

Worship at Home

Discovery Church

Call to Worship

(Have one person read these verses out loud as God calls us to worship by his Word.)

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.
Jesus Christ is our life and light.
In his name and in his power, let us worship God!
—based on Isaiah 9:2, NIV

Opening Prayer

(Have one person open with a spontaneous prayer, or read the following prayer out loud.)

O God, in the beginning you spoke,
and creation was born, the object of your love.
In the fullness of time you spoke,
and the Word became flesh, Jesus, gift of your love.
We wonder at the miracle of creation;
we stand in awe before the mystery of the incarnation.

Forgive us earthbound creatures, feeble in faith,
empty of hope, lacking in love.

God of glory,
your splendor shines from a manger in Bethlehem
into the darkness of human night,
to the praise of your glory we pray. Amen

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20

(You can have one or more people read the story of Jesus' birth out loud.)

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

All returned to their own towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home.

He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them.

"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior -- yes, the Messiah, the Lord -- has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others -- the armies of heaven -- praising God:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors. "

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often.

The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said. (NLT)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Discussion

One person should lead the group in thinking about the passage by asking the following questions:

1. Share a favorite memory from a Christmas past.
2. Was it fitting for Jesus to be laid in a feeding trough? Why or why not?
3. Of all the people that God could have visited, why did he choose the shepherds?

4. What do you think the good news, "the Savior, the Messiah... has been born," meant to the shepherds?
5. How would you have felt if you had been there when a vast host of angels appeared?
6. What is most meaningful to you about these Scriptures? Why?

Prayer

(The group can response to Scripture by having one person open the group in prayer, and then a time is given where any other members in the group can pray, as they feel led, or not. After a certain time someone who is designated offers a closing prayer.)

Or you can take prayer requests and have one person pray, if only one feels comfortable.

Or if no one is comfortable praying in their own words, you can pray the following prayer.)

Eternal God, we bow before the mystery of your incarnation.
You have chosen weakness to confound the strong
and poverty to send the rich empty away.
We remember the millions in our world today
who are hungry, who receive no hospitality—
all with whom your Son has become one by being born in a manger.

[Silence]

We read in Scripture that the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said,
"Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him.
So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt."
Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and left during the night.

Merciful God, we call upon you
for all who have fled their homes in the darkness of night.
We remember the millions in our world who have been made refugees,
who have sought asylum in lands not their own,
who are displaced, homeless, landless, or lost—
all whose experience you have made your own in the life of your Son.

[Silence]

Herod gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem
and its neighborhood who were two years old and younger.
In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:
"A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping.
Rachel is crying for her children;
she refuses to be comforted, for they are dead."

Loving God, our hearts are heavy
with the sufferings of this world.

We remember the many victims of political power and greed:
the innocent killed in war and violence,
all those who are tortured or put to death,
those who languish in prison and camps,
those missing or taken hostage—
all whose lot your Son shared by being born when Herod was king.

[Silence]

And Mary said: “I am the Lord’s servant;
may it happen to me as you have said.”
Give us grace to follow her example:
to become instruments of your grace,
servants of your will, and channels of your love.
May it happen to us as you have willed.

[Silence]

O God of peace, you fill our hearts with hope at Christmas and everyday,
for we remember again that this is the world you have loved.
May hope, peace, and joy fill our hearts this night. Amen.

Unison Benediction

(Read together)

Wherever you go, God is sending you, wherever you are, God has put you there; He has a purpose in your being there. Christ who indwells you has something He wants to do through you, where you are. Believe this and go in His grace and love and power.