

Praise to the Lord

Choir:

Blessed Be the Holy Name of Jesus

(proceed directly to next song)

Praise To the Lord

Narrator 1: In a time before the world was, our Heavenly Father planned for us to come to earth to learn from our own experience how to choose between good and evil. Because He knew we would often choose wrongly, He provided us a Savior, His own Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for us and make it possible for us to return home to His presence. It was Jesus who created for us the heavens and the earth, and filled them with beauty and wonder and glory. He provided every good thing to sustain us and gladden our hearts. Our joy in His creation resounded through the heavens, when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

Narrator 2: As we celebrate this time of resurrection and renewal, all the earth seems to rejoice with us. Perhaps it was this sense of universal celebration that inspired the psalmist to say, “Praise ye the Lord... sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light... Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: ...rejoice, and sing praise.”

Choir:

Anthem of Praise

Narrator 1: All the magnificent creations in heaven and earth would have been for naught, but for the Savior who was promised to us before the world was made--the Son of God, who would come to earth to save us from the fall and from our own sins.

Through the long centuries before He came, the faithful offered animal sacrifices, ordained by God to point their minds and hearts to His great and last sacrifice for their sakes. They brought the best of their flocks, unblemished and perfect, as a symbol of the purity of Jesus himself.

Narrator 2: This was the law that Abraham knew, when God commanded him to offer up as a sacrifice not sheep or doves, but his own son, Isaac, whom he loved. We can only imagine Abraham's pain as they set out together and Isaac asked, “My father... where is the Lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham answered, “My son, God will provide himself a Lamb .”

Faithful Abraham took his broken heart and his obedient son, and went into the land of Moriah, to do as the Lord commanded. But the Lord accepted the intent of their hearts, and stayed Abraham's hand, providing a sacrifice for them in place of Isaac.

When I come to my Heavenly Father today, seeking forgiveness and healing, he asks me to offer not sheep or doves, but a broken heart and a repentant spirit. As He did for Abraham and Isaac, He provides a Lamb in my stead, as a sacrifice for my sins--His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Choir:

God Will Provide a Lamb

Narrator 1: At last the time came when God sent the promised Savior to to earth to live among us. He sent His Son not to the rich and the mighty, but to a young maiden, espoused to a simple carpenter. How

fitting that the birth of the child who would be both Shepherd and Lamb, should be announced first to shepherds abiding in the fields, watching over their flocks.

Narrator 2: “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. And the angel said unto them, 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 Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Choir:

Lying In a Manger

Narrator 2: The shepherds found Him lying in a manger, and they knew Him. The wise men followed a star to the Holy Child, and they knew Him.

What if I had seen Him? What if I had witnessed His power and heard His voice? Would I have known Him? Would I have accepted Him as the promised Messiah? Would I have trusted and loved Him?

Choir:

Because He Spoke To Me

Narrator 2 sings:

Would I have sought Him long ago, and been among the blessed?
When Jesus said, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”
Would I have heard the voice of heaven calling, calling tenderly
Would I have been forever changed, because He spoke to me

(Choir)

Narrator 2 sings: I seek Him now and hear Him gently calling me by name
Again He says, “Come unto me,” my Jesus, still the same

(Choir)

Narrator 1: So beautiful and pure were the teachings of Christ, so compassionate and powerful were the works of his hands, that multitudes followed Him closely, leaving Him little time even for rest. When they brought their children to Him to be blessed, His disciples rebuked them and would have sent them away. “But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Then He took the little ones up in his arms, and blessed them.

Narrator 3 (Mother of child soloist): This is my (son/daughter), (Child). (S)he is a great blessing to me and to our whole family. I think about those parents who brought their children to Jesus, perhaps wondering whether they would be accepted by One so great, and how they must have felt when Jesus made time for each child, taking them in His arms and blessing them one by one. If I had been among them, I would have brought (Child) to Him, knowing that He wouldn't turn us away. It's wonderful to know that He loves (Child) now, just as He loved the children then.

Choir and Child soloist(s)

A Place in His Arms

Narrator 1: Jesus taught his disciples how to love and serve, by example and by precept. He taught them in parables, speaking of familiar things: seeds and coins; trees and gardens; salt and bread. He spoke of sheep and of shepherds, asking, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the wilderness after that which is lost?"

He spoke of a father's love for his son, a young man who wasted his inheritance, and gave himself up to the evils in the world around him. This prodigal son soon found his situation unbearable, and resolved to seek the home he had left, and the father who had always cared for him. As he returned, ashamed and humbled, he found his father watching for him, for when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and ran to meet him rejoicing.

Narrator 2: The Lord watches for every child who strays, like the loving father in the parable, and rejoices when we return home to Him. At times, I am the Prodigal, trading my blessings and opportunities for things of no value, and then longing for the things I've forsaken. At other times, I am like the shepherd who seeks the straying lamb, carrying the love of the Lord to the prodigal who comes within my reach. However imperfect we may be, the Lord can use each of us to work His greatest miracles—changing hearts and lives, and welcoming the lost ones home again.

Choir

The Prodigal

Narrator 2 sings: Somewhere a mother waits
Somewhere a father prays
Somewhere a faithful friend entertains the Lord
For a miracle

(Choir)

Narrator 1: The time Jesus spent among men was brief; the land in which He labored was small. But in this short time, He re-shaped the hearts and minds of men and women in every land, in every generation. His mission on earth came to a close with the greatest sacrifice ever offered, as He took upon himself our griefs and afflictions, our pain, our weakness, and our sin, and died for the sake of all mankind.

Narrator 4 (This passage is spoken by the soloist for "His Tears Were Mine"): The last supper with his disciples was finished; the last sermon was taught; the last expressions of love and friendship were spoken; the last hymn was sung.

Then Jesus went with His disciples to a garden called Gethsemane, and He said to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

Solo:

His Tears Were Mine

Interlude (Narrator 2 sings):

Had I come to Gethsemane, to watch with Him one hour,
Had I beheld His suff'ring 'neath the weight of sin He bore,
Would I have followed weeping then, regardless of the cost?
Would I have been forever changed to see Him bear my cross?

Choir:

Upon the Altar

Narrator 1: The tomb where they laid His body was hewn from the rock in a nearby garden. They sealed the door with a great stone, and returned to their homes to keep the approaching sabbath and to mourn the loss of their Friend and Master.

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, faithful women came to the garden tomb. As they approached, they asked among themselves, "Who shall roll away the stone?" For it was beyond their strength to remove. But they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and an angel of the Lord who spoke to them, saying, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen..."

Narrator 2: The great stone, rolled away from the empty tomb, became both a witness and a symbol that Jesus had conquered death, and brought about the resurrection of all mankind. The women who had set out in sorrow, returned rejoicing. And as they went to tell the news to His disciples, Jesus himself met them, and they fell at His feet to worship the living Lord.

Interlude (Narrator 2 sings):

Would I have come at morning with the women to the tomb
To find the great stone rolled away, and angels bright as noon?
Would I have seen the risen Lord, and fallen at His feet
Knowing He had conquered death, and given life to me?

Choir:

The Stone is Rolled Away

Narrator: 1 The great work of our Savior on earth was accomplished: He overcame sin and death; He gave us life; and He taught us how live. He lived and died and rose again for all of us, but He cares for each of us individually, one by one. As we seek to draw near to Him, He has promised that He will also draw near to us.

Narrator 5 (This passage is spoken by the soloist for "He is There"): My Savior knows my every joy and feels my every sorrow. He lifts my burdens and rejoices in my triumphs. In everything I do, wherever I may go, when I reach for Him, He is never far away.

Soloist:

He Is There

Narrator 1: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation; He who accomplished His Father's will and made possible the great plan of happiness for all of us. He loved us from before the foundations of the world, and He will love us unfailingly forever.

Choir:

Praise To the Lord (Finale)