



**As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright,
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to Thee.**

**As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to Thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before
Thee, whom heaven and earth adore,
so may we with willing feet
ever seek Thy mercy-seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare
at Thy cradle rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure, and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.**

**Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds Thy glory hide.**

**In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
hallelujahs to our King.**

William Chatterton Dix, 1837-98

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Prayer

**Infant holy, infant lowly,
for His bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.**

**Swift are winging angels singing,
nowells ringing, tidings bringing,
Christ the babe is Lord of all,
Christ the babe is Lord of all.**

**Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new.
Saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true.**

**Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow,
Christ the babe was born for you!
Christ the babe was born for you!**

**Polish carol authorship attributed to Piotr Skarga (1536-1612)
tr. Edith MG Reed, 1885-1933**

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Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

Luke 1:26-38

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Luke 1:26-38

³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

Luke 1:26-38

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

Luke 1:26-38

35 And the angel answered her, “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.

Luke 1:26-38

³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Luke 1:26-38

38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

**It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:-
‘Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven’s all-gracious King!’
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.**

**But with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and man, at war with man, hears not
the love song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
and hear the angel sing.**

**For, lo! The days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the Age of Gold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.**

Edmond Hamilton Sears, 1810-76 All words are reproduced under Christian Copyright licence no. 293885

Luke 1:39-45

39 In those days *Mary* arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of *Mary*, the baby leaped in her womb.

Luke 1:39-45

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Luke 1:39-45

44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

**O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by:
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.**

**O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.**

**How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him, still
the dear Christ enters in.**

**O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.**

**We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel.**

Philips Brooks, 1835-93

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Luke 1:46-55

**46 And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the
Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices
in God my Saviour,
48 for he has looked on the
humble estate of his
servant.**

Luke 1:46-55

**For behold, from now on
all generations will call me
blessed;**

**⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has
done great things for me,
and holy is his name.**

**⁵⁰ And his mercy is for
those who fear him
from generation to
generation.**

Luke 1:46-55

**51 He has shown strength
with his arm;**

**he has scattered the
proud in the thoughts of
their hearts;**

**52 he has brought down the
mighty from their thrones**

**and exalted those of
humble estate;**

Luke 1:46-55

**53 he has filled the hungry
with good things,
and the rich he has sent
away empty.**

**54 He has helped his
servant Israel,
in remembrance of his
mercy,**

Luke 1:46-55

**⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring for ever.”**

**From the squalor of a borrowed stable,
by the Spirit and a virgin's faith;
to the anguish and the shame of scandal
came the Saviour of the human race!
But the skies were filled
with the praise of heav'n
shepherds listen as the angels tell
of the Gift of God come down to man
at the dawning of Immanuel.**

**King of heaven now the friend of sinners,
humble servant in the Father's hands,
filled with power and the Holy Spirit,
filled with mercy for the broken man.**

**Yes, He walked my road
and He felt my pain,
joys and sorrows that I know so well;
yet His righteous steps give me hope again
I will follow my Immanuel!**

**Through the kisses of a friend's betrayal,
He was lifted on a cruel cross;
He was punished for a world's transgressions,
He was suffering to save the lost.
He fights for breath, He fights for me,
loosing sinners from the claims of hell;
and with a shout our souls are free
death defeated by Immanuel.**

**Now He's standing in the place of honour,
crowned with glory on the highest throne,
interceding for His own beloved
till His Father calls to bring them home!
Then the skies will part as the trumpet sounds
hope of heaven or the fear of hell;
but the bride will run to her Saviour's arms,
giving glory to Immanuel!**

**Then the skies will part as the trumpet sounds
hope of heaven or the fear of hell;
but the bride will run to her Saviour's arms,
giving glory to Immanuel!**

Stuart Townend

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Prayer

**Still the night! Holy the night!
Sleeps the world; hid from sight,
Mary and Joseph in stable bare
watch o'er the child beloved and fair,
sleeping in heavenly rest;
sleeping in heavenly rest.**

**Still the night! Holy the night!
Shepherds first saw the light,
heard resounding clear and long,
far and near, the angel-song,
'Christ the Redeemer is here!
Christ the Redeemer is here!'**

**Still the night! Holy the night!
Son of God, O how bright.
Love is smiling from Thy face!
Strikes for us now the hour of grace,
Saviour, since Thou art born!
Saviour, since Thou art born!**

Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848

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**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all.
Amen.**