

From Heaven Above: A Service for Christmas Day 2020

Martin Luther based his carol "From heaven above" (ELW 268, LBW 51) on a refrain used for a sixteenth-century singing game. In the game, the song sets up a riddle to be solved. Within the nativity story, who would have proclaimed this text?

*"From heaven above to earth I come
to bear good news to every home!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to all the world, and gladly sing."*

In the hymn, the stanzas in quotation marks become the words of the angels rejoicing at Jesus' birth, while the other stanzas offer commentary and prayers. By sending Jesus into our world, God answers the riddle of sin and our human condition. We are set free to proclaim with the angels: "Glory to God in highest heaven, who unto us the Son has given."

Gathering Song

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice



1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;



give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!



ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.



Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866
Music: IN DULCI JUBILO, German carol, 14th cent.

Dialogue

Who are these angels who come to earth,
bearing the news of the Christ child's birth?

Who are these shepherds who run to see,
and worship the babe on bended knee?

Who is this child, so small, so slight,
of whom the angels sang that night?

Who is this king, a manger his throne,
who humbles himself to make us his own?
Who is this God who sends a Son
into our midst, the promised one?

Greeting and Prayer

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God sent from heaven above, be with you all.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

Incarnate God, on this Christmas Day we give you thanks for sending your Son to bring light to our darkness. Grant that we, like the angels over Bethlehem, may sing your praises in our hearts and lives. **Amen.**

Who Are These Angels Who Come to Earth?

Lesson: Luke 2:8-14

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Following a brief silence for prayer and meditation:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.

Carol: From heaven above, sts. 1-3 (Last page)

Who Are These Shepherds Who Run to See?

Lesson: Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Following a brief silence for prayer and meditation:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.

Carol: From heaven above, sts. 4-6 (Last page)

Who Is This Child, So Small, So Slight?

Lesson: Hebrews 1:1-4

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Following a brief silence for prayer and meditation:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.

Carol: From heaven above, sts. 7-9 (Last page)

Who Is This King, a Manger His Throne?

Lesson: Isaiah 9:2-7

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness

from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Following a brief silence for prayer and meditation:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.

Carol: From heaven above, sts. 10-11 (Last page)

Who Is This God, Who Sends a Son?

Lesson: John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Following a brief silence for prayer and meditation:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.

Carol: From heaven above, sts. 12-14 (Last page)

Meditation

Hymn of the Day

Of the Father's Love Begotten



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -
2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, when the vir - gin,
3 This is he whom seers in old time chant - ed of with
4 Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his
5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly



gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets
prais - es sing; pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him
Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



he the source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that
bore the Sav - ior of our race, and the babe, the world's re -
prom - ised in their faith - ful word; now he shines, the long - ex -
and ex - tol - our God and King; let no tongue on earth be
and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -



have been, and that fu - ture years shall see,
deem - er, first re - vealed his sa - cred face,
pect - ed; let cre - a - tion praise its Lord
si - lent, ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
min - ion, and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more! A - men.

Text: Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348–413; tr. composite
Music: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM, plainsong mode V, 13th cent.

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, you come from heaven above
into the midst of our world.

Fill our hearts

with the joy of the angels at your birth.

You come from heaven above

to the lowliest of human conditions.

**Watch over those in need,
the sick, the hungry, the grieving.**

You come from heaven above to walk the way of the cross.

**Guide us to follow your path
of forgiveness, mercy, and peace.**

You come from heaven above
to become flesh and live among us.

May we see your glory, full of grace and truth. Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Offering Prayer

Gracious God,
you came to us as one unknown,
bringing joy and salvation to the earth.
Nourish us at your banquet table,
that with all who welcome your birth
we may proclaim your peace,
revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving

Dialogue

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Preface

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, Holy, Holy
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Thanksgiving at the Table for Christmas

Holy God,
 Creator of all and Source of life,
 at the birth of time
 your word brought light into the world.
In the fullness of time,
 you sent your Word, born of Mary,
 to shine in our darkness
 and to make us your daughters and sons.
In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. **(Please raise the bread)**
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
 and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. **(Please raise the cup)**
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Remembering, therefore,
 his birth and life among us,
 his death and resurrection,
 we await his coming again
 when all things will be restored in him.
By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup,
 that, held and nourished by you,
 we may live as your children,
 shining with the light of your Son.
Through him all glory and honor is yours,
 Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
 in your holy Church,
 both now and forever. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,**

as we forgive those
 who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

The Word is revealed in a manger, in simple bread and wine.
 Come meet Christ in this meal.

Distribution

Carol Infant Holy, Infant Lowly



1 In - fant ho - ly, in - fant low - ly, for his bed a cat - tle stall;
 2 Flocks were sleep - ing, shep - herds keep - ing vig - il till the morn - ing new



ox - en low - ing, lit - tle know - ing Christ the child is Lord of all.
 saw the glo - ry, heard the sto - ry, tid - ings of a gos - pel true.



Swift - ly wing - ing, an - gels sing - ing, bells are ring - ing, tid - ings bring - ing:
 Thus re - joic - ing, free from sor - row, prais - es voic - ing, greet the mor - row:



Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!
 Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

Text: Polish carol; tr. Edith M. G. Reed, 1885–1933, alt.
 Music: W ZŁOBIE LEŻY, Polish carol

Table Blessing

The body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. Amen

Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks, gracious God,
 that you have once again fed us from your very self
 with the body and blood of Christ.
 Through this mystery, send us forth

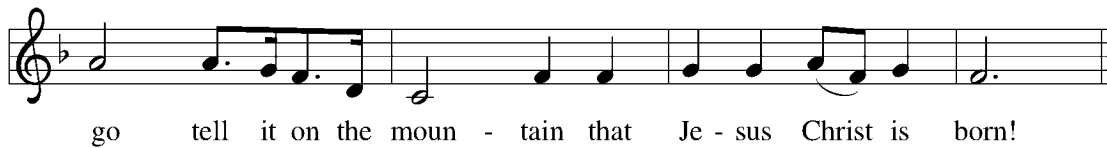
to proclaim your promise to a world in need,
through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Blessing

May the God who comes from heaven above
be born in your hearts and lives this day and always.
Amen.

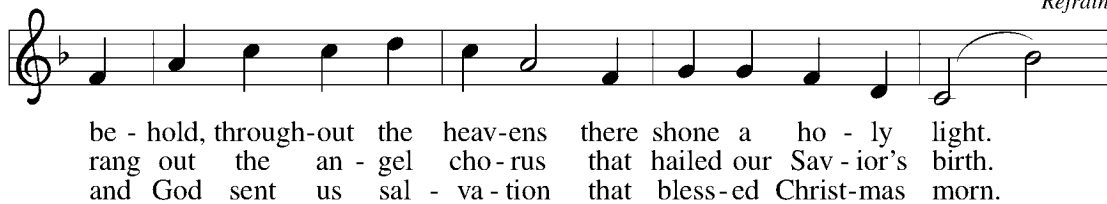
Sending Song Go Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain



- 1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
- 2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
- 3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum-ble Christ was born;

Refrain



Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872–1925, stanzas, alt.
Music: GO TELL IT, African American spiritual

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with us.
Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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From Heaven Above



1 "From heav'n a - bove to earth I come to bear good
 2 "To you this night is born a child of Mar - y,
 3 "This is the Christ, God's Son most high, who hears your

Insert additional stanzas as desired.

12 Ah, dear - est Je - sus, ho - ly child, pre - pare a
 13 My heart for ve - ry joy now leaps; my voice no
 14 "Glo - ry to God in high - est heav'n, who un - to



news to ev - 'ry home! Glad tid - ings of great joy I
 cho - sen vir - gin mild; this new - born child of low - ly
 sad and bit - ter cry, who will him - self your Sav - ior

bed, soft, un - de - filed, a qui - et cham - ber in my
 long - er si - lence keeps; I too must sing with joy - ful
 us the Son has giv'n." With an - gels sing in pi - ous



bring to all the world, and glad - ly sing:
 birth shall be the joy of all the earth.
 be and from all sin will set you free."

heart, that you and I may nev - er part.
 tongue the sweet - est an - cient cra - dle - song:
 mirth a glad new year to all the earth!

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4 "The blessing that the Father planned
 the Son holds in his infant hand,
 that in his kingdom, bright and fair,
 you may with us his glory share."</p> <p>5 "These are the signs that you will see
 to let you know that it is he:
 in manger-bed, in swaddling clothes
 the child who all the earth upholds."</p> <p>6 Now let us all with joyful cheer
 go with the shepherds and draw near
 to see this wondrous gift of God,
 the blessed child to us bestowed.</p> <p>7 Look, look, dear friends, look over there!
 What lies within that manger bare?
 Who is that lovely little one?
 The baby Jesus, God's dear Son.</p> | <p>8 Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
 through whom this sinful world is blest!
 You turned not from our needs away;
 how can our thanks such live repay?</p> <p>9 O Lord, you have created all!
 How did you come to be so small,
 to sweetly sleep in manger-bed
 where lowing cattle lately fed?</p> <p>10 Were earth a thousand times as fair
 and set with gold and jewels rare,
 still such a cradle would not do
 to rock a prince so great as you.</p> <p>11 For velvets soft and silken stuff
 you have but hay and straw so rough
 on which as king so rich and great
 to be enthroned in humble state.</p> |
|---|---|

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: VOM HIMMEL HOCH, attr. Martin Luther; V. Schumann, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1539
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