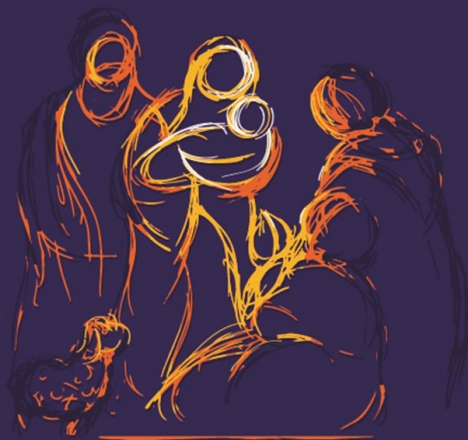


How Great a Love



Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 10, 2023

Presented by

Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church

Lessons and Carols: How Great a Love

*Indicates audience is welcome to stand.

Prelude

Jeff Cagle and Carla Ball

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent

Grace Notes

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Welcome and Introduction

Terry Stetson

Opening Prayer

Jim Richwine

Lesson 1

How Great a Love: Revealed to Adam

Scripture

Genesis 3:8-14

The Lord at First Did Adam Make

Choir

The Lord at first did Adam make out of the dust and clay,
And in his nostrils breathed life, e'en as the Scriptures say.
And then in Eden's paradise He placed him there to dwell
That he within it should remain to tend and keep it well.

[Refrain]

Then let good Christians all begin a life of praise to live,
For Christ was born, the Holy Child, that blessed Christmas Eve.

And in the garden Adam then commanded was to stay.
And God the Holy Father to him these words did say:
"The fruit which in the garden grows to thee shall be for meat,
Except for one tree in the midst, of which you shall not eat.

"And should it come about that this commandment you deny,
And heeding not, you eat of it, then you shall surely die.

But Adam took no heed unto this holy just command.
But he and Eve did freely eat and thus were wrapped in sin.

Now mark the kindness of the Lord which He for mankind bore.
His mercy He did soon extend, Eve's children to restore.
And then for to redeem our souls from death and hellish thrall
He sent His own dear Son to be the Savior of us all.

Traditional English Carol. Davies Gilbert, Some Ancient Christmas Carols, London, 1822; adapted by B. Scheffter. Music by B Scheffter © 2013 B. Scheffter. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Lesson 2

How Great a Love: Revealed to Abraham

Scripture

Genesis 22:15-18

Advent Processional

Choir

Prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight the way for His coming!
Rejoice and sing, give praise to God, sing, "Alleluia!"

Prepare the way for the Lord! He comes, our blessed Messiah!
Our mighty God, the Prince of Peace, sing, "Alleluia!"

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.

Prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight the way for His coming!
Rejoice and sing, give praise to God, sing, "Alleluia!"
Prepare the way of the Lord! Prepare the way of the Lord!
Sing "Alleluia!"

Music by Anna Laura Page. Words from Isaiah 40:3 © 2004 by Hal Leonard Corp. Used with permission under One License #726421. All rights reserved.

***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (#194)**

Congregation

Lesson 3
How Great a Love: Revealed to Isaiah

Scripture

Isaiah 40:1-5

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Choir

Comfort, comfort ye my people,
speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness,
mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them;
tell her that her sins I cover,
and her warfare now is over.

Hark, the voice of one that crieth
in the desert far and near,
Calling us to new repentance
since the kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet Him
and the hills bow down to greet Him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked,
make the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble,
as befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
now o'er earth is shed abroad;
And all flesh shall see the token
that His word is never broken.

*Music by Claude Goussier. Arranged by Howard Helvey (ASCAP). Words by Johann G. Olearius.
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Lesson 4
How Great a Love: Revealed to Mary

Scripture

Luke 1:26-33

The Holly and the Ivy

Grace Notes

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Lesson 5
How Great a Love: Revealed to Joseph

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-23

He Is Born

Choir

He is born, the holy Child; play the oboe and bagpipes merrily!
He is born, the Holy Child; sing we all the Savior mild.

Through long ages of the past, prophets have foretold His coming;
Through long ages of the past; now the time has come at last.

Jesus, Lord over all the world, coming as a child among us;
Jesus, Lord over all the world, grant to us Thy heav'nly peace.

Jesus, Lord of all the world, coming as a Child among us;
Jesus, Lord of all the world, grant to us Thy heav'nly peace. [Refrain]

Traditional French Carol, 19th c. Arranged by Mary McDonald © 2018 Lorenz Publishing Company. Used with permission under One License #726421. All rights reserved.

Lesson 6
How Great a Love: Revealed in Bethlehem

Scripture

Luke 2:1-7

What Strangers Are These?

Choir

What strangers are these that wander through the town?
Hush, 'tis Joseph and weary Mary.

And what does he seek so hopeless and in vain?
He is seeking shelter for Mary.
For she is the blest and chosen of the Lord,
Who will bear to us a goodly King.
And who is this king of whom ye proudly sing?
Know ye not the Christ, Jesus the Savior?

What wee child is this that in a manger lies?
Hush, 'tis Jesus Christ, Son of Mary.
Say what fair maid is this whose joy is mixed with awe?
O 'tis Mary, Mother of Jesus.
O these are the shepherds and these the magi kings
Who have brought him their gifts of gold and myrrh.
But why kneel in homage here before a babe?
They adore their King, Jesus the Savior.

Who are these that march from death unto life?
These are they who love Jesus the Christ Child.
And how do they triumph o'er the gates of hell?
Through the grace of him, Jesus the Savior.
He is born to redeem mankind from sin and strife,
To bring peace, joy, love and brotherhood.
O where shall I find him? Where shall I seek?
He is here and now, Jesus your Savior.

*Old Scottish Carol. Adapted and Arranged by Dan Forrest (ASCAP) © 2013 by Beckenhorst Press, Inc..
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***Joy to the World (#195)**

Congregation

Lesson 7

How Great a Love: Revealed to Shepherds

Scripture

Luke 2:8-16

Good News

Choir

Good News! Tiny little baby. Good news! Born today!
Good news! Tiny little baby. Hallelujah, born today!

Wise men journey from afar to see where the baby lay, hallelujah!
Wise men guided by a star. Oh yes, the wise men saw him,
the wise men saw him born today!

Shepherds traveled through the night
to see where the baby lay, hallelujah!
Shepherds saw a holy sight.
Oh, yes the shepherds saw him.
The shepherds saw him born today!

Listen to the music. Hear the angels sing. Oh, yes! Oh, yes!
Glory hallelujah to the newborn King. Oh, yes, my Lord.
Glory hallelujah, Hear the angels sing. Oh!

Hallelujah! A child is born today!

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Lesson 8

How Great a Love: Revealed to the Magi

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-11

Bell Carol of the Kings

Choir

We three kings of orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, Moor and mountain, Following yonder star.

Hark to the bells, merrily ring, tell all the world Jesus is King.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown Him again.
King forever, ceasing never over us all to reign.

O, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Hark! How the bells; sweet silver bells
all seem to say, "Throw cares away."
Christmas is here, bringing good cheer

to young and old, meek and the bold.
Ding, dong, ding, dong, that is their song;
with joyful ring, all caroling.
One seems to hear words of good cheer
from everywhere, filling the air.
O! how they pound, raising the sound
o'er hill and dale, telling their tale!
Gaily they ring, while people sing
songs of good cheer; Christmas is here!
Hark! To the bells, merrily ring,
tell all the world Jesus is King!

Glorious now before him arise! King and God and sacrifice!
Alleluia, Alleluia earth to heav'n replies!

O, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.
On, on they send, on without end, their joyful tone to every home
Ding! Dong! Ding! Dong! Dong!

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Lesson 9

How Great a Love: Revealed to Us

Scripture	John 1:1-14
*Hallelujah Chorus	Congregation
Conclusion	Jim Richwine
Nunc Dimitis	Choir

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Participants: Carla Ball, Hal Ball, Emily Benz, Annie Brady, Colleen Cagle, Jeff Cagle, Elise Davis, Josh Davis, Sophie Esbrandt, Janet Geary, Paul Geary, Austen Geck, Janice Hohl, Jan Horst, John Horst, Marie Isaac, Diane Jones, Vicky Jones, Marsha Lantz, Butch Lantz, Cara Olson, Sam Olson, Jim Richwine, Ken Scheffter, Robin Skinner, Terry Stetson, Craig Sterling, Ken Wilhelm, Paula Wilhelm

Directed by: Barb Scheffter

Program Notes

An Introduction to Lessons and Carols

The story of the service of Lessons and Carols takes us back to Victorian England in the southern peninsula of Cornwall. For many years, the English celebrated the Christmas season with feasting and dancing—and wassailing, a practice of going door to door, visiting neighbors singing seasonal songs, and drinking. Neighbors were ready with beer, ale, and wassail—a drink made of brandy, apples and spices. Here is a sample verse of a song from the 1700s, the Gloucester Carol:

Wassail! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef
And a good piece of beef that may we all see
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.

Here's to our cow, and to her long tail,
May God send our master a mug of strong ale
Of a cup of good beer: I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

Perhaps there was a bit too much drinking; the clergy in Cornwall were concerned that the miraculous birth of the savior Jesus Christ was not being the focus of the Christmas season. And so in 1880 Edward White-Benson, the bishop of Truro, held a service in a barn/shed (while the Truro Cathedral was being built) where the singing of Christmas hymns and the reading of scripture drew congregants. This service became a yearly event.

Fast forward to the University of Cambridge in 1918. Eric Milner-White had just been appointed Dean of Christ Church. He had served as chaplain in the Great War and had seen many disturbing atrocities on the front. According to Katie Buzzard at illinois.edu, “Milner-White devised A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols as a means of outreach to those who felt alienated by the church or religion as a

whole. Instead of a complicated mass, the carols service was simpler, alternating between choral anthems, congregational hymns, and readings.” White based the order of service on what Benson had created in Cornwall.

He began with a treble chorister opening the service singing acapella, “Once in Royal David’s City.” That became a tradition that continues to this day at King’s College Cambridge. The program has changed little from 1918 to the present. The nine lessons are scriptures that tell the story of the gospel, from the fall of Man to the glory of the coming of the Savior. Choral anthems and congregation-sung hymns are interspersed between the scripture readings.

The service at King’s College has been held yearly since 1918 with few variations. During World War II blackout curtains were used in the cathedral at King’s College to keep the congregants safe from bombings. In 2020 there was no live service due to the pandemic, but the readings and choral pieces had been recorded in an empty sanctuary and broadcast on the radio worldwide. The service has been broadcast on the radio since 1922.

Mt. Airy Presbyterian takes its inspiration from the original. The nine scriptural lessons are the same. The choral anthems and congregational hymns vary from year to year, as the music director, Barb Scheffter, chooses a theme. This year the theme is “How Great a Love.”

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

This piece is taken from two Old Testament books. The first is Habakkuk 2:20, “Let all the earth keep silence before him,” and the second, Zachariah 2:13, “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.” For the opening of Mt. Airy Presbyterian’s Lessons and Carols, Music Director, Barb Scheffter has chosen a bell choir arrangement, which emphasizes the lovely, haunting mystical quality of the music.

Lord at First Did Adam Make

The next musical selection is “Lord at First Did Adam Make.” The text is taken from a medieval English poem, “Adam Lay Ybounden,” depicting the Fall of Man. The poem came to be translated into modern English and was published in *Some Ancient Christmas Carols* by Davies Gilbert, 1822. Interestingly, a modern translation was the opening piece in the very first Lessons and Carols, in Truro in 1880.

Although other melodies have been used since 1822, the piece that the Mt. Airy Presbyterian choir is performing this year was composed by our music director, Barb Scheffter. What is striking about the music's support of the lyrics is the shift in mood, using both the gloom of Adam's sin and its consequences in the verses, with the refrain's upbeat, joyful conclusion that because Jesus took the punishment for sin, we can rejoice at Christmastime.

Advent Processional

This piece takes up the narrative where the first piece left off: Man sinned and is in need of a savior. This is a modern piece by lyricist and composer Anna Laura Page. The song is a festive celebration of the Christmas season. The beginning and the end of the piece take their context from Isaiah 40:2, "Prepare the way of the Lord," and the middle section is based on Charles Wesley's hymn, "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus."

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

The plain haunting melody, coupled with the words based of messianic prophecy, expresses the longing for deliverance from "lonely exile" by "God with us." The piece was written in Latin, (Veni, Veni) in the 12th century as a chant. It was turned into English verse by John Mason Neale, an Anglican priest and scholar, in 1851. Another English translation was made in 1861 by Henry Sloane Coffin. "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is one of the oldest Christmas hymns in our history. Each of the five verses expounds upon one of the names for the Messiah:

"Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14, Mt 1:23) means "God with us."

"Adonai" (Exodus 19:16) is a name for God, the giver of the law.

"Branch of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1) refers to Jesus' lineage.

"Oriens" (Malachi 4:2, Luke 1:78-79) is the morning star or daystar.

"Key of David" (Isaiah 22:22) again refers to Jesus' lineage.

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

The text for this piece is taken from Isaiah 40. The music was composed by Claude Goudimel, who was a French Protestant composer, who lived in the 16th century. Tonight's offering was arranged by Howard Helvey, a contemporary musician, composer, and arranger from

Ohio. This piece represents both the tradition and the fun of celebrating the birth of Christ.

The Holly and the Ivy

This piece is very old, thought to have been in existence since medieval times. Both the music and the lyrics have evolved over the years but what we sing today was found by a song collector, Cecil Sharp, in 1909. The song became standardized when Sir Henry Walford Davies arranged a version of it that is still performed at The Festival for Nine Lessons and Carols in Cambridge. The words are full of rich symbolism: Jesus is the holly. The leaves are evergreen and especially verdant at Christmastime. Their shape is flame-like, symbolizing God's burning love for us. The thorns remind us of Jesus's crown of thorns, and the berries, his shed blood. The ivy symbolizes Mary, as ivy is considered a feminine plant. "And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ" is woven throughout the song, just as in the English forests ivy entwines with the evergreen holly.

He is Born

This piece is a celebration of Christ's birth, full of fun and energy. The lyrics echo many of the Psalms which call for music—singing and the playing of many diverse instruments—in our praising God. "Both the text and the tune date back to at least the mid-19th century—the tune found in R. Grosjean's *Airs des Noël lorrain* (1862) and the French text in Dom G. Legeay's *Noëls anciens* (1875-1876)." Mary MacDonald arranged the choral version.

What Strangers Are These

This is an old Scottish folk song, arranged movingly by American composer and arranger Dan Forrest. "What Strangers Are These" explores the humanness of Joseph as he leads his pregnant wife Mary as they travel wearily to Bethlehem, finding no room to rent, only a stable with animals. The perspective changes, and we become the seekers, with our search ending with the Christ child.

Joy to the World

Issac Watts wrote this popular carol as a response to Psalm 98, which is a psalm of praise. During Watts's lifetime, it was common for English poets to rework the Psalms of the Bible with English poetic

characteristics. Many scholars have written that “Joy to the World” was written as an anticipation of Christ’s second coming, but we can surely enjoy the rapture of God’s incarnation in the birth of Jesus! Leland Ryken concisely sums up the reason this carol is important, “We should celebrate Christmas with the joy that the hymn commands, and we should secure our position as recipients of the blessings of Christ’s messianic rule as delineated in the two concluding stanzas.”

Good News

The genre of this exhilarating piece is “traditional spiritual,” going back to early American roots and the African American community. The melody is joyful and contagious and the harmonies are deep and rich. One cannot help but join in the joyous celebration.

Bell Carol of the Kings

This piece is an intertwining of two carols: “We Three Kings” and “Carol of the Bells.” “We Three Kings” is an American carol, composed in Williamsport, Pennsylvania by John Henry Hopkins Jr. in 1857. “The Carol of the Bells” comes from a Ukrainian song, “Shchedryk,” composed in 1914. Originally meant to wish loved ones prosperity in the new year, it was performed by the National Choir of the Ukraine at Carnegie Hall in English in 1922. It was translated into English by Peter J. Wilhousky, who took it from a New Year’s song to a Christmas Carol. Although he was an American, he was of Ukrainian descent.

Hallelujah Chorus

Our program concludes with Handel’s “Hallelujah!” When we ponder the greatness of God’s love for us and review the journey of the nine lessons, Adam’s sin, the promise of a Messiah, the journey of Joseph and Mary, the Shepherd’s adoration of the baby Jesus, and our salvation because of his sacrifice, we can only turn to God in astonishment and sing Hallelujah!



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