



TEACHER SCORE

From EVERLASTING to EVERLASTING

The Story of the Christmas Wreath

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Christmas Wreath is the theme for this Christmas worship service. Although we are used to hanging wreaths on our front doors and in our churches, many people don't realize the wonderful significance that this decoration has to offer. This service considers several wreaths that all present something meaningful in our Christmas holiday. Many of our members are familiar with the Advent Wreath which provides a calendar to follow as we approach Christmas. The Wreath of Thorns reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The Laurel Wreath was also mentioned in the Bible as a sign of victory in the Greek games. Today it symbolizes the crown of victory that will be ours one day. Finally we will look at the Christmas Wreath and the significance of its color and shape.

"From Everlasting to Everlasting" can be presented by any size group of children from the smallest Sunday school to the largest Christian elementary school. Music and recitations are designed for a range of children from preschool to eighth grade.

NARRATORS

The worship service includes two student or adult narrators who lead the congregation through the service. You may add more children or adjust the narrator lines as you see fit.

RECITATIONS

Sections designated Recitation are Scripture passages to be recited by the children.

SONGS

This program includes four student songs, five congregation songs, and two alternate or optional songs. Feel free to make any changes or adjustments you feel are necessary to accommodate your group.

Children's Songs

The Advent Candles (sung at five different times)

If I had Been in Bethlehem

Come, See the Baby

From Everlasting to Everlasting

Congregation Songs

Of the Father's Love Begotten

O Come, Little Children

Silent Night

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Joy to the World

Optional Songs with Lyrics Included

The Holly and the Ivy

Sans Day Carol (Now the Holly Bears the Ivy)

OTHER ITEMS

Graphics have been provided for a chancel banner.

Worship Bulletins have been designed specifically for this service.

Give-Away Wreath Ornaments are also available for the children to make and distribute to the adults at the service. To order call 1-800-669-0887.

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Processional: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*

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!

At His Word the worlds were framèd; He commanded; it was done:
Heaven and earth and depths of ocean in their threefold order one;
All that grows beneath the shining
Of the moon and burning sun, evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessèd, when the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bare the Savior of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face, evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven adore Him; angel hosts, His praises sing;
Powers, dominions, bow before Him, and extol our God and King!
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert sing, evermore and evermore!

Invocation: Pastor

Prayer: Gracious Lord God, whose love is from everlasting to everlasting, be with us today as we travel back to the Bethlehem manger where we once again witness the fulfillment of that love. Be in the hearts and voices of our children as they share with us the message of your unending grace and mercy. May they teach us that through the symbolism of the Christmas wreath, we may be reminded of the suffering, death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask this in the name of our Messiah and Lord. Amen

Responsive Reading: (Psalm 90:1,2; 103:17-22; 145:13)

P: Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

C: *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world,*

Children: From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

P: The Lord is faithful in all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

C: *The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all those who are bowed down.*

Children: From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—

P: With those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

C: *The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

Children: Praise the Lord, you his angels you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his Word.

P: Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

C: *Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.*

All: *Praise the Lord, O my soul.*

Pastor's Introduction: Christmas is a time of joy and rejoicing as we consider the birth of our Lord and Savior over 2000 years ago beneath the glow of candlelight in a lowly Bethlehem cattle manger. To celebrate God incarnate, Christians around the world decorate their homes and churches with objects that focus on that birth. We put up beautiful Christmas trees decked out in bright lights that remind us of the Light of the World who came down from heaven above. We exchange gifts both as a remembrance of God's gift to us and of the first gifts that were presented by the Magi, and we ring bells announcing to the world that a Savior has come.

Today our children will share with us another Christmas symbol that holds special meaning for God's people. It's the wreath. We hang wreaths on our doors and church walls, but seldom do we take time to consider the significance that the wreath has for us. Tonight we will have an opportunity to see several different wreaths, each having its own special meaning for us. Our message is titled *From everlasting to everlasting: The Story of the Christmas Wreath.*

Congregation: *O Come, Little Children*

O come, little children, O come one and all,
To Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small,
God's son for a gift has been sent you this night
To be your redeemer, your joy and delight.

He's born in a stable for you and for me,
Draw near by the bright gleaming starlight to see,
In swaddling clothes lying so meek and so mild,
And purer than angels the heavenly Child.

See Mary and Joseph, with love beaming eyes,
Are gazing upon the rude bed where He lies,
The shepherds are kneeling, with hearts full of love
While angels sing loud hallelujahs above.

Kneel down and adore Him with shepherds today,
Lift up little hands now and praise Him as they
Rejoice that a Savior from sin you can boast,
And join in the song of the heavenly host.



PART ONE

THE ADVENT WREATH

Narrator 1: One of the most familiar wreaths we see very early in the Christmas holiday season is the Advent Wreath. We set out this wreath at the beginning of Advent, four weeks before Christmas. Like many of our Christmas traditions, we are not certain exactly when and where the Advent Wreath began. Some sources say that it may have risen from a pagan custom among the Germanic tribes. Supposedly these people tried to break the darkness of winter by lighting candles as they called upon the sun to send them warmth and light. The evergreens shaped in a circle reminded them that eventually spring would come back once more in the circle of life.

Narrator 2: In later years, Christians put new meaning to the Advent Wreath. They said that the candles pointed not to the sun god, but rather to the Savior, the Light of the World.

Recitation: (John 13:19, 21) “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world. Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

Recitation: (John 8:12) “[Jesus said] I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Recitation: (Revelation 21:23) “The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”

Narrator 2: The evergreens placed in the wreath now remind Christians that God gives new and everlasting life to his people. We also decorate the wreath with five candles representing the four weeks of preparation before Christmas and a special Christ candle in the center.

Narrator 1: Following the Reformation, the Advent Wreath became popular in many German homes and churches. With the lighting of the candles, fathers would teach their families about the coming of Jesus. Today many of our homes and churches still follow that wonderful tradition.

Song: *The Advent Candles* (first candle)

[Sung to the melody of: *How Firm a Foundation*, *Firm Foundation* melody]
 (“Advent Candles” lyrics used by permission of Sandra Dean, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada)

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;
A candle of **HOPE** in December’s dark night.
While angels sing blessings from heavn’s starry sky,

Our hearts we prepare now, for Jesus is nigh.

Student: The first candle in the Advent Wreath is called the candle of HOPE or the Prophecy Candle. This candle reminds us of the many prophecies that point toward Jesus, the Hope of God's people.

Recitation: (Psalm 33:20) "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice and we trust in his holy name."

Song: *The Advent Candles* (second candle)

A candle is burning, now we must **PREPARE**;
Our hearts we make ready as Christ enters there,
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;
We welcome him here in our lives now this day.

Student: The second candle on our Advent Wreath is the Bethlehem Candle or the Candle of Preparation. God kept his promise to send a Savior. Today we prepare ourselves for the second coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Recitation: (Isaiah 40:3-5) "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'"

Recitation: (James 5:8) "You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

Song: *The Advent Candle* (third candle)

A candle is burning, a candle of **JOY**;
A candle to welcome brave Mary's new Boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, our eyes light and glow
As joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

Student: This brings us to the third candle which is the Shepherd Candle or the Candle of Joy. Can you imagine the joy that filled the hearts of the shepherds when they heard the good news that the long-awaited Messiah was born, and that they could go to see him and worship him? Certainly the joy that was heard in the voices of the angels was felt by the lowly shepherds that blessed night.

Recitation: (John 15:11) "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

Recitation: (1 Peter 1:8) "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy."

Song: *The Advent Candle* (fourth candle)

A candle is burning, a candle of **LOVE**;
A candle to point us to heaven above.
A Baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth;
For Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.

Student: The fourth candle that is lit on our Advent Wreath is called the Candle of Love or the Angel Candle. The angels announced to the shepherds that the Savior was born in Bethlehem. They were overwhelmed by the love that God had shown to them. We also realize the tremendous love that God



PART THREE

THE LAUREL WREATH

Narrator 1: The history of the wreath dates back to Greece and Rome where the people would make ring-shaped “wreaths” using fresh leaves, twigs, small fruits and flowers. Sometimes they even decorated them with precious jewels. The most important people in those days wore these headdresses as a sign of occupation or rank. Originally this circle of living branches was called a “diadem”. The wreath or diadem that was most popular was made of laurel branches called the Laurel Wreath. These special wreaths were awarded to the athletes who were winners in the Greek Olympic Games. The host city would fashion the head wreath awards, much like the host country designs the Olympic medals today. The laurel wreath was truly a sign of victory and royalty! The Roman king, Julius Caesar, often wore a laurel wreath on his head designating him as king.

Narrator 2: Are you training for the Olympics? That might sound like a silly question, but as God’s children, we are also in training. We are also running in a race. It’s called the race of life. Our life is like running on a track, where there are all sorts of difficulties and obstacles.

The Apostle Paul must have enjoyed sports because he often mentioned sports in his letters. In those days, the winners in the Corinthian games were awarded pine wreaths that were placed on their heads. In Athens they received an olive wreath and in Delphi it was a laurel wreath. Paul tells God’s people to keep running the race of life until we gain the victory at the end, and are awarded the wreath of victory. Paul wrote:

Recitation: (I Corinthians 9:24 Amplified Bible) “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run your race that you may lay hold of the prize and make it yours.”

Narrator 2: But Paul went on to explain something important about the crown of living greens that was placed on the victors’ heads. That crown eventually dried up and turned brown and brittle.

Recitation: (1 Corinthians 9:25 Amplified Bible) “Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness that cannot wither.”

Narrator 2: We are blessed to know that one day, after our race here on earth is finished, with the help of the Holy Spirit we will be awarded that crown of final victory. What a wonderful wreath that will be for us to wear!

Recitation: (2 Timothy 4:8) “There is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Recitation: Fast by the throne of God behold them (hold hand outward in welcoming position)
Crowned at last! Crowned at last!
See in His arms the Savior fold them, (cross arms across chest in rocking motion)
Crowned at last! Crowned at last!
With wreaths of glory round their head; (place hands on sides of head)
No tears of sorrow now are shed,
To joy’s full fountain all are led: (point upward with both hands)
Crowned at last! Crowned at last!

Offering, Prayers, Lord’s Prayer: Pastor



PART FOUR

THE CHRISTMAS WREATH

Narrator 1: And now we take a look at the beautiful green wreath that we hang on our front doors at Christmastime, welcoming guests into our homes. Hanging the wreath on the door should mean that this is the home of Christians, followers of Jesus. We also display these wonderful green circles in our churches and schools.

We aren’t certain where the tradition of hanging the evergreen wreath began, however; some suggest that it may have been started by the athletes who displayed their trophy wreaths on the walls of their houses. Traditionally, evergreen branches and especially the holly branches were used to form the circle shape. The use of holly seems to date back to the Romans, however; Christians adopted the symbolism and said the holly, with its prickly green leaves, represents Jesus’ crown of thorns, while the brilliant red berries reflect the blood that he shed on the cross.

Song by Children: *Come, See the Baby*

By Karen Maio

Come see the baby lying in the manger,
His name is Jesus; He’s God’s own Son.
This little baby boy will be our Savior.
He is the Christ the Anointed One.

Refrain

Tiny baby, precious Savior,
Born to be our Lord and King,
We will worship and adore you.
Joyful praise to you we sing.

Come see the baby lying in the manger,
Child of Mary, yet Son of God.
He'll live the perfect life that we cannot live,
And He'll die for us on the cross. Refrain.

Come see the baby lying in the manger,
Humble He lies in the cattle stall.
One day this baby boy will be exalted,
Our risen Savior, the Lord of all. Refrain.

Narrator 2: The Christmas wreaths on our front doors carry with them many symbols. First, the color of the evergreens signify the living hope that we have in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, while the red bow or berries remind us of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

Recitation: (Isaiah 1:18) "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool."

Narrator 2: And lastly there is the recognizable shape. The circle has neither a beginning nor an end. The shape of the wreath tells everyone that Jesus has no beginning and no end, and it also reminds us that everyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life in Christ Jesus. As the Bible says, God's love is from everlasting to everlasting!

Recitation: (John 3:36) "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life."

Recitation: (John 5:24) "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

All Children: (Psalm 90:1,2) "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

All Children: (Psalm 103:17) "From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children."

Song by Children: *From Everlasting to Everlasting*

By Karen Maio

Refrain

From everlasting to everlasting
He is God and God alone!
He is the Alpha and the Omega;
Seated on His heav'nly throne.

1. Like the wreath, He is unending,
The holly: thorns upon His head.
The evergreens will live forever.
And ribbons show the blood He shed.

2. Out of love He sent a Savior,
Who lived a perfect life for me.
Now by grace through faith in Jesus,
Heaven is ours eternally.

3. He's the God of all creation,
Before the mountains came to be.
He's the Word made flesh, Messiah,
The promised Savior sent for me!

Benediction and Announcements: Pastor

Recessional by Congregation: *Joy to the World*

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

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,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Sans Day Carol

1. Now the holly bears a berry as white as the milk,
And Mary bore Jesus, who was wrapped up in silk:

Chorus: And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Savior for to be,
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly.

Holly! Holly!

And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly!

2. Now the holly bears a berry as green as the grass,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died on the cross: *Chorus*

3. Now the holly bears a berry as black as the coal,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died for us all: *Chorus*

4. Now the holly bears a berry, as blood is it red,
Then trust we our Savior, who rose from the dead: *Chorus*