

Lessons and Carols is a celebration of God's redeeming work in our world through Jesus Christ. The story of the long-awaited Messiah is retold through Old and New Testament readings interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols and hymns. In this traditional service, we remember Christ's incarnation and look forward to Christ's return when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:9)

Lesson 1: The Fall of Humanity and the Promise of a Savior | Genesis 3:8-15

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

Carol | O Come, O Come Emmanuel

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

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou 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

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, desire of nations, bind
All people in one heart and mind
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease
Fill all the world with heaven's peace

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

Lesson 2: The Prophet Isaiah Foretells the Coming of the Savior | Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Carol | Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Let all mortal flesh keep silence
And with fear and trembling stand
Ponder nothing earthly minded
For with blessing in His hand
Christ our God to earth descended
Our full homage to demand

King of Kings, yet born of Mary
As of old on earth He stood
Lord of Lords, in human vesture
In the body and the blood
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food

Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spread its vanguard on the way
As the Light of light descended
From the realms of endless day
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away

At His feet the six-winged seraph
Cherubim with sleepless eye
Veil their faces to the presence
As with ceaseless voice they cry
Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Lord most high!

Lesson 3: The Angel Gabriel Announces the Birth of Jesus | Luke 1:26-35, 38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Carol | What Child Is This?

What child is this who laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping,
When 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

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 the song on high
The virgin sings her lullaby
Joy, joy for Christ is born
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

Lesson 4: The Birth of Jesus Christ | Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

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 th'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 the virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail th'incarnate deity
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace
Hail the Sun 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!"

Prayers of the People

Lesson 5: The Shepherds and the Angels | Luke 2:8-16

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Carol | Angels We Have Heard On High

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o’er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Gloria, in excelsis Deo

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 newborn King

Shepherds, why this jubilee
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Lesson 6: The Visit of the Magi | Matthew 2:1-6

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ ““But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.””

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

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His Heaven
No ear may hear His coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive Him still
The dear Christ enters in

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to men on earth

O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin, and enter in
Be born in us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel

Lesson 7: The Prophet Isaiah Foretells the Peaceful Reign of Christ | Isaiah 11:1-10

¹ A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

² The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—

³ and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

⁷ The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Carol | It Came Upon The Midnight Clear

It came upon a 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 heaven's all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing
And ever over its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong

And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring
O hush the noise, you men of strife
And hear the angels sing

And you, beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow
Take heart for comfort, love and hope
Come swiftly on the wing
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing

For lo, the days are hastening
By prophet bards foretold
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling
And all the world give back the song
Which now the angels sing

Lesson 8: The Mystery of the Incarnation | John 1:1-5, 14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Carol | O Holy Night

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 appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night when Christ was born

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 came the wise men from far distant land
The King of Kings is born, the world rejoices

Carol | Joy To The World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods
Rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

In all our trials born to be our Friend
He knows our need, this child within a manger
Behold your King; behold Him Christ the Lord
O night divine, O night when Christ was born

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
Christ is the Lord, O praise His Name forever
His power and glory evermore proclaim
O night divine, O night when Christ was born

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, far as, the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love

Musicians

Carmen Cancél, song leader
Patricia Davis, violin
Lou Garrett, acoustic guitar
Sung Kim, electric guitar
Brandon Lewis, drums
Elizabeth Lewis, song leader
Leo Traversa, bass
Nathan Vickery, cello
Chris Weldon, piano

Song Credits

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Words: Latin, 19th century; Music: Thomas Helmore

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Words: Liturgy of St. James; Music: French Carol Melody

What Child Is This?

Words: William C. Dix; Music: 16th century English melody

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Words: Charles Wesley; Music: Felix Mendelssohn

Angels We Have Heard On High

Words: Traditional French, trans. James Chadwick; Music: Edwin S. Barnes

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Words: Phillips Brooks; Music: Lewis H. Redner

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear

Words: Edmund Sears; Music: Richard Willis

O Holy Night

Words: Placide Cappeau; Music: Adolphe C. Adam

Joy to the World

Words: Isaac Watts; Music: G.F. Handel