

A Christmas Eve Liturgy

Youngest Child: Why is tonight a most special night, and why do we light candles tonight?

Reader 1:

Because tonight the promises of God given so long ago are fulfilled in the birth of our Savior-King, Jesus: “the people walking in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in the land of deep darkness—on them a light is shined.”ⁱ

[light the first candle]

Heavenly Father, we light this candle to thank you for the hope that comes with Jesus’ birth, because hope is kindled when light shines into dark places.

Child: But how do we know that Jesus is this hope?

Reader 2:

The birth of Jesus was celebrated on heaven and on earth! God says that the heavens declare the glory of Godⁱⁱ, and that a star would come out of Jacobⁱⁱⁱ.

[point to star on Christmas tree or have one child hold up a star]

A star told of the birth of Jesus, sending wise men from the East to start a long journey to worship the baby king^{iv}. The only thing brighter than that star’s light is the light of Jesus, who said “I am the light of the whole world.”^v

Oldest Child:

[light the little candle]

But how can such a little candle light up the whole world?

All:

Because God gave us great light in a small package!

Reader 1:

Jesus was born in a small town, Bethlehem, for “out of you will come a ruler for Israel, whose origins are of old, from ancient times.”^{vi}

Reader 2:

Jesus was born as a little baby. His birth displays his humility, his troubles in this world mean he understands our humanity^{vii}, and his sinless and holy life prove his purity^{viii}. Jesus came vulnerable, helpless and human to show us that he knows what it’s like to be us, and to show us that God loves us.

Child:

And why did angels come to the shepherds and not to the rulers?

Reader 1:

Because Jesus is our great shepherd, come not to dictate with power but to lead with love. And that message of love comes to those humble in heart who are looking for some good news. That's why the shepherds rejoiced and worshipped the baby-King who is our always-good shepherd, Jesus.^{ix}

Child:

So what is the first part of this good news?

Reader 2:

The first part of the good news is that Jesus is the Prince of Peace^x.

Child:

And how do we know that Jesus is this peace?

Because Jesus creates peace by making all things right, in heaven and on earth. Jesus is our peace, and he gives us his peace, and no one can ever take that peace away.

[light the second candle]

All:

Jesus, thank you for being our prince of peace. We light the candle of peace to represent the peace that rules in our hearts and drives away all fear.

Child:

What is the second part of the good news?

Reader 1:

The second part of the good news is that Jesus is our Mighty God. Jesus was a human, like us, but also in his nature he is God, with no beginning and no end.^{xi}

Child:

And why did mighty God come to earth?

Reader 2:

Jesus came to invite us to be a part of his kingdom, and to find us when we are lost^{xii}, and to show us that he is the way, the truth, and the life^{xiii}. Jesus kept the all the promises God had ever made, to show us how great God's love is for us, that we can be his children too.^{xiv}

[light the third candle]

All:

God, thank you for showing us what love is: the gift of Jesus, who teaches us to love you, to love one another, and who shows his love through laying down his life for us so that we can experience eternal life with Him.

All Kids:

So why is this the BEST news?

Reader 1:

Because on Jesus' birthday, he gives US a gift--the most good and perfect gift! The free gift is eternal life in Christ, where we get to be in his kingdom forever.

So**What kind of kingdom is God's kingdom?**

Reader 2:

It's a place of feasting and laughing; more beautiful that you can even imagine. It's a place where all sad things are undone and there is no crying or pain^{xv}. And it's a wonderful place for everyone who believes.

[light the final candle]

All:

Holy Spirit, you make our joy complete! We celebrate this most special night because we have the light of Jesus Christ in our hearts. Teach us to celebrate this gift with our life, our love, and our obedience to the Father.

Close your time with a favorite Christmas carol, or singing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

The following references are used in the liturgy, and can also be chosen to read aloud a selection to supplement the worship time.

ⁱ Isaiah 9:2

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

ⁱⁱ Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

ⁱⁱⁱ Numbers 24:17

"I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near.
A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel.

^{iv} Matthew 2:1

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

^v John 8:12

¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

^{vi} Micah 5:2

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans^[a] of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."

^{vii} Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

^{viii} 2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{ix} Matthew 2:9-10

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

^x Isaiah 9:6

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

^{xi} Philippians 2:6-8

Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[a] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Isaiah 40:28

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

^{xii} Luke 19:10

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

^{xiii} John 14:6

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xiv} 1 John 3:1a

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

^{xv} Revelation 21:4

4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death^[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”