

ABOUT THIS WORSHIP SERVICE

“Dear Theophilus”...The Story of Luke 1 & 2

Perhaps the title of this worship service makes some ask, “Who”? We are all so familiar with the first two chapters of Luke’s gospel, even to the point of reciting much of it by heart, that we often lose sight of the first few verses of this book. Here, Luke makes mention that this Gospel is actually a letter he is writing to his dear friend, Theophilus. He tells Theophilus that he wishes to write him about all the marvelous things God allowed him to see. This worship service builds on those first four verses. It is a word for word account of the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke and is presented as if Luke were seated right before us, pen in hand, writing to Theophilus.

You will note that we repeatedly emphasize that although Luke was the writer of this beautiful Gospel, it was God who authored the book through the Holy Spirit’s divine inspiration. The story is still God’s story, still God’s plan, still God’s message to the world.

NARRATOR AND SPEAKERS:

Most of the spoken parts in this worship service are taken directly from the Holy Bible, New International Version. You may use another version if you so desire. With the “Gospel Parchments”, the congregation may follow along through the entire service.

This worship service has many options available to you. We recommend the following:

Luke is to be costumed, and seated in the front of the church at a desk. He should be wearing a microphone, since he is the main narrator. (He need not memorize all the parts. The printed copy may be on the desk in front of him.) As the program progresses, he speaks the narrator sections. However, in place of this person reading the first four introductory verses to Luke, we have recorded them on the Accompaniment CD being read by an adult man, just as if he were writing it. After the CD narration fades out, the seated narrator continues the thoughts as he begins to speak and write. The narrator should be unaware of the goings on around him. He should always be deep in thought. For his props you will need a quill pen, ink well, several sheets of parchment paper, a desk or table and a chair or stool.

Throughout the service other costumed characters appear in the chancel area. These people do not speak. They simply pantomime their parts as the classes are reciting the story. (One exception: Zechariah speaks for one line.) The classes do the recitations of all spoken parts.

Option: You may wish to hang a curtain in front of these characters so the assembly sees only silhouettes.

AGE LEVEL:

This worship service will work well with any size group, preschool through grade eight.

SONGS:

The songs provided are optional. Feel free to use them or other songs of your choice. You will note that “Sweet Lullaby” needs three groups to sing, and “I Wish I Could Have Been There” could be sung antiphonally if desired. The theme song is “When God’s Wonderful, Wonderful Word Came Down”.

SPECIAL THANKS to Mr. Charles Cushinery who arranged and recorded the accompaniments for each song; to Tina Smith for her vocal solos on the sing-along songs; to Surround In Sound studio for the CD recording, and to Mr. Arlyn Boll for serving as editor. Arlyn is a retired educator in the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.

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CHARACTERS AND COSTUMING

Use of characters with costumes is indeed optional. It will add a visual sense to the presentation should you desire to make use of these characters. Put as much or as little work into costuming as you wish. Remember the characters are simply to serve as visual pantomimes as the story unfolds. The only necessary character would be that of Luke, who has a sufficient speaking part.

Another suggestion is to drape a sheet across the chancel. With the use of bright lights behind the characters, you could make them appear as silhouettes.

CHARACTER	COSTUME	PROPS
Luke	Flowing robe. Perhaps a beard.	Desk, three-legged stool, Parchment paper, pen. A microphone should be available for Luke.
Zechariah	Robe. Perhaps a beard.	Incense burner, writing tablet for later.
Gabriel	White robe. Perhaps wings.	
Mary	Flowing robe.	
Elizabeth	Flowing robe.	
Joseph	Flowing robe	Manger with baby.
Shepherds	Robes. Perhaps beards.	Staffs.

Dear Theophilus

OPENING HYMN: (Congregation) *“Savior of the Nations Come” (All verses)*

INVOCATION: (Pastor)

RESPONSIVE READING:

P: On this day all earth shall ring
With the songs our children sing
To the Lord, the Christ, our King.

C: We hear the words that Luke recorded
Of his birth that sacred night.

P: His the doom, ours the mirth
When he came to dwell on earth.
Now let us view his glorious birth.

C: We read the words that Luke recorded:
Of a precious, holy sight.

P: On this day the angels sing.
With their song the earth shall ring
Praising Christ the heavenly King.

C: We love the words that Luke recorded,
Words of peace and joy and light.

PSALM: Psalm 8

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER: As we observe your birth, O Savior, we come with a sincere prayer that you would move our hearts so we may celebrate Christmas in a manner pleasing to you. Help us to rejoice with the Gospel writer Luke as he shared the joy of your birth with his friend Theophilus. Lead us to treasure your Word which shows us our redemption from sin, the pardon for all we have done wrong, and the promise of eternal life offered to all who now worship at your manger. Let the true meaning of your birth never be forgotten with all the many activities of this season, and do not let any cares or worries disturb our Christmas joy. Grant that as we bow at your manger, we may also look forward to your glorious return on that day when you will take us and all believers into the eternal Christmas joys of our heavenly Father's home. May your Holy Spirit grant this. Amen.

ALL SCHOOL SINGS THEME SONG: “When God’s Wonderful, Wonderful Word Came Down.”

When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
To Mary, a young humble maid,
When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
Said Gabriel, “Don’t be afraid!
I bring news of a promise and dream fulfilled:
You’ll carry God’s own child.”
When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
To a sweet, young virgin mild.

When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
The village of Bethlehem slept.
When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
His promises were kept:
The incarnate one, Jesus, was Word made flesh,
A baby born so small.
When God’s wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
To a lonely cattle stall.

When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
To shepherds that first Christmas night,
When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
They saw the spectacular sight
Of the heavenly doors bursting wide with songs,
Of peace on earth again.
When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
O'er the fields of Bethlehem.

When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
Inspired in heaven above,
When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
It brought me God's wonderful love.
Now it guides me, upholds me and gives me peace,
It tells me I'm set free.
When God's wonderful, wonderful Word came down,
I found eternity.

PASTOR'S INTRODUCTION: Tonight our children will take us back in time as they help us to witness the writing of the most widely read account in the Bible. We travel to a time and place where we see a man deep in thought, and busy at writing. The man is Luke, a physician by profession. Although we know little of Luke personally, we do know that he was a traveling companion and close friend of the Apostle Paul. We also know that God inspired Luke to write two of the New Testament books, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. We will hear the word for word account as Luke wrote it with his own hand. (If you wish, you may follow along on your Bible insert.) Interestingly, Luke wrote both books to the same individual, a friend of his named...Theophilus. And so, listen carefully to the story as told by our dear friend Luke.

Recitation: Lower Grades

Listen dear friends that you might know
Of the birth of our Savior a long time ago.
Inspired by God these words were penned
By Luke to Theophilus, his dear, dear friend.

PART 1: The Promise of John

LUKE 1:1-25

(Setting: Luke is seated at a desk with pen in hand. He is writing on a parchment sheet of paper as the CD begins to play over the speaker system. Note: If you do not use the CD, have a gentleman from the congregation read the section, preferably on a microphone and hidden from sight.)

Voice: *(On the CD is heard)* “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke: *(Now Luke begins to speak as if continuing from the CD spoken voice)* “In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

“Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”

(Zechariah enters down the aisle from the back of church, carrying an incense burner. He stops at the foot of the chancel keeping his back to the congregation.)

Luke: “And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.”

(The angel enters, dressed in white and stands at the right side of the altar.)

Luke: “When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and gripped with fear. But the angel said to him:”

Upper Grade Girls (Gabriel) Recite: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth... And he will go on before the Lord...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke: “Zechariah asked the angel:”

Upper Grade Boys (Zechariah) Recite: “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

Luke: “The angel answered:”

Upper Grade Girls (Gabriel) Recite: “I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”

(Gabriel exits)

CONGREGATION SONG: “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” (v. 1-4)

Luke: “Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them.”

(Zechariah exits down the aisle to the back of church)

Luke: “They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. “When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

“And Elizabeth said:”

Lower Grade Girls (Elizabeth) Recite: “The Lord has done this for me. In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

LOWER GRADE SONG: “In the Bleak Midwinter”

In the bleak midwinter frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow, snow, on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heav’n can’t hold him nor earth sustain;
Heav’n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable-place sufficed,
The Lord Almighty, Jesus the Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man I would do my part;
Yet what can I give him – give him my heart.

Recitation: Middle Grades

Dear Luke told us first of the coming of John
But the Light of the World was still yet to come.
For Gabriel had work that must be done well;
A young girl named Mary was the next one to tell.

PART 4: The Birth of Jesus

LUKE 2:1-25

(Mary {seated holding baby} and Joseph take their places in the chancel area)

Luke: “[My dear Theophilus], 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.”

UPPER GRADE (OR CHORUS) SONG: “Sweet Lullaby”

(This song is sung by three different groups – each singing their own melodies.)

GROUP ONE:

I want to sing Jesus a sweet lullaby.
I versed it, rehearsed it,
Oh, please let me try.
I’ll hum it so softly; it won’t take too long,
As I sing him my sweet evensong*.

GROUP TWO:

Sleep, oh sleep, my baby, sleep.
While Mary and Joseph their vigil keep.
I’ll rock your cradle all night long
As I sing you my evensong*, my song.

GROUP THREE:

Close your eyes, my Jesus.
La-la-lu.
Sleep through the night, my Jesus,
As I hum a la-la-lu.

(* An “evensong” is a song or hymn sung in the evening.)

Luke: “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:”

Middle Grade Boys (Angel) Recite: “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.”

Luke: “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying:”

Middle Grade Boys (Angels) Recite: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

MIDDLE GRADE SONG: “I Wish I Could Have Been There”

(Can be sung by two groups – perhaps one in front and one in back of church. One group sings verses in front, the other group responds with the glorias.)

REFRAIN: (Same melody as the familiar carol)

Gloria, in excelsis Deo,
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

I wish I could have been there when they heard the angels sing.
I wish I could have heard the sound of alleluias ring,
With noise that cried both far and wide o’er Bethlehem they did bring;
I wish I could have been there when they heard the angels sing.
REFRAIN.

I wish I could have been there when the heavens opened wide,
With songs of praise and wonder that re-echoed God’s reply.
No earthly choir could e’er conspire with such a heavenly throng,
I wish I could have been there when they heard the angel’s song.
REFRAIN.

I wish I could have been there when they saw that awesome light
Of thousands of God's messengers all clothed in raiment bright.
A brilliant sight, this winged flight, would truly men inspire.
I wish I could have been there when they heard the angel choir.
REFRAIN.

Luke: "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another:"

Middle Grade Girls (Shepherds) Recite: "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

(Three Shepherds join Mary and Joseph in chancel area)

Luke: "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 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."

(Shepherds exit)

CONGREGATION SONG: "Silent Night" (All verses)

Luke: "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.

"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout..."*(fades out)*

(Luke exits)

PRAYERS, LORD'S PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

Recitation: All School

Dear parents and friends who have gathered this day,
You have listened to what our friend Luke had to say.
Though he wrote it all down for one friend so dear,
It's a story that God wants the whole world to hear!

RECESSIONAL BY CONGREGATION: "Joy to the World" (All verses)

When God's Wonderful, Wonderful Word Came Down

Words and Music by Reynold R. Kremer
 Arranged by Charles Cushinery

Voice

Piano

6

1. When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful
 2. When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful
 3. When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful
 4. When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful

Pno.

12

Word came down, To Ma - ry, a young hum - ble maid.
 Word came down, The vil - lage of Beth - le - hem slept.
 Word came down, To shep - herd's that first Christ - mas night,
 Word came down, In - spi - red in hea - ven a - bove.

Pno.

17

When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful Word came down, Said Ga - bri - el,
 When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful Word came down, His prom - is - es
 When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful Word came down, They saw the spec -
 When God's won - der - ful, won - der - ful Word came down, It brought me God's

Pno.

23

"Don't be a - fraid! I bring news of a pro - mise and dream ful -
 made were all kept: The in - car - nate one, Je - sus, was Word made
 ta - cu - lar sight. Of the heav - en - ly doors burst - ing wide with
 23 won - der - ful love. Now it guides me, up - holds me and gives me

Pno.

29

filled: You'll car - ry God's own child." When God's won - der - ful,
 flesh, A ba - by born so small. When God's won - der - ful,
 songs Of peace on earth a gain. When God's won - der - ful,
 29 peace, It tells me I'm set free. When God's won - der - ful,

Pno.

35



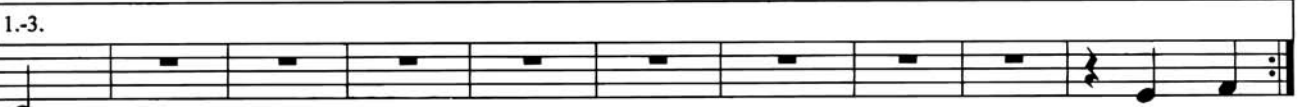
won - der - ful Word came down, To(a) sweet young vir - gin mild.
 won - der - ful Word came down, To(a) lone - ly cat - tle stall.
 won - der - ful Word came down, O'er(the) fields of Beth - le - hem.
 won - der - ful Word came down, I found e - ter - ni - ty.

35

Pno.



41



2. When God's
 3. When God's
 4. When God's

41

Pno.



51



51

Pno.

