

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas

December 20, 2020 11:00 am

Online on Zoom with St Thomas, Kefalas, Crete

As the fourth candle on the Advent Wreath is lit, the following is said:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that we who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son,
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.
Blessed be God for ever.

Opening Hymn: ***Once in Royal David's City***

1 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.

2 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 Saviour holy.

3 And through all his wondrous childhood
he would honour and obey,
love and watch the lowly maiden,
in whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be
mild, obedient, good as he.

4 For he is our childhood's pattern,
day by day like us he grew,
he was little, weak, and helpless,
tears and smiles like us he knew;
and he feeleth for our sadness,
and he shareth in our gladness.

5 And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love,
for that child so dear and gentle
is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on
to the place where he is gone.

6 Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him; but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
where like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

Welcome, Bidding, and the Lord's Prayer

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, and especially on this island of Crete, and this nation of Greece, in this Diocese in Europe, and in the lands of our birth.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

**All Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

May the almighty God bless us with his grace;
Christ give us the joys of everlasting life,
and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of angels bring us all.
All Amen.

Hymn: ***Joy to the World***

1 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.

2 Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!
let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 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.

4 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.

The First Lesson

Genesis 3.8-14: The Disobedience of Adam and Eve.

Following the lesson (and after every lesson) the reader will say,

"This is the word of the Lord" Please respond, "**Thanks be to God.**"

Hymn: ***God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen***

1 God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
when we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

2 From God our heav'nly Father
a blessed 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.

3 "Fear not," then said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Saviour
of a virgin pure and bright,
to free all those who trust in Him
from Satan's pow'r and might."
O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

4 Now to the Lord sing praises
all you within this place,
and with true love and brotherhood
each other new embrace;
this holy tide of Christmas
all other doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

The Second Lesson

Genesis 22.1-19: God tests Abraham, and promises that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Hymn: *The First Nowell*

1. The first Nowell 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.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.

2. 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.
(Refrain)

3. And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
(Refrain)

4. This star drew nigh to the northwest,
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
and there it did both stop and stay
right over the place where Jesus lay.
(Refrain)

6. Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
that hath made heaven
and earth of nought,
and with His blood our life hath bought.
(Refrain)

The Third Lesson

Isaiah 9.2,6,7: Isaiah foresees the coming Messiah.

Hymn: *Unto Us a Boy is Born*

1 Unto us a boy is born!
King of all creation,
Came he to a world forlorn,
The Lord of every nation.

2 Cradled in a stall was he
With sleepy cows and asses;
But the very beasts could see
That he all men surpasses.

3 Herod then with fear was filled:
'A prince,' he said, 'in Jewry!'
And all the little boys he killed
At Bethlem in his fury.

4 Now may Mary's son, who came
So long ago to love us,
Lead us all with hearts aflame
Unto the joys above us.

5 Omega and Alpha he!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Doth rend the air asunder.

The Fourth Lesson

Isaiah 11.1-9: The prophecy of the Messiah's kingdom of peace

Hymn: ***O Little Town of Bethlehem***

1 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.

2 O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
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.

4 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!

The Fifth Lesson

Isaiah 60.1-6, 19 – The coming of the glory of the Lord

Hymn: ***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing***

1 Hark! the herald angels sing
glory to the new-born 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.'

Refrain:

Hark, the herald angels sing
glory to the new-born King.

2 Christ, by highest heaven 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. [Refrain]

3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen 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. [Refrain]

The Sixth Lesson

Matthew 1.18-23: The birth of Emmanuel.

Hymn: *Away in a Manger*

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

2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3 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.

The Seventh Lesson

Luke 2.8-16: Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

Hymn: *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks By Night*

1 While shepherds watched
their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

2 "Fear not," said he for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind
"glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.

3 "To you, in David's town, this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

4 "The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands
and in a manger laid."

5 Thus spake the seraph and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

6 "All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
to those on whom his favour rests
goodwill shall never cease."

The Eighth Lesson

Matthew 2.1-11: Wise men come from the east seeking Jesus.

Hymn: ***We Three Kings***

1 We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

Refrain:

O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

2 Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.

[Refrain]

3 Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshiping God on high.

[Refrain]

4 Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

[Refrain]

5 Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Heaven sings: 'Alleluia';
'Alleluia,' the earth replies:

[Refrain]

The Ninth Lesson (*Please stand, as you are able*)

John 1.1-14: The Incarnation of the Word of God

Hymn: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

1 Adeste, fideles, laeti triumphantes;
Venite, venite in Bethlehem.
Natum videte regem angelorum.

Refrain:

Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus, Dominum.

2 Cantet nunc hymnos chorus angelorum,
Cantet nunc aula caelestium:
Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo;

Refrain

3 Ergo qui natus die hodierna,
Iesu, tibi sit gloria:
Patris aeterni verbum caro factum:

Refrain

The Blessing

May the Father, who has loved the eternal Son from before the foundation of the world, shed that love upon you his children. **Amen.**

May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer, give you grace to carry the good news of Christ. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be amongst you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: ***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***

1 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.

2 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

3 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

4 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