



Starmount

2018 Advent

Daily Devotionals

Week 4: December 21—25

Hymn: Hark, The Herald Angels Sing!

Reflections by Rev. Dr. Kathryn G. N. Campbell

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. -Luke 2:1-11

I think about this hymn often – not only is it one that can be sung in its celebratory fashion to announce the birth of the Christ child, but also in a more contemplative tone. I often think of the hymn in this contemplative tone – particularly at the start of Advent season? Why? All because of a simple television show: *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Something that started back in 1965 to the chagrin of network executives has since become a treasured piece of the traditions of families in the month of December. The special didn't include laugh tracks or use the voices of adults portraying children. Instead, Shultz stuck with his gut and allowed children to deliver the lines, which included Jesus' birth narrative in chapter 2 of Luke's gospel.

You may remember that at the conclusion of Linus's delivery of Jesus's birth, and his famous line proclaiming "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown," the group leaves the pageant stage and walks outside, where the snow is falling. Gathered around a tree, the children begin to sing this familiar hymn. And then, at its conclusion, then "loo loo loo" the tune. What a wonderful image to remember during this special season.

If you need me, I'll be watching *A Charlie Brown Christmas*...

Prayer:

Dear God, we are so thankful for this season and the ultimate gift you've given us. May we see the conclusion of this season through the eyes of a child, constantly being reminded what Christmas is all about. Amen.

Week 4: December 21-25
Hymn: What Child is This
Reflections by Robert Overman

*What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!*

This beloved hymn, based on the Old English tune "Greensleeves", is a treasured part of our Advent / Christmas celebration through song. The question is valid even today: "What Child Is This?" The season of Advent leading to Christmas is where we remind ourselves of the answer. "This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing."

In this commercial world rife with mass and social media marketing and filled with hectic schedules and long to-do lists, let us not lose sight of the reason for the season. This, this is Christ the King... let loving hearts enthrone him.

Let's make this season of Advent a true time of waiting for the Christ Child and celebrating His birth. Let's sing and ring and worship and pray and praise Him!

Prayer:

Loving God, prepare our hearts for Jesus. Let us not become lost in the frenzy but let us take time to visit that remote stable and witness, again, the advent of the greatest gift of all. Amen

Week 4: December 21-25

Hymn: O Little Town of Bethlehem

Reflections by Rev. Dr. Charlie Lee

⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

-Luke 2:4-7

The waiting is finally over. This time of anticipation is drawing to a close. These words from Luke tell us that the time we have been waiting for is finally here. Jesus Christ is born. These few verses of scripture have inspired many works of art over the years, including the text for this beloved hymn, O Little Town of Bethlehem. Here is the text of the first and last verse of that hymn.

*"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."*

*"O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us; abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!"*

As the waiting of Advent breaks forth into the joyful celebration of Christmas, we rejoice in that same message that the angels announced to the shepherds waiting in the fields. Good news of great joy, that a Savior has been born, the Messiah, who is Christ the Lord. Therefore, let us rejoice that the darkness of this world has been overcome by the light of Christ. Let us rejoice that the despair of a sinful humanity has been replaced by the hope of a Savior. Let us rejoice that the hopes and fears of all the years have been met in the birth of Jesus. May our prayer this Christmas be that the Christ child be born in us today.