



a service of
Nine Lessons And Carols



Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia

St Mary's Cathedral

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

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Welcome

Welcome to the Cathedral Church of St Mary's, Kuala Lumpur, for this special service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols was first held 138 years ago in Truro Cathedral (Cornwall, UK) by Bishop Benson (24 December 1880). The lessons (Bible readings) trace the great history of God's redeeming work from its beginning in Genesis until the coming of Jesus as Saviour. The carols reflect these same great themes, uniting to celebrate and rejoice in Jesus, born that first Christmas in Bethlehem.

Most of the carols are congregational - all in attendance are warmly encouraged to join in.

We pray that through word and song, prayer and reflection, we will find ourselves drawn ever closer to the Christ of Bethlehem; rejoicing in his great salvation, and holding firmly to the hope of eternal life he comes to bring.

Introit: Comfort Ye My People

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
and cry unto her,
that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned.
The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness;
prepare ye the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.

The oratorio "Messiah" features this poignant piece, drawing from the first part of Handel's masterpiece. Its lyrics are rooted in a prophecy from the book of Isaiah 40:1-3, written around 700 years before the birth of Jesus in the 8th century.

The song beautifully encapsulates the comforting words of God spoken to His people. Following a warning from God in the book of Isaiah about the consequences of their disobedience, the prophet Isaiah delivers a message of hope to his people.

In this passage, God promises that a time of great comfort will come, where His people's sins and disobedience will be fully atoned for, leading to peace and comfort. This comfort will be brought by God Himself, and His coming will be witnessed by all.

In response to this promise, the people are called to "prepare the way" for the coming of the Lord. They are urged to change their hearts and minds in order to receive God in the right manner and thereby experience the promised peace.

The subsequent parts of this Nine Lessons and Carols service will further illuminate the arrival of the Lord and how the people received Him.

Carol: Once In Royal David's City

The Choir will sing the first verse; the congregation join for the remaining verses.
Please remain seated until the 2nd verse.

Words: Cecil F. Alexander (1848)

1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor, and mean, and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy.
3. For he is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us he grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew:
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.
4. And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love;
for that child who seemed so helpless,
is our Lord in heav'n above,
and he leads his children on
to the place where He is gone.
5. Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him, but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
when like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

King David was the second king of Israel, renowned for being a “king after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). God promised that he would raise up his offspring to rule after him forever (2 Samuel 7:13). This promised descendant of David is Jesus (Matthew 1:1).

The word **Christ** indicates the same thing – it means ‘*anointed*’ and refers to the anointing of a king. In Hebrew, the word is ‘*Messiah*’. By the time Jesus came, God’s people had been waiting for this great Messiah/Christ for a long time.

In verse four of this hymn we sing of how we will see him ‘through his own **redeeming love**’. In love, Jesus died to redeem us – to give his life as a ransom to set us free from our sins – so that we can be his forever. This is the great Christian hope: that being set free from our sins, we will one day see him face-to-face in his eternal kingdom.

The Gathering And The Greeting

Please remain standing. In general, this service will proceed without directions and announcements – please observe those written in this liturgy.

The Minister shall greet the people:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

The Minister continues:

As we gather again to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will hear from Scripture about why he came, what he achieved, and how he might change our lives today. We will learn of God's purpose in creating us and reflect on the consequences of humanity's rebellion against God. We will listen to prophecies that speak of the coming of a Saviour. We will hear from the Gospels about the way in which Jesus was born in fulfilment of those predictions. We will remember that he was born in order to die for us, and we will rejoice together in his resurrection. Finally, we will anticipate his second coming even as we celebrate his first. Please join me now in asking our Heavenly Father to speak to us through this whole service, so that we might truly know him through his Son and serve him for ever.

Let us pray:

Loving Father, open our hearts and our minds to the truths revealed in your Word. Help us to understand your plan for humanity and the salvation that you offer us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Make us grateful for his coming and enable us by your Spirit to find joy and peace in him.

All: Amen.

Choir: Birthday Of A King

Words and Music: William Harold Neidlinger (1863-1924)

In the little village of Bethlehem
There lay a Child one day
And the sky was bright with a holy light
O'er the place where Jesus lay.

***Alleluia! O how the angels sang
Alleluia! How it rang!
And the sky was bright with a holy light
'Twas the birthday of a King.***

'Twas a humble birthplace, but O how much
God gave to us that day
From the manger bed what a path has led
What a perfect, holy way.

The Liturgy Of The Lessons

Minister:

Our account of salvation starts in the infancy and innocence of our race, on that day we turned from faith and obedience to God into the darkness and rebellion of sin. So let us hear how at a stroke we fell from blessing to curse, from joy to fear, and from life to death itself.

The First Lesson: Genesis 3:1-15

Please be seated

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

This chapter of Genesis contains both one of the worst, and one of the best words from God to his people.

The sin which Adam and Eve committed cut them off from God, and meant that mankind must surely die. The word of the curse is no more than justice demands – for how could a holy and just God leave rebellion unpunished?

On the other hand, the curse contains a very wonderful promise; for in verse 15 we read that the offspring of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent who had tempted them. One day God would send a man, born of a woman, to destroy the tempter and all his power forever. That man is Jesus, and he defeats the serpent, the devil, through his death on the cross.

This is one of the wonders of Christmas – that Jesus, who is indeed the eternal Son of God, was born of a woman – so becoming the one perfect man who can save us from the devil forever.

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the
woman, and between your offspring and
her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Prayer

Righteous and Holy God, we confess that we have turned away from you, bringing judgement upon ourselves and upon the world in which we live. We thank you that through your Scripture you promise salvation from this judgement, in the defeat of sin and death, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

All: Amen.

Minister:

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; to rebel against the one in whose hands alone is all power and judgement and dominion in heaven and on earth. Yet wonderfully, the very same God who created us, against whom we have rebelled, still loves us. Despite our sin, he still desires to have us a holy people for himself; a plan he sets out to us in many great promises – five of which we hear today.

The first of these we have in fact just heard; the promise of the offspring of the woman who will bruise the head of Satan, that ancient serpent who led to the curse. Let us hear now the second promise; in which God gives to one man, Abraham, the promise of bringing blessing in place of curse, for himself and all the nations of the world:

The Second Lesson: Genesis 12:1-3

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Carol: God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

Words: Traditional 16th Century Carol

Please stand

1. God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas day,
to save us all from Satan's power
when we were gone astray.

***O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.***

2. From God our heavenly Father
a blessed angel came,
and unto certain shepherds
brought tidings of the same,
how that in Bethlehem was born
the Son of God by name.

3. Fear not, then, said the angel,
let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Saviour
of a pure, virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in him
from Satan's power and might:

The **promises made to Abraham** are very important for a right understanding of the Bible as a whole.

They fall into three main categories – a promised people; a promised land; and a promised blessing/rule.

Ultimately, these promises are fulfilled by and in Jesus, the offspring of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). The people of God are those who share Abraham's faith in God – Christians from across the globe (Romans 4:16); the promised land is the New Heavens and Earth he comes to bring (1 Peter 1:4); and in Jesus we have both a perfect ruler, and every Spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).

Thus: Jesus comes to reverse the fall – changing curse into blessing, and death into life everlasting.

4. Now to the Lord sing praises,
all you within this place,
and with true love and brotherhood
each other now embrace;
this holy tide of Christmas
all others doth deface.

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

Please be seated

In our next lesson, we hear another great promise of God. By now even Abraham's own descendants have so rebelled against him that they are to be cast away once more in judgement. Yet, according to the overflowing richness of God's love he promises that he will one day come to them and save them. This will be seen in the coming of a promised child, Emmanuel, God with us:

The Third Lesson: Isaiah 7:10-17

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷ The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria."

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Let us pray:

We give you thanks and praise, heavenly Father,
for your promise to come to save your people,
through Jesus Christ our Lord;

All: Amen.

Let us sing, with thankfulness for this promise of Emmanuel:

Carol: O Come, All Ye Faithful

Words and Music: John Francis Wade (1711-1763); Descant: Alan Gray (1855-1935)

Please stand

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.***

2. God of God, Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created;

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God, in the highest;

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born for our salvation,
Jesu, to thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

This carol, originally in Latin as *Adeste fideles*, reflects on the wonder of a child born, who is God with us – Emmanuel (as we heard in our lesson).

He is the King of angels, and yet he is born as a baby! He is God, the Son of God himself, yet he comes from the virgin's womb! This is a very marvellous thing!

The right response is to worship him, and rejoice that he came to save us.

Please be seated

In our fourth lesson, we hear yet one more great promise – this time picturing the day that the coming son will bring the light of salvation to God's people under the judgement of sin.

The Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle
tumult and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God



G. F. Handel's masterpiece, "**Messiah**" includes whole sections of this reading in the section "Unto us a child is born". The oratorio rightly connects the promise given in Isaiah to its fulfilment in Jesus – the Son of God given to save and rule God's people forever.

Isaiah himself was a prophet who lived somewhere around 700 years before Jesus was born. He also writes about the saving death of Jesus – describing him as the one who would be "pierced for our transgressions", and "bear" our sins (see Isaiah 53:5,12)

Let us pray:

Our Father in Heaven,
you promised us your Son,
he who is called Mighty God, the Prince of Peace;
grant that we who know the dawning of his light,
might also receive with faith his salvation;
through that same Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

In our fourth carol, we recall that same promise, fulfilled in Jesus our King:

Carol: Angels From The Realms Of Glory

Words: James Montgomery (1816)

Please stand

1. Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth:

***Come and worship
Christ the new-born King;
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born King.***

2. Shepherds, in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:

Please be seated

Our fifth lesson contains yet another great promise, of where God's promised Saviour will be born. The one who comes to bruise Satan's head, in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, who will save his people, like light in the darkness, will be born in the town of Bethlehem of Judea:

3. Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen His natal star:

4. Though an infant now we view him, he
shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
ev'ry knee shall then bow down:

The Fifth Lesson: Micah 5:2-4

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the
strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Did you know that King David was a shepherd before he became the ruler of God's people? The Bible uses this as a picture of God's promised king, who cares for God's people like a good shepherd does his flock.

Jesus describes himself as the "Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10:11), and promises he will return to "be their shepherd" - "he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

Let us pray:

For our ruler and Saviour,
sent from heaven; born in Bethlehem;
we praise and thank you, O God;

All: Amen

We now sing of the fulfilment of this promise; in our fifth carol:

Carol: O Little Town Of Bethlehem

Words: Phillips Brooks (1868); Music: Traditional arr. R V Williams, Descant: Frank Vincent.

Please stand

1. 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.

2. For Christ is born of Mary
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.

3. How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still
the dear Christ enters in.

4. 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.

Bethlehem, which literally means ‘house of bread’, is the name of the village of King David, the great king who would be the model of a greater King to come, Jesus.

In our fifth reading we heard more about Bethlehem from **Micah**, a prophet who wrote from Judah around 700-750 years before Jesus came.

Micah’s promise of a ruler from Bethlehem, one whose “coming forth is from of old, from ancient days”, who will “shepherd” Israel so that they “dwell secure” was fulfilled that first Christmas as Jesus was born in Bethlehem to save and rule his people forever.

Our carol, **O Little Town of Bethlehem**, poetically addresses this famous village, wondering at the almost unnoticed arrival of the Saviour of the World as a tiny baby, laid in a manger.

Having heard many of the great promises of God's love, in our sixth lesson we hear of their fulfilment in the newborn child of Bethlehem, Jesus the Christ:

The Sixth Lesson: Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

So far, we have heard much of the very great love with which God loved us; and of the depths of his mercy upon us, who have rebelled against his good and righteous laws. Let us give thanks to God for this deep and marvellous love.

Let us pray:

Merciful and loving Father,
we give you thanks and praise
that although we were sinners, you loved us,
and although we deserved death, you promised life;
yet most of all,
we thank you that you have fulfilled these promises in Jesus Christ,
the promised Son, our Saviour,
in whose coming we rejoice;

All: Amen

Choir: Away In A Manger

Words: vst1-2 Anonymous (1885), v3 John T. McFarland (1892)

Music: traditional Normandy tune arranged by Reginald Jacques

Please be seated

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing the baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

In our next carol, we sing of the birth of the light of the world – Jesus Christ, in whom we now have redeeming grace. “Alleluia” to our King and Saviour!

Carol: Silent Night

Please stand

Words: Joseph Mohr (1702-1848)

1. *Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.*

All join at this point. Please stand.

2. Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing: “Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born!”

3. Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

4. Silent night! Holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing
“Alleluia” to our King:
“Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born.”

Let us pray:

O God of justice and mercy;
your Son took human flesh, and was born of Mary, and laid in a manger;
grant us grace to turn to him with faith, to leave our sins, and find salvation in him,
according to the great promises of your love, in Jesus Christ our Lord;

All: Amen

The really good news of Christmas is the good news of a Saviour.

Long ago, God had promised that a baby would be born, by a virgin, who would change the world forever.

He would be God, born as one of us, in order to save us from our sins.

As the Bible says, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

Because of him, we can find forgiveness for everything we've done wrong, against God and one-another.

In our seventh lesson, we join a group of shepherds in the field, as the angels of heaven declare to them the joyful news of God's salvation, in the birth of the child, Christ our Lord:

The Seventh Lesson: Luke 2:8-20

Please remain seated

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Let us respond to these tidings of great joy, by echoing the very words of the angels – in our seventh carol:

Carol: While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night

Please stand

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

1. While shepherds watched their flocks
by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

2. "Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind:
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

3. "To you, in David's town, this day is
born of David's line,
The Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord;
And this will be the sign:

4. "The heavenly Babe you there
shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid."

5. Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

6. "All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.

Please be seated

Sometime later, wise men from the East came to worship Jesus, anticipating the fact that even the Gentiles (those who are not part of ethnic Israel) would eventually come under his rule. Of this we hear in our eighth lesson:

The Eighth Lesson: Matthew 2:1-12

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures they offered him gifts gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that people from all the ends of the earth are now coming with joy to Jesus, the true King of Israel, and bowing before him as their King.

All: Amen

Let us share in that joy, as we sing our eighth carol:

Carol: Joy To The World

Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Please stand

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sin and sorrow 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.

4. 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.

Please remain standing

In our final lesson, we hear in summary the great reason that Jesus came into this world as a baby. We also hear how we too can receive him, and the salvation he came to bring:

We started our service with the sad news of **the curse**. In this hymn we rejoice at the joyful news of **the blessing** that comes in Jesus.

We know this wonderful blessing now, if we trust in Jesus – and we will see it in its fullness when he comes once more.

The Ninth Lesson: John 1:1-14

Please remain standing

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Choir: Jesu Joy Of Man's Desiring

Words and Music: Johann Sebastian Bach (1723)

Jesu, joy of man's desiring,
Holy wisdom, Love most bright,
Drawn by Thee, our souls aspiring
Soar to uncreated light.
Word of God our flesh that fashioned
With the fire of life impassioned,
Striving still to truth unknown,
Soaring, dying round thy throne.

The Homily

Please be seated

In our final carol, we share the joy of the angels celebrating the fulfilment of God's great promises of salvation in his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord:

Carol: Hark The Herald Angels Sing

Words: Charles Wesley (1739); Music: Felix Mendelssohn (1840); Descant: David Willcocks (1919-2015)

Please stand.

1. Hark, the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

***Hark, the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."***

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
late in time behold Him come
offspring of a virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

3. Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give them second birth.

As we saw in our final reading, Jesus is nothing less than God himself, made flesh – as our carol puts it, "veiled in flesh ... the Godhead" - the "**incarnate Deity**".

He who was God from all eternity so loves us that he took on our human flesh, and died for us – bearing our curse – suffering for our sins.

In him, we have the sure and certain promise of salvation – a salvation which is ours if we hold firmly to it by faith. For, we know that he will come again, and raise us up from this world of sin, to the blessed life of the world to come.

Closing Prayer And Benediction

Let us pray (please kneel or be seated).

All: **Almighty God,**
 you make us glad with the remembrance
 of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ:
 grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer,
 so we may with sure confidence behold him
 when he shall come to be our judge;
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.
 Amen

Minister Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
 fill you with his grace
 to trust his promises
 and obey his will;
 and the blessing of God Almighty,
 the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 be among you and remain with you always.

All: **Amen**

Please do stay back for refreshments after the service.

There will also be a briefing room open for visitors who would like to spend 45 minutes to find out more about the Christian faith. There will be a short presentation, an opportunity to ask questions from the floor and a video.

Announcements may be made.



Christmas & New Year Services at St Mary's Cathedral

We warmly invite you to come back and join us for one of our Christmas and New Year services.

<http://stmarys.my/christmas>



Connection Card

Thank you for joining us tonight! If you would like for us to get in touch with you, or have any feedback for us, please fill in our

Connection Card at <http://stmarys.my/connect>

Please do indicate on the Connection Card if you would like us to contact you about Christianity.



Find out more about Christianity

We regularly host a series of studies where you can find out more about who Jesus is and what it means to belong to him. If you are interested to find out more about Christianity, please visit

<http://stmarys.my/findoutmore>



Giving

If you would like to support the work of ministry at the Cathedral and beyond, please scan the QR code on the left using any e-wallet app (Touch n Go / GrabPay / Boost). Be sure to confirm "St Mary's Cathedral Main Hall" is listed as the payee.

There are also collection boxes at the door if you would like to contribute cash or cheque.



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Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia

St Mary's Cathedral

Making disciples of Jesus Christ