

Christmas Program
Submitted by Joy Ward, Monument, Colorado

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD

One thousand, nine hundred and ninety-eight years ago, you and I, everyone one of us in this room, peered out over the veil of time and distance and watched with wonder as the birth of our Savior took place here on earth. We were all there. The fact that we are all here right now, today is proof of that.

What a glorious occasion that must have been! Not moments before the Savior stood in our midst. Perhaps he gave you a hug, shook your hand, put His arm around you, or stared lovingly into your beautiful eyes. He probably smiled, a broad, loving confident smile that said to us, "Fear not, for this day I am about my Father's work. The work that will someday bring us back together to dwell with one another forever. I shall not be gone long, and when I return we will rejoice together the same as we now rejoice at my going."

And when the exact moment was right, He vanished from our presence and began His exquisite journey. We laughed, we cried, we celebrated! This was it! This was the moment we had waited an eternity for! This was the part of our Father's plan most precious and holy! Our love for our Elder Brother could not have been stronger. Our gratitude and humility for what He was about to do could not have been deeper! So glorious was this moment, that we spontaneously joined our voices together and began to sing! And those who were not blessed with the talent of singing, began to shout in joyous tones! A sublime chorus of notes and voice blended together to create one of the sweetest sounds ever to come from the heavens! So great was our joy and our shouting and singing, the sound could be heard even to the ends of the earth! At some point the veil dividing the heavens and the earth was rent, and some of us were allowed to visit the earth and there to sing praises to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, we were there. You and I, me and you. Shouting and singing. Praising and rejoicing.

May we throughout this Christmas Season and for the entire year, reflect on our commitment to our brother, even Jesus Christ, that we made that day, standing there, watching these events take place. Our commitment to pass the test, rise above our circumstances on earth whatever they may turn out be, and live our lives such that we may be a part of that same Heavenly or Earthly choir that will herald Christ's return to this Earth once again, is our prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

GUARD HIM, JOSEPH

Who put Joseph in the back of the stable?
Who dressed him in brown, put a staff in his hand,
And told him to stand in the back of the creche,
Background for the magnificent light of the Madonna?

God-chosen, this man Joseph was faithful
In spite of the gossip in Nazareth,
In spite of the danger from Herod.
This man, Joseph, listened to the angels
And it was he who name the Child Immanuel.

Is this a man to be stuck for centuries

In the back of the stable?
Actually, Joseph probably stood in the doorway
Guarding the mother and Child
Or greeting shepherds and kings.

When he wasn't in the doorway,
He was probably urging Mary to get some rest.
Gently covering her with his cloak,
Assuring her that he would watch the Child.
Actually, he probably picked the Child up in his arms
And walked him in the night,
Patting him lovingly
Until he closed His eyes.

This Christmas, let us give thanks to God
For this man of incredible faith
Into whose care God placed the Christ Child.

And to Mary, whose faith never wavered,
Though mocked and ridiculed
By those all around her.
Still, head held high, and close
Under Joseph's arm,
Her courage was as strong as
Was her determination to
Finish the work she'd been given to do.

Courage. To choose right over the convenient, the popular, or the socially accepted is a sign of strength. We need courage to choose change over conflict and inner anguish. The courage to choose and to make decisions based on fact, feelings and prompting, regardless of the reaction or responses of others, is a God-given virtue that make life meaningful and worthwhile.

We need the courage to remain true and faithful, to show by our life-style day after day that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need courage so that regardless of environmental pressures or situations, we will continue worthily in the pursuit of lofty goals in His paths.

LULLABY

Child: Mom, how come so many pictures of Jesus I see have children in them?

Parent: That's a good question, _____. What do you think?

Child: Well, I think Jesus loved to be around children!

Parent: Yes that's right. He did love to be around them. And they loved to be around Him. Jesus had a special place in His heart for children. After all, He started out just like every other child! He was born a tiny baby, just like you were. He grew up just like you are and had to learn and study and pray and do all the things little children do. He was even a teenager once like your big sisters are!

Child: Boy, I never thought about that before!

Parent: (laughing) well, it's true.

Child: I think I would like to have been one of Jesus' friends if I lived back then. I'll bet He was a good friend.

Parent: I'm sure He was Alicia.

Child: I would especially like to have been one of the Nephite children when Jesus came and gave them all a blessing. Boy, that would be so special!

Parent: Oh, yes! What a wonderful experience that would have been!

Child: Mom, do you think when Jesus comes again I could get a blessing from Him?

Parent: I'm sure you could dear (hugs child). (Short pause), _____ do you know why children are so special to Jesus?

Child: Well, I think because He loves them so much.

Parent: True...but He also used the example of children in many in His Parables and commandments. Do you remember when He said, "Except as ye become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."?

Child: Yes, I remember that. And I've always wondered what it meant. What's so special about children?

Parent: Well, there's an example right there. Children are so innocent and pure. They have an outlook on the world much different than grown-ups. They love everyone. They don't feel hate or anger toward others, nor do they think any one person is better than another. I think Jesus wanted us grown-ups to try to have the kind of outlook on life that children do.

They also have great faith. Remember the time when you climbed the big tree in the front yard almost to the very tippity top? And then you got so scared you couldn't get down? Your Dad came out and told you to jump from the branch and he would catch you. You didn't hesitate for a moment, but just jumped right down, and sure enough he caught you! That was having innocent faith. You didn't stop to think about it, would he catch or wouldn't he? Would he miss, or would you fall? You just jumped. You obeyed your Dad because you know he loves you and would never want to hurt you. That's what our Father in Heaven is like. He has given us commandments to obey which will lead us back into His arms. All we have to do is obey! It's as simple as that. The same simple faith you had in Dad when you were stuck in the tree.

Child: Oh, I get it! Being stuck in the tree is kinda like being stuck here on earth! And if we obey the commandments we can jump from the tree and land in Heavenly Fathers' arms! Cool!

Parent: You see what I mean? That's why Jesus so often talked of becoming like children so we could return to heaven and be with Him. Children throughout the world are following after the Savior and setting examples to their friends, teachers, and families. Many times it's the children who set the

standards in the home. How often do you and _____ remind Dad and me about family prayer or to study our scriptures today? Children can make home a bit like heaven with their sweet spirits and kindness. I think it's because it hasn't been very long since those little ones left their Father in Heaven and Jesus and came to earth!

Child: Boy, I never thought about that. But I understand. Sometimes I feel so close to Jesus I could reach out and touch Him. I get all goosebumpy inside when I say my prayers, and when I read stories about Him.

Parent: (very softly) And that's how it should be _____. We can all learn from the example of children.

NO ROOM, NO ROOM

My day began like all the rest,
My babies I awoke, and kissed and dressed.
Fixed breakfast while they watched tv,
Then filled each growling, small tummy.
Bundled them off their health to protect,
The blizzard outside would not them affect.

My husband arose as the day before,
Showered and shaved and was out the door.
Barely a kiss to exchange post haste,
For I, too was in a scurrying pace.

Off for the groceries, my cupboards to fill,
Then to the cleaners, and drop off the bills.
Lunch came and went without much ado,
For today was the day for my new hairdo!

Before I knew it the kids were home,
"Too much homework," they all said with a groan.
The little ones all went out to play,
They'd had quite enough school for that day.

Soon time rolled around for dinner to make,
Chicken to fry, potatoes to bake.
My sweetheart arrives, his day is done.
He asks the children how their day was won.

Then dishes and laundry and baths to take,
A round of tickles and smiles to make!
Soon teeth are brushed and prayers are said,
And before I collapse, they're all in bed.

My day now concludes, like all the rest.
But looking back, "Did I do my best?"
I filled their tummies, made sure they had coats,

But what of their Spirits? What of their souls?

I'm trying so hard a good mother to be,
But did I forget about Christ, and what He means to me?
Did I make time, my own well to fill,
Studying His word, learning His will?
In all of my giving, am I giving to Him,
The place He deserves, making room for Him?
'Tween dishes and laundry, homework and play,
Did I teach my family of the Savior today?

Dear Lord, please forgive me, my folly of late,
Help me to remember the goals I have made.
An Eternal Family is what I prize most,
A dwelling in heaven, with Thee as the host.

May I remember to each day make a part
For Thee to be planted down deep in my heart.
That my husband and children will easily see
Our circle of love's not complete without Thee.

Are we making room for the Savior each day in our lives? Are the doors of our hearts or homes locked and barred...too full of the pleasures of the day to fit any more? Do we make the time to kneel at His manger each day, both in study and in prayer? Are we ready each and every day to give our best to Him, to live such that He may abide in our hearts and our homes always? (Pause) Are we seeking His face? (Pause) May we keep Him as this beautiful song suggests "evermore our guest, offering Him our best, the finest each soul can afford"...

SHEPHERD, LEAVE THY SHEEP

Broken Toys

As children bring their toys,
With tears, for us to mend;
I brought my broken dreams to God,
Because He was my friend.

But then instead of leaving Him
In peace to work alone,
I hung around, and tried to help,
In ways that were my own.

At last, I snatched them back and cried,
"How could you be so slow?"
"My child," He said, "What could I do?
You never did let go..."

Author Unknown

Imagine, if you will, faithful shepherds on a lovely hillside outside of Bethlehem, watching over their flock. These were men of faith and knowledge. Men who were looking for a Messiah. It's not likely that the angels picked just any shepherds to which to appear! Imagine the thrill they experienced as they followed the direction of the angels and went and saw the newborn babe, the Savior of the World. Imagine the disappointment of he who could not leave his flock unattended for fear they would wander or be eaten by wild animals. How foolish and sad he must have felt when the others returned and marveled at what they had seen. How that shepherd may have wished for the faith and courage he lacked to let go of the things of this world , turn things over to the Lord and go and obey.

President Ezra Taft Benson in his 1986 Christmas Devotional said: "Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace."

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Narrator 1: Luke 2, And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Nazareth, into Judea unto the city of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.

(Mary and Joseph have made their way into the room, and approach the innkeeper.)

Joseph: Please, I beg of you. Yours is the last place in all the city; please, do you have a room for myself and my wife, who is about to have a baby.

Innkeeper: I'm sorry, sir, but all my rooms are taken. There are so many in town just now. But wait! I do have a warm, clean place you might consider. It is around back, in the stable. There is fresh hay laid there. Come I'll show you.

(The three of them make their way to the "stable." Mary gets the "baby" and kneels by the cradle , Joseph stands behind her. While they are getting settled, the narrator continues.)

Narrator 1: And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night.

(Shepherds enter)

Narrator: And Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. (Angel enters shepherds act scared).

Angel: Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto

you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Narrator : And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them (angel leave), the shepherds said one to another:

Shepherd 1: Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

Shepherd 2: Yes, let us depart. We shall leave our flocks for the angels to attend, and go to see the newborn King.

Narrator : And they came with haste, and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.

(Shepherds go to the “stable”.)

Shepherd 1: Let us now go and tell all the world the news of this glorious event!

Shepherd 2: And let us give thanks to God, for this wonderful gift of our Savior.

(The Shepherds kneel as if praying.)

Mary: Oh, Joseph! Look at him! What a beautiful child he is! And such a good baby. Why he hardly even cries when he wakes up.

Joseph: Yes, he certainly is. And how lucky we are to know that our Savior has been born. He who will save the world from their sins!

Mary: How true, Joesph. But right now he is just my beautiful little baby.

Primary sings “Away in A Manger”

WE THREE KINGS

How are we conducting our own individual searches for the coming Messiah? Pres. James E. Faust in the April 98 conference recounted a story from the Church News: “A group of religious instructors were taking a summer course on the life of the Savior and focusing particularly on the parables.

When the final exam time came, the students arrived at the classroom to find a note that the exam would be given in another building across campus. Moreover, the note said, it must be finished within the two hour time period that was starting almost at that moment.

The students hurried across campus. On the way they passed a little girl crying over a flat tire on her new bike. An old man hobbled painfully toward the library with a cane on one hand, spilling his books from a stack he was trying to manage with the other. On a bench by the union building sat a shabbily dressed, bearded man in obvious distress.

Rushing into the other classroom, the students were met by the professor who announced they had all flunked the final exam.

The only true test of whether they understood the Savior's life and teaching, he said, was how they treated people in need.

Their weeks of study at the feet of a capable professor had taught them a great deal of what Christ had said and done. In their haste to finish the technicalities of the course, however, they failed to recognize the application represented by the three scenes that had been deliberately staged. They learned the letter, but not the spirit. Their neglect of the little girl and the two men showed the profound message of the course had not entered into their inward parts.

The story is told of a fourth wise man, which had studied and prepared all his life for the coming of a "new King". When the sign was seen, he sold all his possessions to purchase three jewels of great worth to be used as gifts for the newborn babe, a ruby, a sapphire and a pearl. Artaban set out toward his rendezvous with the other Magi. Along the way, however, he happened upon a man by the side of the road, stricken with a deadly fever. If he stopped to help him, he would be delayed and this most important journey to meet the king, but how could he turn his back on his fellowman in his hour of need? He stayed and nursed the man, leaving him finally with provisions and healing medicines. The other three kings were well ahead of him when finally reached the rendezvous, and Artaban was forced to return to the city and use his precious sapphire to buy supplies and camels to see him through the desert as there would be no trace of the trail of the other kings.

Arriving in Bethlehem, he found himself in the midst of a most horrid event. Herod's soldiers were about the city with dripping swords and bloody hands killing all the children who might grow up to challenge him as the rightful King! Artaban skillfully used his huge, red ruby to save the life of a child whose mother has been kind enough to offer him dinner and a place to sleep. Now with only his pearl left, he journeyed on. A Jewish rabbi had counseled Artaban to seek the Messiah, not among the rich, but among the poor. And so over the years we see Artaban passing through countries where famine lay heavy on the land and sharing his meager portions with the hungry. He made his dwelling place among the sick and downtrodden, constantly tending to their needs and continually searching for the Jewish King. He clothed the naked, fed the hungry, healed the sick and comforted the captive.

Now 33 years later, he finds himself again in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. The streets are thronged with people, who are moving toward Golgatha. He learns that a man who has done many good works and is known as King of the Jews is about to be executed. How strange those words fell upon the ears of Artaban. He thought of the lifetime he had spent searching for the Messiah, and now he was about to lose that chance forever! Wait!! The pearl! He could perhaps use the pearl to ransom the King from death! He quickly made his way through the crowd toward the hill Calvary. His path was cut off by a band of soldiers dragging a sobbing young woman with torn dress and bare feet. As they passed, the woman broke loose from her captors and threw herself at his feet.

"Have pity on me, sir. My father was also a Magi, but he is dead and I am about to be sold into slavery!"

Taking the pearl from his robe, Artaban looks closely at the priceless gem. It has taken on a unique beauty from all those of years of being carried close to his heart.

He quickly held it out to the soldiers, paying the ransom for the young woman.

Artaban hurried on, hoping to at least see the face the this king he head sought, though he now had no gift to give Him. Suddenly the earth trembled, and the sky darkened. A fierce storm arose and the wind howled. A roof tile was blown loose, striking Artaban in the head. He fell, his life streaming out of him..

“Not so, my Lord. When did I find thee naked and clothed thee, or hungry and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger and took thee in or visited thee in prison? Thirty-three years have I spent looking for thee, but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered unto thee!”

“Verily, I say unto thee, that inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

As we search for the Messiah, may we discover that it is not at the end of the journey we find Him, but along the way.