

December 20, 2020 11am
The Bright Star of Bethlehem Advent Service Four: Star of Joy
Christmas Cantata

Call to Worship – Greg Silliman assistant

P. In the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. **C. Amen.**

A. Jesus, Bright Star of Bethlehem, light of creation,
C. Shine now and enlighten the whole world!

A. Jesus, Bright Star of Bethlehem, light of hope,
C. Shine now and heal broken hearts!

A. shine now, Bright Star of Bethlehem and bring your light and your life to us!
C. Shine now and heal broken hearts! Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath (Hill family)

Family. Today we light the fourth candle of our Advent wreath. We give thanks for the joy that comes with the light of Christ.

(first candle is lit)

Family. At the dawn of creation God said, "Let there be light!"

C. Advent Lord, shine your light on us! Alleluia!

(2nd candle lit)

Family. When Jesus came, hope was born!

C. Advent Lord, shine your light on us! Alleluia!

(3rd candle lit)

Family. The light of Christ brings unity to our world.

C. Advent Lord, shine your light on us! Alleluia!

Family. The star of Bethlehem brings joys to all.

(4th candle lit)

Prayer of the Day

A. Jesus, Bright star of Bethlehem, just as you were born in Bethlehem so long ago, we pray that you would be born again in us today. Bring your true and lasting joy to our world, to us and to all, for you are joy in the flesh and in your blessed name we pray.

C. Amen.

Word

Reading (Larry Calcamuggio)

R. Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me because God anointed me. He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners. God sent me to announce the year of his grace— a celebration of God's destruction of our enemies— and to comfort all who mourn, to care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion, give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes, messages of joy instead of news of doom, a praising heart instead of a languid spirit. Rename them "Oaks of Righteousness" planted by God to display his glory.

Gospel Acclamation: Song: "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 meet in thee tonight.

R. Gospel: Luke 1:39-56

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly, "You're so blessed among women, and the babe in your womb, also blessed! And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me? The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears, the babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy. Blessed woman, who believed what God said, believed every word would come true!"

And Mary said, "I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one good look at me, and look what happened—I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others. His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before him. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold. He embraced his chosen child, Israel; he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. It's exactly what he promised, beginning with Abraham and right up to now."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then went back to her own home.

Response

Cantata (Larry Calcamuggio narrator)

“Waiting” – Quintet

Narrator: Indeed, the world had been awaiting the promised One from Heaven. Prophets had told of His coming, yet it seemed to many that these prophecies would not be seen in their lifetime.

Can you imagine the desperation that overflowed the hearts of all who longed to see the Messiah?

It must have been difficult to fathom the idea of a holy God who desired communion with fallen man. Now imagine the way His birth was foretold. The great prophet Isaiah said "therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Surely, the cries of the people were to see the fulfillment of this blessed promise.

Prayers for redemption and petitions for mercy, wrapped in praise for what was to come, must have been a part of the daily fabric on which God would reveal His plan for salvation.

“An Invitation to Advent” – Quintet

Narrator: A holy God. A fallen world. A heavenly throne. A lowly manger. It's amazing to think that these things can have anything to do with one another. But, God's sovereignty and love for His people require a sacrifice be made to bring the Creator and His creation back into righteous fellowship. The night sky is filled with His wonder. The sun brings forth life and gives light to our days.

“The Peace Carol” – Quintet

Narrator: All we have to do is look around us and see the evidence of God's power in creation. The very air in our lungs is given to us by our infinite God. And yet, with all His power and majesty, He still desires a relationship with us! The Holy with the unholy. The Creator with creation. How great are Your works, O Lord! How marvelous is Your name. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork!"

(Psalm 19:1 RSV)

“How Great Thou Art” – Quintet

Narrator: What memories come to your mind when you hear the word, "Christmas"? Perhaps you think of candlelight dancing in frost-covered windows, mantles decorated with fresh greenery and homemade stockings dangling beneath in the glow of a warm fire. Maybe you can almost smell fresh-baked cookies in the air and hear the laughter of family and friends gathering together in the kitchen. Whatever your memory, there's a soundtrack of our lives' biggest moments playing in the background. Many of these songs have drawn the world into humming their tunes and singing their messages of peace, hope and love that has come to earth through the birth of a Savior.

These songs tell salvation's story and bring the same nostalgic feelings that our family memories bring. As our quintet sings, may you revisit some of the carols that have become the musical theme that has accompanied your family for generations.

"A Carol Celebration" – Quintet

Narrator: Throughout Scripture, we are told of people singing songs in celebration of a great event. Led by Moses, the children of Israel sang a song of praise to God after their deliverance from Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea. David's victory over Goliath was celebrated with a new song as he and king Saul triumphantly returned from battle. Even Revelation records songs of heaven that will be sung to the Lamb on the throne. Songs continue to be a part of our culture. Whether they be songs of triumph or songs of sorrow, music is part of who we are. In fact, if we had been gathered together in the manger to witness the very first breath of our Savior, perhaps we would have celebrated in song announcing the news of the newborn King!

"In Christmas Night" – Quintet

Narrator: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to 'be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 ESV)

"Still, Still, Still" – Sister Act Bells

Narrator: When Christ was born, hope was ushered into our world, joy filled the hearts of all those who heard the news, and, God's love was revealed to mankind. All of this was given to us in the most unusual of ways. The greatest Gift ever given was wrapped in an innocent, fragile Infant. God stepped down from His throne and into the very creation He had breathed into existence. He didn't cease to be a King in that moment. Instead, He came to share His royalty with us!

"Mary Did You Know?" – Solo Mark Pym

Narrator: No other season contains the wonder of Christmas. Since the night angels filled the sky to announce the good news of the birth of a Savior, Christmas has offered hope to the hopeless and peace and goodwill to man. Children are filled with excitement as they spend the year awaiting the arrival of the holiday season. If your family is like many others, you have experienced the tradition of making Christmas lists, in hopes to wake up early on Christmas morning to find those things you wanted most, sitting beneath the tree. Can you recall some of those gifts that filled you with uncontrollable excitement; the very ones that had been hidden from you for weeks beneath the ribbons, bows and wrapping paper? These are the gifts that most likely were at the top of your list that you started well before Thanksgiving, and strategically placed on tables, in a prominent spot on the refrigerator, and under your parents' pillow for them to be discovered. Even as children, we go to extreme lengths to ensure our greatest wishes come true.

“Angel Carol” – Duet Jeanette Dotson & Amy Horst

Narrator: But, what if we had the zeal and passion of children for the dreams we dream as adults? Can we believe the impossible with the same wide-eyed wonder that we did so many years ago? Even more, what if we made our list and did everything within our power to see our greatest wishes come true?

What things would be at the top of your list? When God looked down into a dark and sorrowful world without hope, we became the priority on His list which was realized that very first Christmas. Maybe this is the year we become a part of fulfilling wishes, as we replace those special items we'd love to have with peace, love and hope for a lost and desperate world.

“Let There Be Peace on Earth” - Quintet

Narrator: In a season marked by giving, what a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Giver of life, love, joy, hope, and peace. There is no longer a divide between God and man.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His own Son, that whosoever believes in Him will be saved!"

So, celebrate with us tonight, as we sing the praise of our God, and the Gift He gave at Christmas when Love Was Born a King.

Our God has come to us! He is here! Emmanuel--Our God is with us!

Quartet

Soprano – Jeanette Dotson

Soprano – Amy Horst

Alto – Rev. A.N. Mary Adelsberger

Tenor – Mark Pym

Bass – Greg Silliman

Sister Act Bells

Sandy Hill

Anita Lalonde

Evie Schaefer on one song

Claudia Sauer

Cindy Hensley

Benediction

P. Go now to shine like stars in the sky, bringing the light of Christ to the world. And the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the +Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C. Amen.**

Dismissal

A. Go in the Hope of our Shining Jesus. **C. Thanks be to God.**