



THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS TODAY

(The program requires a Narrator and a Leader. To enhance the program with a visual presentation, “build” a creche scene by adding the figures to the display as they are mentioned in the readings, or present a “living creche” with costumed people entering at the appropriate time. Display a large Mite Box or some appropriate container to receive the offerings.)

All Sing: “As Each Happy Christmas”

Little Ones Sing Praise 81

As each happy Christmas Dawns on earth again,
Comes the holy Christ Child To the hearts of men.
Enters with His blessing Into ev’ry home,
Guides and guards our footsteps As we go and come.

Narrator: It is that time of year when once again we celebrate the birth of the Holy Christ Child - once again the familiar carols, once again the familiar words. Yet that familiarity may be a problem - the words may have become so familiar that we don’t really hear their message nor meditate on their significance. In this gathering we will again hear the familiar words. As those glorious words are read, let’s pause to reflect and let them remind us of our blessings today.

All Sing: “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”

TLH 62; LW 31

Leader: *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. Luke 2:1-3*

All: For a democratic government and for our country;
For the privilege and responsibility of citizenship;
For the freedom to worship, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *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. Luke 2:4*

All: For our family and church ancestors;
For our strong Lutheran heritage;
For Martin Luther, the reformers and the Reformation, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. Luke 2:5*

All: For God's blessing of marriage;
For spouses who are committed to each other in love;
For Christian homes where children learn of Jesus, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *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. Luke 2:6-7.*

All: For the gracious gift of God-Made-Flesh;
For those who welcome Him into their hearts;
For the miracle of birth;
For the spiritual gift of hospitality and for those who practice it, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

All Sing: "Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes"

TLH 66; LW 29

Leader: *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. Luke 2:8*

All: For workers in all honest occupations;
For the gift of employment and the benefits it offers;
For those who are willing to work in dangerous or isolated jobs, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *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, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Luke 2:9-10*

All: For God's awesome presence in our lives;
For angels, God's messengers who serve on our behalf;
For faithful, hard-working Christians, who willingly do what is asked, and in many cases, with little or no recognition;
For emotions - love, joy, sadness, fear, happiness and sorrow - and for the ability to express them;
For messengers of comfort and encouragement, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *“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 2:11-12

All: For the gift of a Savior born just for me;
For towns and villages, cities and countries, especially places where Christ is honored;
For Jesus’ example of humility, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”* Luke 2:13-14

All: For music and voices raised in song;
For all instruments, musicians and choirs;
For those who can’t carry a tune but praise God with a joyful noise, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

All Sing: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” *TLH 94; LW 49*

Leader: *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”* Luke 2:15

All: For the wonder and excitement of Jesus’ birth;
For the eagerness to learn of Him;
For Christian fellowship to share the joy, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *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.* Luke 2:16-18

All: For the spirit of evangelistic fervor;
For the eagerness to tell of Jesus;
For hearts opened to the gospel message, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* Luke 2:19

All: For the intangible gifts of feelings and memories;
For the ability to remember;
For the ability to memorize favorite Scripture and hymns, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.* Luke 2:20

All: For all faithful Christians who witness;
For evangelists and teachers of the Word;
For all those who spread the message of God's love and the way to salvation;
For times of worship filled with praise and joy, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

All Sing: "Silent Night! Holy Night!" *TLH 646; LW 68*

Leader: *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.* Luke 2:21

All: For the Name of Jesus, ...*the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;*
For the hope that swells within us when that Name is proclaimed, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

All Sing: "Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love" *TLH 114; LW 182*

Leader: *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*
Matthew 2:1-2

All: For all those who continue to seek the King;
For earthly rulers and those in authority;
For our president, governor, mayor and all legislators, particularly those who use their position to serve and honor God, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: `But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"* Matthew 2:3-6

All: For the Old Testament prophets who pointed to Christ;
For prophecy from which we draw the riches and promises of God;
For all who share the Gospel - pastors, lay ministers, professors, teachers, deaconesses, elders, church councils, and all who willingly volunteer in the congregation, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.* Matthew 2:7-10

All: For God's perfect planning and timing;
For God's guidance and direction;
For God's revelation of His Son to all nations and peoples, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Leader: *On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.* Matthew 2:11-12

All: For homes where Jesus lives and is worshiped;
For treasures of worth and treasures without price;
For gifts, specifically the gift of giving and the spirit of generosity;
For the humility to acknowledge that all comes from and belongs to God;
For God's continued revelation of Himself and His Son through Word and Sacraments, we respond...

BLESSING AND PRAISE TO YOU, O LORD!

Narrator: The Wise Men worshiped the Christ Child with their gifts; let us also offer ourselves and our gifts in worship to Him. As we sing the next hymn, we come forward to present our mite box mission offerings.

All Sing: “As with Gladness Men of Old”

TLH 127; LW 75

Narrator: The Closing Prayer

Dear God, our Father, we are here in an effort to close out the world and its hollow celebration of Christmas. Please center our minds on the reason for this special time of the year, remembering the birth of Your Son, our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We have read the Christmas story once again, while also remembering Your blessings to each of us. We praise and glorify Your Holy Name for the greatest blessing of all, the gift of Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Who came to this world as a tiny babe, humble and helpless, yet in His divine nature, continues to rule the universe. We praise and glorify Your Holy Name recalling that you have bestowed a multitude of blessings upon us, Your children. We realize we could not begin to name all of Your blessings to each of us - since some are not even known to us, but we gratefully acknowledge Your presence in each and every minute of our lives. We humbly come before You in thanksgiving. Please accept our love and gratitude as we raise our voices to You and say (in unison):

**TO GOD ALL PRAISE AND BLESSING NOW AND FOREVER MORE!
AMEN.**

All Sing: “Joy to the World, the Lord is Come”

TLH 87; LW 53

All Scripture is from NIV

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