Christmas Meeting

**Welcome**

**Sing: Psalm 100:1-4**

1. You lands and peoples of the earth 3. Come, enter His gates with praise

before the LORD your joy shout forth. and in His courts your voices raise.

Serve Him with gladness all your days Give thanks to Him and bless His name;

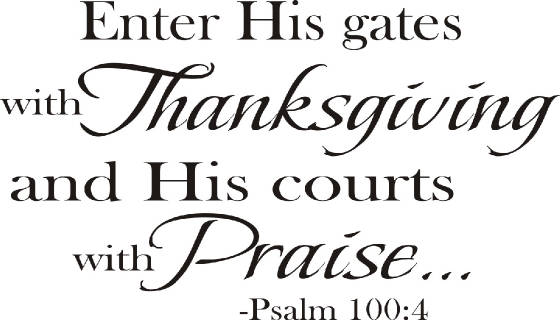
and come to Him with songs of praise within His house your joy proclaim.

1. Know that the LORD is God alone; 4. The LORD is good, and evermore

He made us, and we are His own, His love and mercy will endure.

the sheep that He to pasture leads All generations He will bless

and as their shepherd guards and feeds. in His unchanging faithfulness.

**Reading: Psalm 100**

*Make a joyful shout to the LORD all you lands!*

*Serve the LORD with gladness;*

*Come before His presence with singing.*

*Know that the LORD, He is God;*

*It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;*

*We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving;*

*And into His courts with praise.*

*Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

*For the LORD is good;*

*His mercy is everlasting,*

*And His truth endures to all generations.*

**Prayer**

**Sing: Hymn 7:1, 4**

1. Glory be to God the Father, 4. “Glory, blessing, praise eternal!”

Glory be to God the Son, Thus the choir of angels sings.

Glory be to God the Spirit, “Honour, glory, power, dominion!”

God almighty, Three in One! Thus its praise creation brings.

Hallelujah, hallelujah! Hallelujah, hallelujah!

Glory be to Him alone! Praise the mighty King of Kings!

**Devotion: Christmas Songs**

*Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! – Psalm 100:2*

Singing has always been an important part of biblical faith and practice, a frequent expression of worship and praise. But it’s interesting, of all the songs captured in Scripture, how many of them are clustered at the beginning of Luke’s gospel. They’re not just songs, they’re Christmas songs.

No, they’re not the familiar carols we may sing at church sing-alongs during the Christmas season. And they’re definitely not the “Let it Snow” variety that may touch us in sentimental ways but can do nothing to move our souls with true wonder. These jubilant songs from the pages of God’s Word seek to scale the vast reaches of His greatness, glory and goodness. They celebrate His redemptive purposes and plans. They resound with awe and majesty at the coming of our Lord in a Bethlehem manger. They… sing!

Elizabeth’s song – sometimes called the Beatitude (Luke 1:42-45). Mary’s song – the Magnificat (verses 46-55). Zechariah’s song – Benedictus (verses 68-79). The angel’s announcement to the shepherds (2:10-12), followed by the Gloria of the angel chorus (2:14). And then there’s Simeon’s song of worship to the child Jesus in the temple (verses 29-32) – known as the Nunc Dimittis, from the Latin of the hymn’s opening phrase, “Now you let depart.” Six in all.

So even if this year’s holiday season feels unusually laboured and exhausting – perhaps tinged with feelings of sadness or loss, with difficult circumstances that cast a shadow over what was once an exuberant season of celebration – maybe the best way to find your joy rekindled is to settle back into those first two chapters of Luke again, take your place with the gathering choir, and join the rousing offering of worship going forth in praise of our Immanuel.

Christmas is for singing!

(Taken from ‘The Quiet Place’ by Nancy Leigh DeMoss)

**Sing: Psalm 98:1, 3**

1. Sing to the LORD, a new song voicing, 3. Let all the earth with loud rejoicing

for mighty wonders He has done. burst into song to praise the LORD!

His right hand and his arm most holy With joyful blasts of horns and trumpets

the victory for him have won. let Him be worshipped and adored.

The LORD has blessed us with salvation; Join in the praise and jubilation,

His righteousness has He made known. make music with the harp, and sing!

He has revealed to all the nations Shout forth your joy in celebration;

that justice issues from His throne. come, praise the LORD, the mighty King.

**Reading: Luke 1: 39-56**

*Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfilment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”*

*And Mary said:*

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones. And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.”*

*And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.*

**Devotion: It is God’s Work**

Why does God fulfil His promises in such strange, miraculous ways? Remember Abraham and Sarah? All their lives they lived with the promise of a child. But they received the child only when it was clear that they could no longer have children. When it was humanly impossible, God gave them the child of His promise.

And when you open the gospel of the New Testament, the first thing you read about is a woman who is too old to have a baby. Then you are introduced to a woman who gets a baby before she has a husband. It is through these two women that God brought into the world children for whom the ages longed and on whom our lot depends.

Doesn’t God make it hard to believe? Don’t you think that most people will say that this is a ‘wonderful story’, but that they don’t believe it – at least not literally?

The message, however, is that nobody can celebrate Christmas if he does not believe in God. Christmas is God’s work. The Kingdom is God’s Kingdom. John the Baptist was sent by God. Jesus was and is the Son of God. The whole event was the work of God.

In these days we meditate on the star, the manger and the virgin, but all the time we must listen to a question of Isaiah: “Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (53:1)

It is pleasant to sing carols, to catch the mood and enter into the spirit of the season. But is it enough. “To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

In the child of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and even more in the Son of Mary, God has shown that salvation comes from Him. Christmas is a time to praise the wonderful works of God! Only the believing acceptance of the work of God gives strength for today and hope for tomorrow.

*(Taken from ‘Daylight’ by Andrew Kuyvenhoven)*

**Sing: Hymn 17:1, 3, 6 – Mary’s Song**

1. My soul will magnify 3. How holy is His name!

The Lord, who from on high The mighty One, He came

has blessed me with His favour. and showed me His great favour

His praises I will voice; With mercy He is near

My spirit will rejoice to all who Him revere;

in Him, my God and Saviour His love endures forever.

6. The Lord is merciful;

His servant Israel

He graciously delivered,

remembering evermore

what He to Abraham swore

and to His seed forever.

**Reading: Luke 2:8-14**

*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!”*

**Sing: Glory to God**

Glory to God! Glory to God!

In the highest, in the highest, in the highest!  
Peace be forever, peace on earth forever

And to people goodwill forever more.  
Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God in highest!

Peace on earth forever, Peace on earth forever,

Peace on earth forever, peace on earth forever.    
And to people, and to people, goodwill forever   
And to people, goodwill forever, goodwill forever more.   
Glory to God, Glory to God!

In the highest, in the highest,  in the highest!  
Peace be forever, peace on earth forever

And to people goodwill forever more.  
A-men, A-men.

**Reading: Luke 2:25-38**

*And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:*

*“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,*

*According to Your word;*

*For my eyes have seen Your salvation*

*Which you have prepared before the face of all peoples,*

*A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,*

*And the glory of Your people Israel.”*

*And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”*

*Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

**Devotion: The Changing Of The Guard**

God had promised Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. On this particular day, the Holy Spirit guided Simeon into the temple, where he met Mary and Joseph with their Baby. Then Simeon took Jesus in his arms and sang his song: “Now may Thy servant Lord,

According to Thy Word,

Depart in exultation.

My rest shall be serene,

For lo, mine eyes have seen

Thy wonderful salvation.”

Simeon was not asking for death. He was speaking as a watchman whose watch had ended. He is the representative of the true Israel. There is also an old woman, Anna, of the tribe of Asher, who comes to greet the Redeemer.

Simeon is described as someone who was “looking for the consolation of Israel.” And Anna knew a group of people who were “looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

The Bible brings these people onto the scene as “the Israel within Israel,” the true people of God whose hearts burned with Messianic hopes and whose lips said daily prayers for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Now their eyes are blessed because they see the Baby in the temple. And here their watch has ended. Simeon sings the swan song of the old covenant: “Now dismiss Your servant, Lord. The dawn has come, and my eyes have seen Your salvation.” We are specifically informed that Anna is from the tribe of Asher, one of the least among the sons of Jacob. We must be aware also of the remnant of that tribe coming to greet the light of day after a long and dreary night. And now the Old Testament exits.

This is the end of one watch, but it is also the beginning of another. The guard has been changed. Now the people of the Messiah, the true Israel of the new covenant, are those who watch, and wait, and pray.

These: “saints their watch are keeping,

Their cry goes up: “How long?”

And soon their night of weeping

Shall be the morn of song.”

(Taken from ‘Daylight’ by Andrew Kuyvenhoven)

**Sing: Hymn 22: 1, 2 – Simeon’s Song**

1. Now let Your servant, Lord, 2. Lord, you have graciously

according to your word, prepared for all to see

depart from exultation a light for revelation

now I in peace may rest: to Gentiles far and near,

my eyes have seen at last and glory bright and clear

Your wonderful salvation: to Israel, Your nation.

**Devotion: Hark the Herald Angels Sing**

Christmas carols as we know them now, were abolished by the English Puritan parliament in 1627 because they were a part of a "worldly festival," which they considered the celebration of Christmas to be. As a result, there was a scarcity of Christmas hymns and carols in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" by Charles Wesley was one of the few written during this period. Wesley's fine text and the melody by master composer Felix Mendelssohn have given this hymn its great popularity and its standing as a classic among Christmas songs.

Like many of Charles Wesley's more than sixty-five hundred hymns, this text clearly presents biblical doctrine in poetic language. The first stanza describes the song of the angels outside Bethlehem with an invitation to join them in praise of Christ. The following stanzas present the truths of the virgin birth, Christ's deity, the immortality of the soul, the new birth, and a prayer for the transforming power of Christ in our lives.

For more than two hundred years, believers have been enlightened and blessed by the picturesque manner in which Charles Wesley has retold the truths of our Saviour’s birth.

*Taken from* [*www.cbn.com*](http://www.cbn.com) *(Christian Broadcasting Network)*

**Sing: Hark the Herald Angels Sing**

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

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

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings  
Ris'n with healing in His wings  
Mild He lays His glory by  
Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

**INTERVAL**

**Sing: The Song of Zechariah – Hymn 18:1, 2**

1. Blest be the God of Israel, 2. His faithfulness He has now shown,

for He has come to set us free; that we might serve Him without fear,

in David’s house the Lord has raised that all our days with upright hearts

salvation’s horn for all to see. We in His presence might appear.

He through His prophets long ago Of you, my child, it will be said

said He would save us from our foe, that God Most High sent you ahead

from all who scorn and hate us. as herald of salvation.

He has not put our fathers’ faith to shame You will before the Lord prepare His way

but, in His love remembering them, and tell His people of the day

has kept the oath He swore to Abraham. When He to them His mercy will display.

**Quiz – First half**

**Break in quiz to sing: O Come All Ye Faithful**

O Come All Ye Faithful  
Joyful and triumphant,   
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold Him,   
Born the King of Angels;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.  
  
O Sing, choirs of angels,   
Sing in exultation,   
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.  
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,   
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.  
  
All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
O Jesus! For evermore be Thy name adored.  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;   
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.

**Second half of quiz**

**Results…**

**Sing: Hymn 66**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;   
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,   
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,   
As Thou hast been,Thou forever wilt be.

**Refrain:**   
*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,   
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above;   
Join with all nature in manifold witness,   
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

**(Refrain)**

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;   
Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

**(Refrain)**

**Closing and Prayer**



Thank you for attending our Christmas Evening!

May God bless us all during this holiday break and may He bring us back

together in His time, to discuss more of His Word