stayed, life might be restored. Should he risk the great reward of his faith for the sake of a single deed of charity? Should he turn aside, if only for a moment, from the following of the star, to give a cup of cold water to a poor, perishing Hebrew?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which Thou only knowest." Then he turned back to the sick man and carried him to a little mound at the foot of the palm-tree. He brought water from one of the small canals near by, and moistened the

sufferer's brow and mouth. Hour after hour he laboured as only a skillful healer of disease can do. At last the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him. Slowly the Jew raised his trembling hand solemnly to heaven.

"Now may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob bless and prosper the journey of the merciful, and bring him in peace to his desired haven. Stay! I have nothing to give thee in return—only this: that I can tell thee where the Messiah must be sought. For our prophets have said that he should be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem of Judah. May the Lord bring thee in safety to that place, because thou hast had pity upon the sick."

When he had tended further to the sick man, Artaban hurried to the appointed place. There he found a piece of parchment on which was written, "We have waited past the midnight and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert."

Artaban sat down upon the ground and covered his head in despair.

"How can I cross the desert," said he, "with no food and with a spent horse? I must return to Babylon, sell my sapphire, and buy a train of camels, and provision for the journey. I may never overtake my friends. Only God the merciful knows whether I shall not lose the sight of the King because I tarried to show mercy."

Many days later he arrived at Bethlehem. And it was the third day after the three Wise Men had come to that place and had found Mary and Joseph, with the young child, Jesus, and had laid their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh at his feet. Then the Other Wise Man drew near, weary, but full of hope, bearing his ruby and his pearl to offer to the King.

The streets of the village seemed to be deserted, and Artaban wondered whether the men had all gone up to the hill-pastures to bring down their sheep. From the open door of a cottage he heard the sound of a woman's voice singing softly. He entered and found a young mother hushing her baby to rest. She told him of the strangers from the far East who had appeared in the village three days ago, and how they said that a star had guided them to the place where Joseph of Nazareth was lodging with his wife and her new-born child, and how they had paid reverence to the child and given him many rich gifts.

"But the travellers disappeared again," she continued, "The man of Nazareth took the child and his mother, and fled away that same night secretly, and it was whispered that they were going to Egypt."

Artaban listened to her gentle, timid speech, and the child in her arms looked up in his face and smiled, stretching out its rosy hands. "Why might not this child have been the promised Prince?" he asked within himself, as he touched its soft cheek. "Kings have been born ere now in lowlier houses than this, and the favourite of the stars may rise even from a cottage. But it has not seemed good to the God of wisdom to reward my search so soon and so easily. The one whom I

seek has gone before me; and now I must follow the King to Egypt."

But suddenly there came the noise of a wild confusion in the streets of the village, a shrieking and wailing of women's voices, a clangour of brazen trumpets and a clashing of swords, and a desperate cry: "The soldiers! the soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children." The young mother's face grew white with terror.

The soldiers came hurrying down the street with bloody hands and dripping swords. But Artaban, standing in the doorway said, "I am all alone in this place, and I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

He showed the ruby, glistening in the hollow of his hand like a great drop of blood. The captain was amazed at the splendour of the gem. He stretched out his hand and took the ruby. "March on!" he cried to his men, "there is no child here. The house is empty."

Artaban re-entered the cottage and turned his face to the east and prayed: "God of truth, forgive my sin! I have said the thing that is not, to save the life of a child. And two of my gifts are gone. I have spent for man that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?"

But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy in the shadow behind him, said very gently: "Because thou hast saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

Artaban, still following the King went on into Egypt seeking everywhere for traces of the little family that had fled there before him. For many years Artaban searched among the pyramids, among the villages and towns of Egypt, and in the great city of Alexandria.

There he took counsel with a Hebrew rabbi who told him to seek the King not among the rich but among the poor. The venerable man, bending over the rolls of parchment on which the prophecies of Israel were written, read aloud the pathetic words which foretold the sufferings of the promised Messiah—the despised and rejected of men, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Artaban passed through countries where famine lay heavy upon the land, and the poor were crying for bread. He made his dwelling in plague-stricken cities where the sick were languishing in the bitter companionship of helpless misery. He visited the oppressed and the afflicted in the gloom of subterranean prisons, and the crowded wretchedness of slave-markets, and the weary toil of galley-ships.

In all this populous and intricate world of anguish, though he found none to worship, he found many to help. He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the

captive; and his years passed more swiftly than the weaver's shuttle that flashes back and forth through the loom

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Three-and-thirty years of the life of Artaban had passed away, and he was still a pilgrim and a seeker after light. His hair, once dark was now white. His eyes, that once flashed like flames of fire, were dull. Worn and weary and ready to die, but still looking for the King, he had come for the last time to Jerusalem.

It was the season of the Passover. The city was thronged with strangers. The children of Israel, scattered in far lands, had returned to the Temple for the great feast, but on this day a singular agitation was visible as the multitude rushed from the city. Artaban asked where they were going.

"We are going," they answered, "to the place called Golgotha, outside the city walls, where there is to be an execution. Have you not heard what has happened? Two famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them another, called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they love him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that he must die, because he gave himself out to be the Son of God. And Pilate has sent him to the cross because he said that he was the `King of the Jews.'

The King had arisen, but he had been denied and cast out. He was about to perish. Perhaps he was already dying. Could it be the same who had been born in Bethlehem thirty-three years ago, at whose birth the star had appeared in heaven, and of whose coming the prophets had spoken?

But Artaban said within himself: "The ways of God are stranger than the thoughts of men, and it may be that I shall find the King, at last, in the hands of his enemies, and shall come in time to offer my pearl for his ransom before he dies."

As Artaban started towards Calvary a troop of soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair. As Artaban paused to look at her with compassion, she broke suddenly from the hands of her tormentors, and threw herself at his feet, clasping him around the knees. She had seen his white cap and the winged circle on his breast.

"Have pity on me," she cried, "and save me! My father was a merchant of Parthia, but he is dead, and I am seized for his debts to be sold as a slave. Save me from worse than death!"

Artaban trembled as he felt the old conflict in his soul—the conflict between the expectation of faith and the impulse of love. Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the worship of religion had been drawn to the service of humanity. This was the third trial. One thing only was sure to his divided heart—to rescue this helpless girl would be a true deed of love.

He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant, so full of tender, living lustre. He laid it in the hand of the slave.

“This is thy ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King.”

While he spoke, the darkness of the sky deepened, and shuddering tremors ran through the earth heaving convulsively like the breast of one who struggles with mighty grief.

The walls of the houses rocked to and fro as an earthquake shook the ground below him. The soldiers fled, but what did Artaban have to fear? What had he to hope? He had given away the last remnant of his tribute for the King. He had parted with the last hope of finding him. The quest was over, and it had failed. But, even in that thought, accepted and embraced, there was peace.

One more lingering pulsation of the earthquake quivered through the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale. Then there came a voice through the twilight, very small and still, like music sounding from a distance. The rescued girl leaned over him and heard him say, “Not so, my Lord! For when saw I thee an hungered and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? When saw I thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? Thirty-three years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King.”

He ceased, and the sweet voice came again, “Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me.”

A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the pale face of Artaban like the first ray of dawn, on a snowy mountain-peak. A long breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips. His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. The Other Wise Man had found the King.

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