

Of the Father's Love Begotten

by Anita Schulz

Processional Hymn: Oh, How Joyfully

1. Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how merrily Christmas comes with its grace divine!
Grace again is beaming, Christ the world redeeming.
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time!
2. Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how merrily Christmas comes with its peace divine!
Peace on earth is reigning, Christ our peace regaining.
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time!
3. Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how merrily Christmas comes with its life divine!
Angels high in glory Chant the Christmas story:
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time!
4. O thou holy child, O thou heav'nly child. Dearest gift of Christmastide!
To ev'ry nation Bringing salvation.
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time!

Call to Worship

Pastor: Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see.

Congregation: Evermore and evermore!

Children's Song: Light of the World by Gerald Patrick Coleman

1. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.
(Antiphon) Jesus Christ is the light of the world! The light no darkness can overcome!
2. What came to being in Him was life and the life was the light of all,
shining in darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.
(Antiphon) Jesus Christ is the light of the world! The light no darkness can overcome!
3. This is the true light shining on all coming into the world.
And from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.
(Antiphon) Jesus Christ is the light of the world! The light no darkness can overcome!

Pastor: To Christ who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-

Congregation: To him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

Pastor: Christ, to you, with God the Father, and the Spirit ceaselessly, Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving and unending praises be, Honor, glory, and dominion and eternal victory

Congregation: Evermore and evermore!

Introduction

Congregation Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten, CW 35 vs. 1

Of the Father's love begotten Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see
Evermore and evermore.

Narration A

Kai: Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ, the Son of God. True God took upon himself human flesh and blood and became true man. God's Son became our brother! Yes, even before "the worlds began to be," that is, before the world was created, God's Son was begotten of, that is, brought into being by, his Father's love.

Johnny: Before the world was created?

Kai: Yes, the Son was begotten of his Father, existing along with him and the Holy Spirit before time began. He is Alpha and Omega.

Rory: Alpha and Omega? What does that mean?

Kai: Alpha and Omega are Greek words meaning "beginning" and "ending" Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. In the hymn verse we just sang, the ancient hymn writer explains: "He is Alpha and Omega, He the source the ending he, Of the things that are, that have been. And that future years shall see Evermore and evermore.

Johnny: What are "the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see"?

Kai: Tonight, in this very special service, we are going to learn about these very things-- beginning with "the things that are," continuing with those "that have been," and ending with those "that future years shall see."

Part One: Of the Things that Are

Congregation Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten CW 35 vs. 2

Oh, that birth forever blessed When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face
Evermore and evermore.

Narration B

Kate: From beginning to end, the pages of the Bible are filled with God's promises and the fulfillment of those promises. "The things that are: are the fulfillment of God's promises, which he made to his people over a long period of time. Tonight's celebration is centered on the fulfillment of the special promise to send a Savior from sin. Listen to what happened when God sent his Son into our world to save us.

Recitation: Grades 6-8

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:1-7)

Congregation Hymn: Silent Night CW 60

German: Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht, Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar. Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh! Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

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.
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!
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.

Narration C

John: This was a special birth. The first people to hear of this event were some humble shepherds. These men were the first witnesses of the birth of our Savior. And the announcement of the birth of the birth was also very special because it was delivered by one of God's special messengers, an angel. Although the shepherds were terrified when the angel appeared, they listened and believed. Listen to the angel's good news that a Savior had been born.

Recitation: K-4

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:8-14)

Congregation Hymn: 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.
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?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
3. Come to Bethlehem and 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.

Narration D

John: Not only did the shepherds listen to and believe the angel's message, they reacted to it! They didn't put off or delay their trip. They didn't even dawdle on the way! Instead, they ran to Bethlehem to see the Son of God, who had come as a baby, cradled in a cattle-feeding box. Luke tells us of the shepherds' reaction to this great news.

Recitation: K-8

K-4: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherd said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

6-8: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:15-20)

Children's Song: 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 you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky, And stay by my side until morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay Close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care, And take us to heaven to live with you there.

Narration E

Kai: See? The shepherds praised God because everything that they saw and heard was just as God's angel promised! This was the reason for their great excitement. And because everything happened as promised, the shepherds' excitement didn't end after they saw the newborn Savior.

Rory: I'll say! They spread the news and told everyone they saw about the child.

Johnny: And that he was born to be our Savior!

Kai: Yes, a Savior who would suffer and die in our stead for our sins for those of all people who have ever lived or will ever live on this earth! We need to be like those shepherds and tell our friends, relatives, and neighbors the good news of Jesus' coming as their Savior too! Let's praise and thank our God for the wonderful gift of his Son!

Part Two: Of the Things That Have Been

Congregation Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten CW 35 vs. 3

This is he who heav'n taught singers Sang of old with one accord;
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets Promised in their faithful word.
Now he shines, the long-expected;
Let creation praise its Lord
Evermore and evermore.

Narration F

Kate: What about “the things that have been”? I think I know what the hymnwriter meant. He was talking about all God’s promises in the Bible, wasn’t he?

John: Yes, he was. Throughout the centuries since the world’s creation and man’s fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, God promised the Savior’s birth over and over again to his people. Listen as, we recall some of those promises from God’s Word.

Recitation K-8

6-8: In the Garden of Eden God promised: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

K-4: To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God promised: Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed. (Genesis 22:18)

6-8: Through Isaiah God promised: The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

K-4: Again God spoke through Isaiah: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

6-8: Through the prophet Jeremiah God promised: “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5,6)

Congregational Hymn: Behold a Branch Is Growing CW 47

1. Behold, a Branch is growing Of loveliest form and grace,
As prophets sang, foreknowing; It springs from Jesse’s race
And bears one little flow’r In midst of coldest winter, At deepest midnight hour.
2. Isaiah had foretold it In worlds of promise sure,
And Mary’s arms enfold it, A virgin meek and pure.
Through God’s eternal will This child to her is given At midnight calm and still.
3. The shepherds heard the story Proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of glory, Was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped And in the manger found him, As angel heralds said.
4. This flow’r, so small and tender, With fragrance fills the air;
His brightness ends the darkness That kept the earth in fear.
True God and yet true man, He came to save his people From earth’s dark night of sin.

5. O Savior, Child of Mary, Who felt our human woes,
O Savior, King of glory, Who conquered all our foes,
Bring us at last, we pray, To the bright courts of heaven And to the endless day.

Narration G

Kate: The final promise of the Savior's birth was given to a young girl named Mary. What a surprise it was when she found out that she was soon to become the mother of God's Son! Once again God used a special messenger to deliver this very special news.

Responsive Reading by the Congregation

Women: God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said,

Men: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Women: Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her,

Men: "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Women: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

Men: The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the son of God." (Luke 1:26-35)

Hymn by Children and Congregation:

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came
CW #24 vs.1 Children vs.2-4 Congregation

1. The angel Gabriel from heaven came, His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he to meek and lowly Mary, "Most highly favored maiden." Gloria!
2. **(Men)** "I come from heav'n to tell the Lord's decree: A blessed virgin mother you shall
be
Your Son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold, Most highly favored maiden." Gloria!
3. **(Women)** Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head; "To me be as it pleases God,"
she said.
"My soul shall praise and magnify his holy name." Most highly favored maiden, Gloria!
4. **(All)** Of her Immanuel, the Christ, was born In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say, "Most highly favored maiden."
Gloria!

Part Three: Of the Things that Future Years Shall See

Narration H

Kai: “The things that have been” were easy to figure out, but what are “the things that future years shall see? You know that because God loved us so much, he sent his one and only Son into the world to be our Savior. Although tonight we picture baby Jesus cradled in the manger, that child, God’s Son, is our Lord who reigns in heaven above and will one day take us to heaven to be with him. Those of us who believe in Jesus and what he did for us will have eternal life with him. This is what future years will see. This is our future. Listen to some of the beautiful descriptions of heaven that God has given to us in the Scriptures.

Recitation Grades 6-8

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34)

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem . . . prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (Revelation 21:1,2,11)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them . . . and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21: 3,4)

Congregation Hymn Now Sing We, Now Rejoice CW 34

1. Now sing we, now rejoice, now raise to heav’n our voice:
He from whom joy streameth poor in a manger lies:
Not so brightly beameth the sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!
2. Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to thee.
Cheer my wearied spirit, O Pure and holy Child;
Through thy grace and merit, blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Draw me unto thee! Draw me unto thee!
3. Now through his Son doth shine the Father’s grace divine.
Death o’er us had reigned through sin and vanity;
He for us obtained eternal joy on high.
May we praise him there! May we praise him there!
4. Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav’nly ground?
Where the angels singing with all his saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing in heav’nly joy and light.
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

Conclusion

Narration I

Rory: What a happy future we'll have!

Johnny: A heaven more beautiful than we can even imagine!

John: An eternity of being together with God and his angels, with the people we've read about in the Bible, with other Christians who have died and are already in heaven, and with all Christian family members! An eternity of happiness living with God, and worshiping and praising him forever!

Pastor: How wonderful to be able to look at our future with such hope! But, we don't have to wait until then to worship and praise our Lord! Together with those in heaven, we on earth can praise and thank Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through our lives and through our witness of what the Lord has done for us. We can praise and thank God evermore and evermore!

Congregation Hymn: Of the Father's Love Begotten vs. 4, 5

Let the heights of heav'n adore him, Angel hosts his praises sing,
Pow'rs, dominions bow before him And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Ev'ry voice in concert ring
Evermore and evermore.

Christ, to you, with God the Father, And the Spirit ceaselessly
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving And unending praises be,
Honor, glory, and dominion
And eternal victory
Evermore and evermore.

Offering

Offering Song by the Children *Hurry, Shepherds, Run!* by Douglas E. Wagner

Still was the sky over Bethlehem, Bright were the stars that lit the way.
Distant the sound of angel voices, telling the world that hope is born today.

Hurry, shepherds run to the manger, leave your sheep and come, come with gentle
kings and people all.

Hurry, hurry run, kneel, adore, open your hearts to him; the world is born anew in
humble stall.

Bathed in the glow of the soft moonlight, there on the golden straw he lay.
Close by his side we shall ever stay; tell all the world that love is born today.

Hurry, shepherds run to the manger, leave your sheep and come, come with gentle kings and people all.

Hurry, hurry run, kneel, adore, open your hearts to him; the world is born anew in humble stall.

Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the manger, Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the stall.

Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the manger, born is the Lord of all.

Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the manger, Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the stall.

Hurry, hurry, hurry run to the manger, born is the Lord of all.

Hurry, shepherds run to the manger, leave your sheep and come, come with gentle kings and people all.

Hurry, hurry run, kneel, adore, open your hearts to him; the world is born anew in humble stall.

Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry run, run, shepherds, run!

Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Pastor: May the God of time and eternity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and keep you tonight and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

Recessional Hymn: Joy to the World CW 62

1. Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Let earth receive her King.
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love.

Officiant: Pastor Paul Schaefer

Organ/Piano: Jan Jacobi

Director: Kim Pappenfuss