

Glory to God

How quiet was the night after the final echoes of "glory to God" faded? Did darkness seem deeper when the light left, and how long before a shepherd broke the silence? Though we sing about a "silent night," few Christmas plays pause to capture that stillness. I believe there was a profound silence before anyone spoke.

The shepherds required time to comprehend the events they had witnessed. They were not scholars or scribes, but rather ordinary individuals. Although they may have been familiar with certain prophecies, many people of that period likely expected the birth of the Savior to occur in a palace, or among those of higher social status, rather than in a stable. It is common for individuals to reflect in silence on significant experiences before they respond.

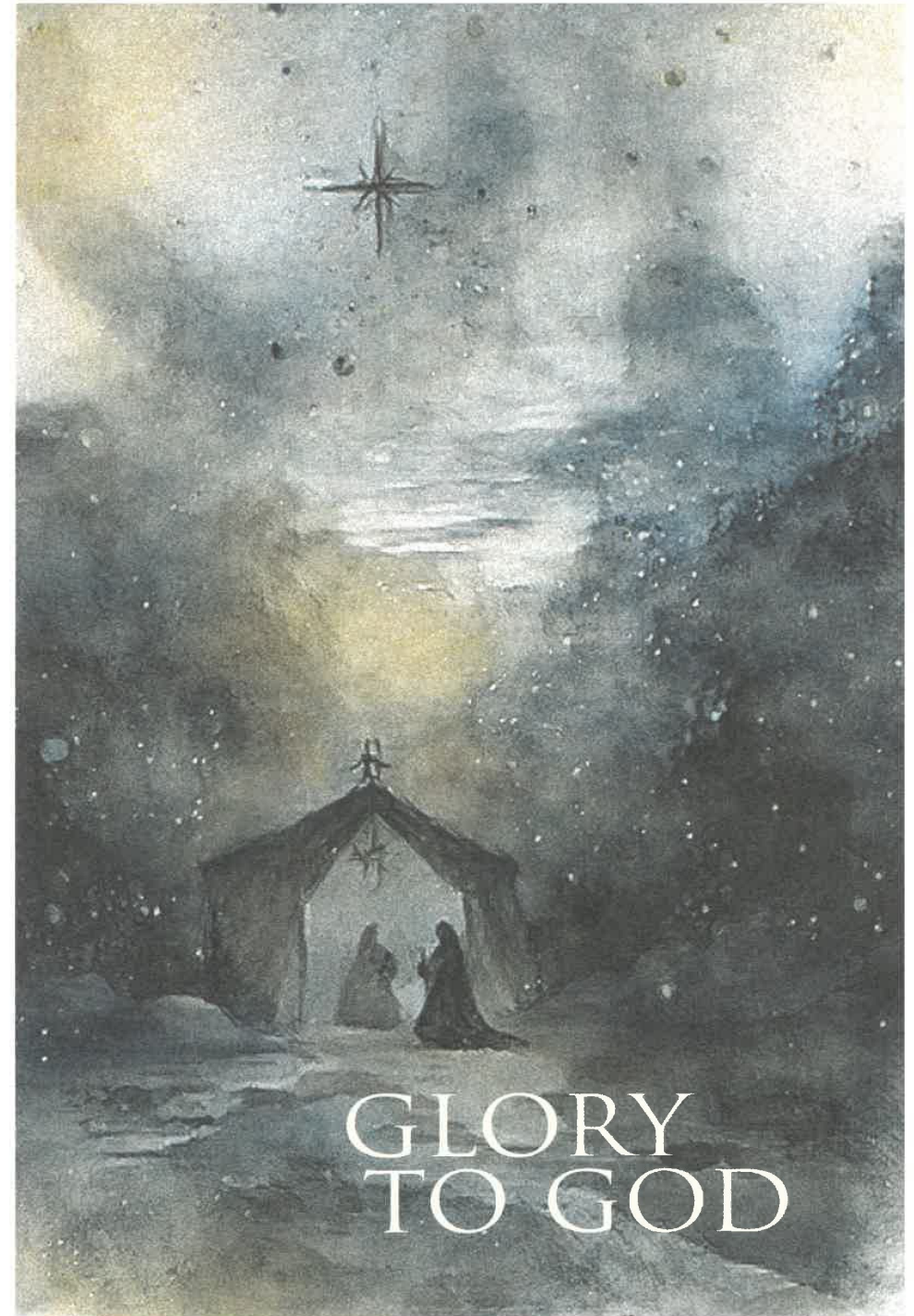
God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. A young unmarried girl is chosen to give birth to the Messiah. A common carpenter is asked to be the father of Jesus. Shepherds are told to go and see the child in a manger. Though it is not indicated in our scriptures, I imagine that they all took time to think about it in silence, praying just like we would, before they could give their praises to God for what had just happened.

The busy period of Christmas preparations likely have left us little opportunity for quiet reflection, but on this night, this most holy night, we must take time to silently contemplate the significance of this event, for it is from the silence that praises are born. May we all ponder these things in our hearts so that our glories to God ring out on Christmas day.

—Cindy Sanders
Cabool, Missouri

"*Glory to God* in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:14, NRSVue). **Today's Bible readings from the lectionary:** Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20).

Christmas Eve/Day. Cover design by Paul Stockdale © Brethren Press.
Living Word Bulletin Series © 2025 Brethren Press. Printed in the USA.



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
Hagerstown, Maryland

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE **7:00PM**

GATHERING MUSIC “Still, Still, Still” (Hayes)
Piano Duet

WELCOME

PRELUDE “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing” (Larson)
Brethren Bells

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 9:2-7 OT 638

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For 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. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For 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. Great will be his authority, 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.

HYMN #172 “O Come, O Come, Immanuel” (vss. 1, 3, 6)
[Verse 1]

*O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.*

[Chorus]

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

[Verse 3]

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.*

[Chorus]

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

[Verse 6]

*O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind. Bid envy,
strife and quarrels cease. Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.*

[Chorus]

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

One: Arise, shine, for God's light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us. Nations shall come to this light, and kings to the brightness of this dawn.

All: *Let us rejoice; the splendid eternal light shines on all who live in darkness, and Christ has come to witness to that light.*

One: Let us pray, God of promise, the coming of your Son into the world has revealed your glory. Salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers. Let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day. Let us live simply and devoutly, set apart as your people who have seen the light. Amen.

BRETHREN BELLS “Christmas Carol Fest” (Wagner)
(Please see the insert)

ANTHEM “Joyful, Joyful to the World” (Althouse)

POEM “Hush” by Lucinda Hynett

Can you hear it?
An expectant silence,
a hushed anticipation,
as if the very galaxy
is holding its breath.
There are some truths
even the stars know,
like darkness,
like loneliness
and how the night
can be a living thing.
And how once, long ago,
the night waited in wonder
along with the darkness
and the loneliness,

(continued)

for the sound of a baby's cry,
for the miraculous
to come down
to the earth mundane.

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:1-7 NT 58

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

HYMN #191 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

[Verse 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.

[Verse 2]

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love. O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth! and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

[Verse 3]

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of the heav'ns. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.

[Verse 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 Immanuel!

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

(This year's offering will go towards the Community Breakfast ministry. If you are giving a check, please write, "Community Breakfast" in the memo line.)

OFFERTORY "Echoes of Christmas" (Dennis)
Brethren Bells

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:8-14 NT 58

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

HYMN #197 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

[Verse 1]

Angels we have on heard high, singing sweetly through the night, and the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight.

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

[Verse 2]

Shepherds, why this Jubilee? Why these songs of happy cheer? What great brightness did you see? What glad tidings did you hear?

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

[Verse 3]

Come to Bethlehem to see him whose birth the angels sing. Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord the newborn King.

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

[Verse 4]

See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above. Mary, Joseph, lend your aid while we raise our hearts in love.

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria, in excelsis Deo.

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:15-20 NT 58

When 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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

ANTHEM "Mary, How Could You Have Known?" (Althouse)

A CHRISTMAS STORY

BRETHREN BELLS "Carols for the Newborn King" (Larson)

SERVICE OF COMMUNION

Blessing of the Bread:

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

Blessing of the Cup:

The cup which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.

ANTHEM "And Love Was Born" (Sewell)

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE "Silent Night, Holy Night"

(Nativity Scene: Brian & Nicole Forsythe)

[Verse 1]

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright 'round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

[Verse 2]

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight, glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia! Christ, the Savior is born, Christ the Savior, is born."

[Verse 3]

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, Love's pure light, radiant, beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

[Verse 4]

Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light. With the angels let us sing "Alleluia" to our King, "Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born."

BENEDICTION

After the Benediction, you may be seated.

Please continue in a spirit of worship as we listen to the Postlude music.

POSTLUDE "The First Christmas" (Smith)

*Please return your candle to the basket before leaving the church.
We will need it to use again next year.*

Our thanks to all who participated in our service and to those who worked behind the scenes to prepare our sanctuary for our worship.

Christmas Carol Fest

(1) O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

1. 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.
2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
O sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God, all 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.

(2) THE FIRST NOEL

1. The first Noel, 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.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, 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.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.

(3) 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 cradle till morning is nigh.

(4) 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 heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. 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 wonder, wonders of His love.

Christmas Carol Fest

(1) O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

1. 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.
2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
O sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God, all 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.

(2) THE FIRST NOEL

1. The first Noel, 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.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, 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.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.

(3) 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 cradle till morning is nigh.

(4) 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 heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. 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 wonder, wonders of His love.