

The Traditions of Christmas



The Traditions of Christmas

INTRODUCTION

K-8 Song--“O, Come All Ye Faithful” CW55:1-2

1 Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels. [Refrain]

3 Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above.
Glory to God, All glory in the highest.

Refrain:

Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

(Christmas hymn playing in background as narrators speak.)

N1 Candles glow. Lights glimmer. The smell of holiday baking drifts through the air. Cheerful decorations adorn the mantle, the tree, the front yard. As the familiar song says, “It’s Christmastime in the city.”

N2 Our families, our churches, and even our cities have traditions that make the Christmas season extra special. But, at times, our focus on carrying out these traditions can overshadow the real event—the birthday of God’s Son.

N3 Tonight we will look at several parts of a traditional Christmas. We will use them to refocus our attention on what really matters—the fulfillment of our Father God’s love for sinful mankind. It is our prayer, during this time of stress and uncertainty in the world around us, that the comfort found in this message gives you peace and joy.

K-2 Song--Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We” CW46:1-2

1 Your little ones, dear Lord, are we
And come your lowly bed to see;
Enlighten ev'ry soul and mind
That we the way to you may find.

2 With songs we hasten you to greet
And humbly fall before your feet.
Oh, blessed hour, oh, sweetest night
That gave you birth, our souls' delight.

PART 1 – BELLS

K-2 The bells ring out, they seem to say,
“Be joyful, here comes Christmas Day!”
The news they bring,
The song they sing,
Announce the birthday of a King.

N4 The bells ring an hour before a church service begins and again to open the service. They announce happy times like holidays and weddings. They commemorate more solemn occasions like funerals and Good Friday.

N5 Each Christmas, as we hear the bells, we think about the birth of a special baby two centuries ago. We think about what his birth and then death thirty-three year later mean for us. We rejoice in God’s marvelous plan of salvation.

3-4 Song--“Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes” CW12:1, 4

1 Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
And ev'ry voice a song.

4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Your welcome shall proclaim,
And heav'n's eternal arches ring
With your beloved name.

Recitation by Children--Luke 2:1-7

K-2

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

3-4

²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ And everyone went to register, each to his own town.

5-6

⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and family line of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, his wife, ^[a] who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

7-8

⁶And so it was that while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

PART 2 – CAROLS

3-4 Those special songs we love to hear,
The melodies we hold so dear
Tell the story
Of the glory
Of our Lord so pure and holy.

N6 What's your favorite Christmas carol? We all have one or two or maybe even several! The flowing poetry and melodies touch our hearts. They form a picture in our minds of that first Christmas long ago.

N7 Many of the familiar hymns tell of the announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds. We sing of their excited reaction to the miracle they witnessed.

7-8 Song--“Angels We Have Heard on High” CW 63

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

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song? (Refrain)

3 Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Refrain)

Recitation by Children--Luke 2:8-15

K-2

⁸ There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock at night.

3-4

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. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people:

5-6

¹¹ Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ^[b] the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

7-8

¹³ Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.”

PART 3 – GIFTS

K-2 The presents stacked beneath our tree,
I’m waiting for them anxiously.
They can’t compare
To a gift so rare—
God sent his son so good and fair.

N8 I guess if there is one thing we associate with Christmas more than any other, it would be presents. This is also the tradition that most threatens to overshadow what is truly important at Christmas.

N9 As we give and receive gifts, we should contemplate the greatest gift of all—the gift of God’s one and only Son. And, as with any gift we’re excited about, we will want to tell others all about it.

5-6 Song--“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” CW38:1, 4, 14, 15

1 "From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:

4 "He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in his kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us his glory share.

14 My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

15 Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us his Son has given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

Recitation by Children--Luke 2:16-20

K-2

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

3-4

“Now let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

5-6

¹⁷ When they had seen him, they told others the message they had been told about this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds said to them.

7-8

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

PART 4 – CHRISTMAS TREES

5-6 A Christmas tree so fresh and tall,
Its beauty is admired by all.
No change is seen
In its bright green—
Picture life everlasting.

N10 A Christmas tree really is a lovely sight. The lights twinkle and shine. Some ornaments are simply pretty, while others hold a sense of nostalgia. Some, like the Chrismons on our church trees, have special meaning for our faith.

N11 But let's look deeper, past the decorations at the tree itself. Ever-Green, always living, never changing. Just like Jesus. Let's look deeper at Christmas as well. Past the sweet baby and our romanticized notions. Jesus came to earth because we are sinful human beings. He came to suffer and die, to take our place. But, he didn't stay in the tomb. He rose to life everlasting!

7-8 Song--"Come, O Long-Expected Jesus" CW6

1 Come, O long-expected Jesus,
Born to set your people free;
From our sins and fears release us
By your death on Calvary.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope to all the earth impart,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

2 Born your people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now your gracious kingdom bring.
By your own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By your all-sufficient merit
Raise us to your glorious throne.

Reading--Luke 23:44-46, 24:1-8

Pastor's Message--"Christmas Isn't the Whole Story"

PART 5 – CANDLES

5-6 The flickering of candles bright,
A tiny baby's holy light,
The heavenly glow
Here down below
Reminds us that God loves us so.

7-8 Reading--Isaiah 60:1-3, 19-20

5-6 Song--“O Little Town of Bethlehem” CW65:1, 3

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.

3 How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts To human hearts The blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming, But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still, The dear Christ enters in.

PART 6 – SPECIAL TREATS

3-4 The special things we love to eat,
The cookies and delicious treats,
They dimly show
When at last we go
The heavenly feast that we will know.

N12 Our holiday celebrations almost always include food. Eating involves our senses: the smells, the tastes, the textures, the colors. Just thinking about a special meal can make our mouths water in anticipation. We are also anticipating another feast—the great banquet prepared for us by our heavenly Father. And we can't wait until we get there!

7-8 Reading Revelation 19:9, Isaiah 26:6

K-8 Song “Joy to the World” CW62:1, 4

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry 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.

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.

CONCLUSION

Christmas Prayer and Lord's Prayer

K-2 May the trimmings of the season
Point you to the season's reason—
God sent his son,
His only one,
For you and me and everyone.

Faculty Song "Dona Nobis Pacem" or "Silent Night"