

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

by Carole J. Adams



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**JOURNEY TO
BETHLEHEM**

By Carole I. Adams

The hymns and songs mentioned in "Journey to Bethlehem" have been selected by the author to fit the particular mood or message. Any other suitable hymn or song may be substituted.

The Methodist Hymnal is used as a reference with hymn numbers given, but these hymns are also available in many other hymnals.

Two of the solos mentioned have other music sources listed. If you choose not to use these suggestions, there is also mention of one substitution for each which is available in *The Methodist Hymnal*.

In all cases, please feel free to make any substitutions you choose for these suggested hymns and songs.

You will notice that the script has been divided into ten parts and headings. This is for the convenience of preparing a bulletin for use during the service. These headings are not to be read by the two readers.

1 **PRELUDE**2 **CALL TO WORSHIP**

3 **SOLO:** "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (First verse. Available in
4 most hymnals.)

5

6

Part I — The Prophecy

7

8 **MAN:** "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.

9 **WOMAN:** Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that
10 her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.

11 **MAN:** A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of
12 the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our
13 God."

14 **WOMAN:** And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all
15 flesh shall see it together.

16 **MAN:** Arise, shine; for your light has come.

17 **WOMAN:** And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

18 **MAN:** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great
19 light.

20 **WOMAN:** Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on
21 them has light shined.

22 **MAN:** For to us a child is born.

23 **WOMAN:** To us a son is given.

24 **MAN:** And the government will be upon his shoulder.

25 **WOMAN:** And his name will be called "Wonderful
26 Counselor."

27 **MAN:** Mighty God,

28 **WOMAN:** Everlasting Father,

29 **MAN:** Prince of Peace.

30 **WOMAN:** Of the increase of his government and of peace
31 there will be no end.

32 **MAN:** Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited
33 and redeemed his people.

34 **WOMAN:** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace
35 among men with whom he is pleased.

CAROL: (*Congregation sings.*) "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"
(The Methodist Hymnal, No. 360)

PART II — The Annunciation

MAN: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and
his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means "God
with us."

WOMAN: The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of
Galilee named Nazareth.

MAN: To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was
Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was
Mary.

WOMAN: And the angel said to her:

MAN: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with
God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and
bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be
great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and
the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father
David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever:
and of his kingdom there will be no end.

WOMAN: How can this be?

MAN: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of
the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child
to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

WOMAN: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be
done to me according to your word.

MAN: Blessed is she who believed that there would be a
fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

WOMAN: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices
in God, my savior, for he who is mighty has done great
things for me and holy is his name. His mercy is on those
who fear him from generation to generation.

SOLO: "A Virgin Unspotted" (An Early American carol by the
composer Billings, from "The Season for Singing," compiled by

John Langstaff, published by Doubleday and Co. You may choose to substitute "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child," The Methodist Hymnal, No. 395.)

Part III — Christmas Story from Luke

MAN: Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

WOMAN: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled, and all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.

MAN: And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

WOMAN: And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

MAN: And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

WOMAN: And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them:

MAN: "Be not afraid, for behold I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

WOMAN: And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

MAN: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

WOMAN: When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another:

1 MAN: Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that
2 has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

3 WOMAN: And they went with haste and found Mary and
4 Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

5 MAN: And when they saw it they made known the saying
6 which had been told them.

7 WOMAN: But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in
8 her heart.

9 MAN: And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising
10 God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told
11 them.

12 SOLO: "In the Bleak Midwinter" (The Methodist Hymnal, No. 376)

13

14 Part IV — Journey to Bethlehem

15

16 MAN: Let us go then to Bethlehem.

17 WOMAN: Go to Bethlehem? Oh, Joseph, I cannot go to
18 Bethlehem.

19 MAN: We have no choice, Mary. The emperor has ordered it.

20 WOMAN: But the journey is long and hard. And I'm afraid.
21 What if the baby were to come . . .

22 MAN: We must trust God.

23 WOMAN: I do, Joseph. I know that he said that all would be
24 well. And I said that I would do as he wished. But
25 Bethlehem? Couldn't the baby be born here in Nazareth,
26 at home?

27 MAN: We must go to Bethlehem. There is no other way.

28 WOMAN: No other way? Sometimes I am filled with wonder
29 — how can all this be happening to someone like me?
30 And joy, when I feel the stirrings of a new life within me.
31 But sometimes I'm afraid, too. What does it all mean?

32 MAN: He spoke to me, too, that we should neither of us be
33 afraid.

34 WOMAN: He will be a beautiful baby! I suppose every mother
35 feels that way.

- 1 **MAN:** We'll name him Jesus, as the angel said.
 2 **WOMAN:** Jesus! God must have a very special plan in mind.
 3 And to think that we are part of it!
 4 **MAN:** "For he will save his people from their sins, and his
 5 name shall be called Emmanuel, which means 'God with
 6 us. ' "
 7 **WOMAN:** Let us go then to Bethlehem. Joseph, is it very far?
 8 **SOLO:** "Mary, Mary, What You Gonna Call That Baby" (By Avery
 9 and Marsh, "Hymns Hot and Carols Cool," published by
 10 Proclamation Productions Inc., Orange Square, Port Jervis, New
 11 York 12771. If desired, you may choose to substitute, "Infant
 12 Holy, Infant Lowly," The Methodist Hymnal, No. 396.)
 13

14 **Part V — The Shepherd's Visit**

15

- 16 **MAN:** Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has
 17 happened.
 18 **WOMAN:** And they went with haste, and found Mary and
 19 Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
 20 **MAN:** We had to come. I hope we're not disturbing you, and
 21 the child.
 22 **WOMAN:** We're glad you came. But how did you know about
 23 the baby?
 24 **MAN:** It was the strangest thing. We were tending our sheep
 25 as we always do. We were trying to keep warm, for it's a
 26 cold night. We weren't dreaming — we were watching the
 27 sheep carefully so no harm would come to them. When
 28 suddenly . . . you may not believe this . . .
 29 **WOMAN:** Tell me about it.
 30 **MAN:** We heard voices.
 31 **WOMAN:** Voices?
 32 **MAN:** A whole choir of voices. They were singing. It sounded
 33 like "Glory to God in the Highest." One of them told us
 34 not to be afraid.
 35 **WOMAN:** Were you afraid?

1 **MAN:** We were scared to death. But he told us he had good
2 news for us, that our savior had been born today in the
3 city of David and we would find him lying in a manger.

4 **WOMAN:** So you have come to look for him.

5 **MAN:** Some of the others didn't want to come. David said
6 we were only dreaming, claimed he hadn't heard a thing.
7 Well, I don't see how he slept through it — it sounded
8 like a great chorus to me. Jacob said he wasn't going to
9 leave his sheep and start wandering about in the dead
10 of night on such a fool's errand, looking for a savior. Oh,
11 he agreed we needed a savior — the rest of us, that is.
12 And we could use a bit of liberation from the Romans,
13 too. But he wasn't about to look in a stable for his Messiah.

14 **WOMAN:** Did you believe the news?

15 **MAN:** At first I didn't know what to think. Besides the voices
16 there was this great light, shining all around us. We were
17 dazed, we had to cover our eyes. After the light and the
18 voices had faded, we looked at each other in amazement.
19 Some of us wanted to come at once. It might have been
20 easier just to stay on the hillside and try to forget the
21 whole thing. But we had to come, we had to see.

22 **WOMAN:** The journey to Bethlehem isn't easy. The babe and
23 I know that.

24 **MAN:** Yes, we had to come. We asked and people told us that
25 a baby had indeed been born. Someone directed us to
26 this stable and now we have found him. What the voices
27 told us must be true. We will go and tell the others. Good
28 news! God is with us. The Savior is here!

29 **SOLO:** "Go Tell It On the Mountain" (Old spiritual found in many
30 hymnals.)

31

32 **Part VI — Christmas Story from Matthew**

33

34 **MAN:** Arise, shine, for your light has come.

35 **WOMAN:** And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

- 1 **MAN:** For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick
2 darkness the peoples.
- 3 **WOMAN:** But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory
4 will be seen upon you.
- 5 **MAN:** And nations shall come to your light.
- 6 **WOMAN:** And kings to the brightness of your rising.
- 7 **MAN:** Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in
8 the days of Herod the King,
- 9 **WOMAN:** Behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,
10 saying,
- 11 **MAN:** Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For
12 we have seen his star in the East, and have come to
13 worship him.
- 14 **WOMAN:** When Herod the King heard this, he was troubled,
15 and all Jerusalem with him: and assembling all the chief
16 priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them
17 where the Christ was to be born. They told him,
- 18 **MAN:** In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:
19 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no
20 means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall
21 come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.”
- 22 **WOMAN:** Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and
23 ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and
24 he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,
- 25 **MAN:** Go and search diligently for the child, and when you
26 have found him, bring me word, that I, too, may come
27 and worship him.
- 28 **WOMAN:** When they had heard the king they went their way;
29 and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went
30 before them, til it came to rest over the place where the
31 child was.
- 32 **MAN:** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly
33 with great joy.
- 34 **WOMAN:** And going into the house they saw the child with
35 Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshipped

1 him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts,
2 gold and frankincense and myrrh.

3 **CAROL:** (*Congregation sings.*) "We Three Kings of Orient Are"
4 (*Found in most hymnals.*)

5 6 **Part VII — Journey of the Wise Men**

7
8 **WOMAN:** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
9 they departed to their own country by another way.

10 **MAN:** This must be the road we are looking for. Let me ask
11 that woman by the well.

12 **WOMAN:** May I help you, sir?

13 **MAN:** We are strangers here, lately come from a visit to
14 Bethlehem and we are now returning home. Can you tell
15 us where this road leads?

16 **WOMAN:** If you want to return to Jerusalem —

17 **MAN:** Jerusalem? No. We are heading East.

18 **WOMAN:** I only thought — I mean, you seem men of some
19 importance, and I am only a serving girl. I supposed you
20 would be going to Jerusalem, the capital.

21 **MAN:** We passed through Jerusalem on our way to
22 Bethlehem.

23 **WOMAN:** Bethlehem! We have heard such strange stories
24 lately. The news has traveled even to our village. Did you
25 hear about the baby, too?

26 **MAN:** It is true. Indeed, that is why we came to Bethlehem,
27 to find the baby, born King of the Jews. We had studied
28 the stars and the writings of your wise men. One day a
29 great star appeared, a sign that the important event was
30 to take place. We have traveled a great distance, a long
31 and difficult journey, following that star.

32 **WOMAN:** And it led you to Bethlehem. Imagine that!

33 **MAN:** We stopped in Jerusalem, thinking that a likely place
34 for a king to be born. But prophets of your people told
35 us what was written in your Scriptures concerning the

1 birth of this king, the Messiah, as they call him.
 2 **WOMAN:** The Messiah! Oh, how long my people have waited.
 3 Do you think it could be true?
 4 **MAN:** We found the child. The star we had been following
 5 came to rest over, of all places, the stable of an inn in
 6 Bethlehem. The baby had been born in that stable. The
 7 town was so crowded that Joseph and Mary, the child's
 8 parents, could not even find a room. But even in that
 9 humble place there was a strange atmosphere of
 10 expectancy and all who came to see wondered at the
 11 sight, as if a miracle had indeed occurred.
 12 **WOMAN:** A miracle!
 13 **MAN:** We felt it, too. We knew our search had ended. We had
 14 found the king.
 15 **WOMAN:** What kind of king will he be, do you think? I can
 16 scarcely believe it. Can this be the good news we have
 17 expected for so long — this baby born in a stable with a
 18 great star to light his birth? Oh, how I wish I could go to
 19 Bethlehem and see!
 20 **SOLO:** "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" (The Methodist
 21 Hymnal, No. 399)
 22

23 Part VIII — The Modern Journey

24
 25 **MAN:** Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy! Let us
 26 go to Bethlehem and see this thing —
 27 **WOMAN:** Bethlehem? Go to Bethlehem? I haven't got time!
 28 Why, you wouldn't believe the things I have to do between
 29 now and Christmas. I declare every year it gets worse
 30 and worse. If I don't get to the mall today, there won't
 31 be any decent presents left. About this Bethlehem, maybe
 32 I could go next week when the rush is over.
 33 **MAN:** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
 34 **WOMAN:** Words — words. That reminds me. Seasons greetings,
 35 etc. etc. I haven't even finished sending my cards out yet.

1 If I'm still writing them on Christmas Eve again this year,
2 I don't think I'll even bother to send any next year. Of
3 course, I'd miss that once a year letter from my friends.

4 MAN: Sing and rejoice, for lo, I come and I will dwell in the
5 midst of you, says the Lord.

6 WOMAN: Sing? Rejoice? I've had enough of the Christmas
7 songs. Every time you go into a store, they're blaring in
8 your ear. And rejoice? Well, I'm too tired to rejoice. I
9 haven't baked the cookies for the children's party at
10 school or the fruitcake my husband likes. I haven't
11 finished sewing my daughter's dress nor the jacket I
12 promised my son. Guess I should have started those
13 knitting projects in July. — Do I really have to get Aunt
14 Jane a present? Well, I suppose so because I get one from
15 her every year. — Is this all there is to Christmas?

16 MAN: You haven't been listening. I invited you to go to
17 Bethlehem.

18 WOMAN: I tried that once.

19 MAN: And what did you find?

20 WOMAN: Oh, it was a nice little story about a mother and
21 her baby and some shepherds and wise men —

22 MAN: Did you hear the good news?

23 WOMAN: What news?

24 MAN: About the gift, the one that God wants you to receive.

25 WOMAN: I must have missed that somewhere between a
26 shepherd's crook and an angel's wing.

27 MAN: It takes a little effort to make the journey to
28 Bethlehem, you know. It wasn't easy for Mary or the
29 shepherds. And the wise men traveled for weeks.

30 WOMAN: But they brought him gifts, the baby in the manger,
31 I mean.

32 MAN: Only because God had given us his gift first — that
33 baby born so long ago in Bethlehem. For God so loved
34 the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes
35 in him should not perish but have eternal life.



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