



Service of Nine Lessons & Carols by Candlelight

Welcome and Introduction

Carol



Reading

God so loved us that for our sakes he,
through whom time was made, was made in time;
older by eternity than the world itself,
he became younger in age
than many of his servants in the world;
God, who made man, was made man;
he was given existence by a mother
whom he brought into existence;
he was carried in hands which he formed;
he was nursed at breasts which he filled;
he cried like a baby in the manger in speechless infancy -
this Word
without which human eloquence is speechless.

Augustine of Hippo 354-430



Reading Luke 1.26-38

Prayer

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
the virgin Mary accepted your call,
and was obedient to your will.
Give us the same willingness of spirit,
that we may love and serve you, all our days.
Amen.

Carol



Reading

Christmas by John Betjeman 1906-1984

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain.
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that villagers can say
'The Church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial public houses blaze
And Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad,
And Christmas morning bells say 'Come!'
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true? and is it true?
The most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant.

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives to-day in Bread and Wine.

Carol



Reading Luke 2.1-7

Prayer

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
rejected stranger, born on a stable.
We pray for all who are lost and alone.
All who live in poverty.

Amen

Carol

Reading BC:AD by U.A.Fanthorpe

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect.
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.

Reading
Luke 2.8-20



Prayer

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
the shepherds heard the news,
and hurried to the manger.
May we respond to your word
with hopeful hearts, and eager joy.

Amen.

Carol

Reading

Carol for the Last Christmas Eve
by Norman Nicholson

The first night, the first night
The night that Christ was born,
His mother looked in his eyes and saw
Her maker in her son.

The twelfth night, the twelfth night,
After Christ was born,
The Wise men found the child and knew
Their search had just begun.
Eleven thousand, two fifty nights,
After Christ was born,
A dead man hung in the child's light
And the sun went down at noon.

Six hundred thousand or thereabout nights,
After Christ was born,
I look at you and you look at me
But the sky is too dark for us to see
And the world waits for the sun.

But the last night, the last night,
Since ever Christ was born,
What his mother knew will be known again,
And what was found by the Three Wise Men,
And the sun will rise and so may we,
On the last morn, on Christmas morn,
Umpteen hundred and eternity.

Reading
Matthew 2.1-12



Prayer

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
the wise men brought gifts;
the finest they could find.
May we offer to you
the treasures of our grateful hearts.

Amen

Carol

Reading

Royal Presents
by Norman Wanley 1634-80

The off-rings of the Eastern kings of old
Unto our Lord were incense, myrrh and gold;
Incense because a God, gold as a king;
And myrrh as to a dying man they bring.
Instead of incense (blessed Lord) if we
Cand send a sigh or fervent prayer to thee,
Instead of myrrh if we can but provide
Tears that from penitential eyes do slide,
And though we have no gold; if for our part
We can present thee with a broken heart
Thou wilt accept: and say those Eastern kings
Did not present thee with more precious things.

Carol

Reading
Isaiah 9.2,6,7

Carol

Final Blessing

May you
have a very
Happy and Blessed
Christmas



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