

“Come to the Manger: Joy for Advent”

by
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What Joseph and Mary, in the most significant moment of their lives to date, learned the lesson their son would later preach on the mountain: Don't worry about anything, for God in heaven provides all our needs...even a manger, when there's no room in the inn. This reading, for the third week in Advent, reminds us to come to the manger with joy.

Themes: Christmas, Advent, Joy, Joseph, Reader's Theatre, virgin birth, incarnation, Sermon on the Mount, Beatitudes

Who Reader 1
Reader 2

When Present

Wear (Props) Unless you have the script memorized, Readers should have a black binder to read from.

Why Matthew 1:18-25 and Matthew 6

How If you read this from the script, be familiar enough with your lines so that your head isn't down in the script the entire time. Embrace the awe and mystery of the scripture.

Time Approximately 3 minutes

Readers enter and address the audience.

Reader 1: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear."

Reader 2: We don't often think of the Sermon on the Mount when we talk about Christmas.

Reader 1: But as we approach the manger to prepare our hearts for Advent, we want you to imagine with us.

Reader 2: Imagine with us, for a moment, what it must have been like to witness the miracle of the Incarnation through the eyes of the first witness to Christ's birth:

Reader 1: Joseph, husband of Mary.

Reader 2: The scriptures tell us that he was a righteous man.

Reader 1: A man God spoke to in dreams.

Reader 2: A man who loved and honored his wife.

Reader 1: And he was a man who had a lot to be anxious about during the first Christmas season in history.

Reader 2: His first worry: The social stigma of shame.

Reader 1: Mary was pregnant, and he wasn't the father.

Reader 2: Joseph wanted to protect Mary from disgrace.

Reader 1: He believed the angel when it was revealed to him that the baby Mary carried was conceived of the Holy Spirit,

Reader 2: Yet few others did.

Reader 1: Another thing to worry about: Joseph had to find a way to get to Bethlehem, from Nazareth—a journey of 100 miles.

Reader 2: Days on the road by foot with a pregnant wife at the command of no one less than Caesar who decreed they register for the Roman census.

Reader 1: Every detail of her health,

Reader 2: the journey,

Reader 1: their accommodations and provisions were on his mind.

Reader 2: We don't know if it was because of the stigma of her pregnancy,

Reader 1: Or because there were so many others travelling the same road,

Reader 2: But when they finally arrived, there was no family in Bethlehem willing or able to help Joseph and his young wife.

Reader 1: The rule of threes: Joseph’s third worry came when it was time for Mary to give birth and there was no room for them, not even at the inn.

Reader 2: Tired and alone,

Reader 1: In an unfamiliar place,

Reader 2: Joseph had to deliver a baby.

Reader 1: But, you see, Joseph was used to solving problems.

Reader 2: As a carpenter, he was someone who could see what was not yet there and make a vision into a reality.

Reader 1: The desperately creative idea, to take shelter in a stable meant for livestock, and fashion it into a delivery room that would have to double as a nursery for the night.

Reader 2: And so, Joseph and Mary, in the most significant moment of their lives thus far, learned the lesson their son would later preach on the mountain.

Reader 1: Have you ever wondered if Jesus, when he told the crowds not to worry about their lives, or about what they’d eat or drink, had the night of his birth in mind?

Reader 2: Perhaps Jesus remembered the story that his earthly father told him about his birth when Joseph and Mary received urgent provision from God on that cold night in Bethlehem:

Reader 1: A place for Jesus to be born.

Reader 2: A manger for the King.

Reader 1: A place for the Savior of the World to arrive in order to fulfill God’s eternal plan of salvation.

Reader 2: As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, let’s go to the manger knowing that God provides for all our needs.

Reader 1: As we go to the manger, remember that God sees the end from the beginning.

Reader 2: He has fed us with the bread of life

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Reader 1: He has let us drink from the well of his salvation.

Reader 2: God has clothed us in new robes of righteousness.

Reader 1: As we light the Candle of Advent, we remember that God provides for all our needs and made a way for us to be reconciled to him.

Reader 2: Today we come to the manger with joy.