



Songs of the Savior

Advent Devotional | Week 1

Advent is a time of preparing for Christmas and for Christ to come again. Our St. John Family Ministry has developed this devotional booklet as a way to help you connect with our Advent sermon series, *Songs of the Savior*. Our hope is that this booklet helps you and your family grow in your faith and love of Jesus through song. Each week of Advent will feature new songs and devotions.

Many of our teachers and staff have written a devotion for this booklet, based on some of their favorite Christmas songs. We pray these devotions will be a blessing to you during this season of Advent.

There are no devotions on Wednesdays or Sundays, so that you may join in worship, in person or on-line.

Advent Worship Schedule

Weekend:

Traditional Praise: Sunday @ 8:00 (also online),
9:30, & 11:00 AM

Modern Praise: Saturday @ 5:00 PM &
Sunday @ 10:45 AM (also online)

Wednesdays during Advent:

4:15 & 7:00 PM

Listen to the Songs of Advent! Scan this QR code for all of the songs connected with this seasonal devotion.



Scan Here

Song: The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me a partridge in a pear tree. On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree...

After Thanksgiving, I begin listening to Christmas songs, and one of my favorites has always been "The Twelve Days of Christmas". The origin of the song has been lost over the years, and the gifts have changed slightly - after all, what are four colly birds...or do you say four calling birds? Does any of that really matter though? The joy of trying to remember all the gifts, plus the changes in tune and rhythm, make it more of a game than just singing a song, which is what I have always enjoyed.

The real point of this song is to mark the days of the Christmas season. This song helps us celebrate the days between Jesus' birth and Epiphany - the day when we celebrate the arrival of the Wise Men in Bethlehem. So, the twelve days do not begin on December 13, but on Christmas Day, December 25. That means the twelfth day is January 5, the last day of Christmas, and January 6th is Epiphany - the day Jesus received His first Christmas gifts!

Currently, we are in the season of Advent - a time of preparation when we prepare our hearts for the birth of our Savior Jesus. When Jesus arrived as a tiny baby, born in a stable, and placed in a manger, the time of waiting was not over. He waited for His first gifts - gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40a), and the world continued to wait for the savior. When the time was right, the perfect gift was ready, and fulfilled the promise that God made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Jesus, our Savior, took our sins upon Himself and died in our place. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

On Christmas, we celebrate the best gift from our true love, God the Father - the gift of Jesus! The perfect and best gift the world has ever received!

If Jesus were born today, what would be your gift to Him?

Written by: Jennifer Laubsch, 3rd Grade Teacher

Song: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart. Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King, Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit, Rule in all our hearts alone; By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

"How long O Lord?" has been a question God's people have asked for centuries. It has been a question asked when the people were in oppression, exile, or other troubles. God's people have been waiting for a long time for a savior.

"How long O Lord" has been something I have said a lot in my life as I forget about how much God has been with me. Through struggles at work, or home, through illness of friends and family, through job loss and pain, God has been there, but I didn't always see it. It is easy for all of us to ask "How long O Lord?" We want to be in the place now where we will not experience pain or struggle. How long do we have to wait for God to intervene on our behalf?

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Galatians 4:4-5

"The fullness of time" is a phrase that I cling to today. We have to wait for God's timing. We have to wait for the fullness of time for Jesus to come again. As you sing this hymn this year, may we wait not with hearts of discontent but with hearts of joy as we wait for Jesus to come again.

How long O Lord? When the time is right.

Written by: Steve Wilson, Director of Child and Family Ministry

Song: O Holy Night

Matthew 1:21 "...and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

After thinking about some of my favorite Christmas hymns, (there are many!), I started researching the history of my favorites. As I was looking at my Google results for "O Holy Night," the fact that it was written by an atheist caught my eye. How could the following words be written by an atheist?

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, O holy night, O night divine!

After researching more, I discovered that a priest, Father Petitjean, asked a local wine merchant and poet to write a Christmas poem to celebrate the renovation of the church organ. Placide Cappeau was the man who was asked to write the poem. Despite being an atheist, he agreed to write the poem. So how did Cappeau so succinctly capture the amazing events of that night, and the impact of Christ's birth on the world forever? Well, before writing the poem, Cappeau read from the Gospel of Luke. He read the Good News for himself. In Luke 2, we are told how the birth of Christ unfolded, how he came to earth to be one of us, to live a perfect life, and to be that "thrill of hope" to a world steeped in "sin and error". The people were "pining" for a Savior. Matthew 1:21 tells us that the angel told Joseph in a dream, "...you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." The line, "It is the night of our dear Savior's birth," speaks of this Jesus, born in a lowly manger, whose purpose was to break the chains of sin, death, and hell. The night Christ was born he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..." Isaiah 9:6

Cappeau read the Gospel and imagined what it must have been like to witness Christ's birth that first Christmas night. He conveyed very articulately in his poem, Minuit Chrétiens, the overwhelming joy a Christian feels because of the greatest love ever shown to mankind that first Christmas night. He continued his poem with the following words:

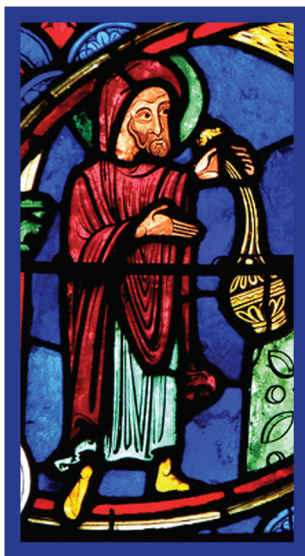
Verse 2: Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand. So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, Here came the Wise Men from Orient land. The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger, in all our trials born to be our Friend. He knows our need– to our weakness is no stranger. Behold your King, before Him lowly bend! Behold your King, before Him lowly bend!

Verse 3: 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 pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!

Three weeks later, after the words were quickly set to music, an opera singer raised her voice at Christmas Eve mass, proclaiming the good news, "Behold your King...His law is love and His Gospel is peace." May you have "glowing hearts" throughout this Christmas season as you ponder what the King of kings did for you as He came to earth in a lowly manger.

Which line of the song or poem best describes how you feel about Christ coming to earth that first Christmas night? What does Christ coming to earth mean for you?

Written by: Mary Rich, 3rd Grade Teacher



Song: Do You Hear What I Hear?

Bible Verses: Luke 2:8-17

Wham! I heard a very loud noise one night. I asked my son, "Did you hear that sound?" We didn't know what it was, so we began to look around the house. After some investigating, we found that the spring on the garage door had broken. If you have ever heard that sound before, you know that it can be a very loud sound.

We hear sounds every day. Some sounds are good sounds, others are not. Many sounds that we hear during the time of Advent and Christmas are happy and joyful sounds. There is Christmas music playing everywhere you go. There are bells merrily ringing. There are people talking, laughing, and singing. Wrapping paper is being ripped from gifts. There are sounds coming from the kitchen as special meals are prepared.

In the Christmas song, "Do You Hear What I Hear?" by Bing Crosby, there are sounds and questions that announce the good news of Jesus being born. The song encourages us to listen, look, and reflect. There are three questions asked during the song:

The wind asks the lamb. "*Do you see what I see?*" The shepherds saw the star of Bethlehem. Can you put yourself in the place of the lamb, other sheep along with the shepherds as they look up to see the beautiful Star of Bethlehem?

Next, the lamb asks the shepherd boy. "*Do you hear what I hear?*" The shepherds heard the song and the message of the angels. Jesus is born in Bethlehem. The lamb spread the special message to the shepherd boy.

The shepherd boy asks the king. "*Do you know what I know?*" The shepherd boy told the good news of Jesus' birth to the king. The shepherd boy knew that Jesus was someone special. He tells the king to bring the Christ Child gifts of silver and gold.

The end of the song is a proclamation of the king to "*Listen to what I say!*" He asks for people everywhere to pray for peace. He also states that the child will bring us goodness and light. Jesus does bring us goodness and light. He is our Savior.

In Luke 2:8-17, we hear the message of the angels to the shepherds. The shepherds spread the news of Jesus' birth. The good news of the promised Savior was told to people everywhere.

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child."

Can you imagine being on the hillside with the shepherds that night? It was truly an amazing sight for them to see the angels. The angel's song had the most wonderful message for them. The long-awaited Savior had been born. The shepherds could not keep the news to themselves. They went and shared it with others. We can share the good news of Jesus, our Savior too. During this Advent and Christmas season, I pray that you find joy in the sounds of Christmas.

What are your favorite sounds of Christmas? What special way can you share God's love with others this Christmas season?

Written by: Beth Mick, Preschool 4's Teacher

Song: Little Drummer Boy

As I listened to this song, I could not help but to image a young boy carrying his drum, tapping gently on it as if to not get in trouble by his mom for banging loudly. My mind pictures a sweet innocent little face standing next to the animals in the manger tapping a song to Jesus. Pa rum, pum, pum, pum.

I googled what was the purpose of a drummer boy and found that the use of drums and drummer boys was a vital part of the military a long, long time ago. These young brave soldiers banged out commands of warning, retreat, or victory. They also played songs to entertain the troops. It was an especially significant role. It gave a sense of encouragement and hope to troops who were so far away from home. I cannot imagine leading at such an early age. But then we have this baby, who will lead forever. Another leader born to lead at a young age. The Bible says in Psalm 146:10, "The Lord will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!"

He was born as a baby to reign. Not only does it say He will reign forever, but it tells us to praise the Lord! The drummer boy of this song was asked to come.

Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum, A newborn King to see, pa rum pum pum pum, Our finest gifts to bring, Pa rum pum pum pum, To lay before the King, Pa rum pum pum pum rum pum pum pum rum pum pum, So, to honor him, Pa rum pum pum pum.

Why did the drummer boy go to see this baby? To give him something, but what? The drummer boy did not think he had a gift fit for a king. He did not think he had something that would be of value, something that anyone would even want. He was not some kind of superhero that rescued people from a burning building, he was not some great doctor, teacher, or pastor. All he had was his drum to play. The only gift he could think of was to play his drum for the King. Jesus does not need us to give him the best gift we can think of. Just like the drummer boy played his drums from his heart, Jesus wants us to give from our hearts.

What gift do you bring to the king? How can you honor the Lord, especially during this time of celebration of His birth?

Written by: Jennie Eller, Mission Mobilization



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