

# youthESource Drama

## Glory Be, A Christmas Drama

by Sarah R. Larson

Full Dialogue, no singing

**Suggested Use:** A stand-alone evening or afternoon production.

**Approximate Running Time:** 30 to 40 minutes, *flexible time dependent on production style*

### Scripture References:

#### Lectionary B: Christmas

December 24: Psalm 96: 5 - 6, Luke 2:1 - 14

December 25 *Dawn*: Micah 5:2 - 5a

December 25 *Day*: Psalm 2:1, 2, 10 - 12

*and*

#### Lectionary B: Good Friday

John 19:16 - 18

*and*

#### Additional Scripture:

Luke 17:6, 1 Samuel 10:1, John 20:29

*with support from The Lutheran Study Bible footnotes commentary*

Music from *Lutheran Service Book*.

### Characters:

NARRATOR

CAESAR AUGUSTUS

KING HEROD

ATTENDANTS

JOSEPH

MARY

INNKEEPER

BETHLEHEM CROWD, *varying ages*

SHEPHERDS, *varying ages*

BABY JESUS

MICAH the PROPHET

DAVID the SHEPHERD BOY

ANGEL VOICE

ANGELS

JESSE

SAMUEL the PROPHET

CITIZEN 1

CITIZEN 2

VISITOR 1

VISITOR 2

SHEPHERD 1

SHEPHERD 2

WOMAN

## Scene 1

*An introduction of "Angels From The Realms of Glory" (LSB 367) is played. Lights dim to half.*

*Lights go down as one full verse of the song is played.*

*Lights up. NARRATOR enters carrying a Bible.*

NARRATOR: Hello. (BEAT) You know, Jesus Christ came to us from realms of glory. We can only imagine that, of course. He came from a kingdom of unspeakable majesty, and from undeniable dignity. From unimaginable peace. How do we know this? (NARRATOR holds up Bible) This. (BEAT) But, why did he do that?

*Lights up to reveal a hill with a dark cave set against a blue sky filled with stars. NARRATOR approaches the hill thoughtfully, then turns back to the audience.*

NARRATOR: God chose to come to us and to redeem us in this way. (BEAT) Here, let me read. (NARRATOR opens Bible): "So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to a place called The Place of a Skull (NARRATOR indicates hill) which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them." (John 19:16 - 18) (NARRATOR thoughtfully closes Bible) Why would he do this, for those men on either side? And for we who have no glory at all and have absolutely nothing to offer? What kind of King would give himself up for this purpose: to save us from our sins?

*NARRATOR turns to watch DAVID enter. DAVID is carrying a shepherd's staff and a lantern. He climbs the hill and peers out over the audience, lifting the lantern up to see.*

NARRATOR (continued): David. (BEAT) This shepherd boy, many years before Jesus was born, deeply understood what it meant to be small. He learned what it meant to be big, too, seated on a throne. He knew the difference between very still waters and valleys of shadow and death...he knew death, and knew what it was like to lose a son. Above all he knew what it meant to carry the weight of sin in guilt. David knew that he was incapable of saving himself, and he in turn believed in the freedom of forgiveness under a compassionate and patient God. He knew what men sought, and he knew what he was in danger of seeking for himself.

*NARRATOR steps to the side to watch.*

DAVID: "Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord..." (Psalm 2:1, 2) I know that the Lord "sits in the heavens [and] laughs" at this, because this is false glory! "O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled." (Psalm 2: 10 - 12)

*JESSE hurries in leading the prophet SAMUEL.*

JESSE: David?

DAVID: Yes, Father.

JESSE: Come!

*DAVID descends the hill, and greets JESSE.*

JESSE (continued): The prophet Samuel.

DAVID: Hello.

SAMUEL: David. Son of Jesse.

DAVID: Yes.

SAMUEL: Please. Right here.

*SAMUEL urges him to kneel, and DAVID does so. SAMUEL lifts his eyes and hands to the heavens in prayer.*

DAVID (to JESSE): Father.

JESSE: Listen to him, Son.

SAMUEL: David. (BEAT) "Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies..." (1 Samuel 10:1)

*NARRATOR steps out to address the audience.*

NARRATOR: Was David any better than the kings he admonished to be wise? We might catch ourselves believing so. His story is spectacular, with giants and stone and victory. He was chosen out of all his brothers, and out of all of his people to lead them. But, David knew what his own jealous and lustful spirit was capable of, and he knew the frailty and fear and fleeing that comes with sinning against the Lord. He was not better and did not have more faith than any of the rest of us, because even Jesus said years later that, "If [we] had faith like a grain of mustard seed, [we] could say to [a tree], 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey [us]." (Luke 17:6) No, he was not better or worse, but he believed. He stood out among men. And, he believed...

DAVID: "... all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." (Psalm 96:5 - 6)

*SAMUEL lowers his hands and rests a hand on DAVID's head. DAVID bows his head.*

DAVID (continued): Not ours.

*SAMUEL motions DAVID to stand. JESSE gathers the shepherd staff and lantern and follows SAMUEL and DAVID as they exit.*

NARRATOR: God, help us. Rescue us. Have mercy on us. Come, Lord Jesus.  
"Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Psalm 2:12)

*NARRATOR exits as lights go down.*

*"Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle" (LSB 454) is played through to the opening of the next scene.*

## **Scene 2**

*Lights up to reveal the same scene, but with a throne center stage. NARRATOR is standing beside it, thoughtfully.*

NARRATOR: A long time ago, though maybe not as long as it seems, Jesus Christ the King came from his realms of glory to fulfill the promises he had made about our rescue. At the time, as today, emperors lived and moved and made policy, and they mandated that people go from here to there.

*BETHLEHEM CROWD begins to filter in from various entrances, visiting and dealing with each other. NARRATOR moves to the side to allow for the shuffle, watching the activity.*

NARRATOR (continued): But in Bethlehem...in this humble, tiny place...royal *glory*, or anything that resembled it, didn't look all that appealing. Glory looked selfish. It looked dark as night, as unfeeling and inconsiderate as a foreign occupancy concerned only with counting heads. And so it was "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town." (Luke 2:1 - 3)

VISITOR 1 (to CITIZEN 1): Hello, is there somewhere to eat?

CITIZEN 1: You didn't bring anything with you?

VISITOR 1: We intended to do business here.

CITIZEN 2: That was foolish.

VISITOR 2: Why?

CITIZEN 2: Look at this chaos! This is a tiny place. This is an enormous crowd.

VISITOR 1: No room, either, I suppose.

*CITIZEN 1 and 2 laugh with each other.*

CITIZEN 1: You came a day too late. You'll need to sleep in the hills.

VISITOR 2: Is it safe?

CITIZEN 2: I don't know...but cities have walls for a reason!

*CITIZEN 1 and 2 walk away laughing. VISITOR 1 and 2 sigh wearily.*

VISITOR 1: Cities have walls. Ha. Cities have a lot of things, but nothing to offer any visitor.

VISITOR 2: It isn't their fault.

VISITOR 1: I'll tell you something. Caesar likes to count...but I challenge him to count how many times I walked through camel dung to get here.

*VISITOR 1 and 2 sigh again and begin to approach other BETHLEHEM CITIZENS, asking and pointing. The BETHLEHEM CITIZENS laugh quietly and point in opposite directions. There is a general sense of chaos and confusion as the crowds jostle and do business.*

*CAESAR enters in a stately manner, with ASSISTANTS trailing him. One ASSISTANT carries a scroll, and another is carrying an ornate, jeweled goblet.*

NARRATOR: I don't know if Caesar *liked* to count, but he and many others did think it advantageous of him to do it anyway. And who was this man? The Roman Senate gave Octavian the title of "Augustus" which means "the exalted one," and *oh* he had his glory. The great-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, Augustus once crossed enemy territory to reach his great-uncle after a shipwreck and thus impressed Julius Caesar so much as to find himself heir to Caesar's name and fortunes. (BEAT) Inherited glory, but his glory nonetheless.

*CAESAR seats himself on the throne.*

CAESAR (waving to an ASSISTANT): Now.

*The ASSISTANT hands CAESAR the goblet and stands readily waiting. CAESAR takes a long drink.*

HEROD (with authority): Caesar!

*HEROD enters from the other side and approaches the throne. HEROD's ASSISTANTS follow him respectfully. CAESAR looks up at him suspiciously and hands his ASSISTANT the goblet.*

NARRATOR: And Herod...Herod was an ambitious but paranoid ruler over all Judea, and was too willing to submit to the glory of *this* false god for the sake of his own popularity and safety.

CAESAR (skeptical): Herod. *King.* (BEAT) I suppose it's no small thing to be king.

HEROD: It is no small thing to be Caesar. (BEAT) If I'm not mistaken.

CAESAR: Indeed.

*CAESAR eyes HEROD critically and HEROD returns a confident glare.*

CAESAR (continued): Yes, it is right for you to say so.

*CAESAR waves to his ASSISTANT who hands him the scroll.*

CAESAR (continued): You are from Palestine. And Marc Antony made you tetrach of Galilee.

*HEROD nods with dignity.*

CAESAR (continued): ...and now you are king of Judea.

HEROD: Yes, my lord.

CAESAR: From Palestine.

*HEROD is getting uncomfortable. He raises his chin in defense, defiant.*

CAESAR (continued): Then you will do as I say...it is decreed, and it will be done in the Roman way.

*CAESAR holds out the scroll. HEROD nods to an ASSISTANT and the ASSISTANT takes the scroll and unrolls it so that HEROD might read it.*

HEROD: A census. (BEAT) The Roman way? But, they are Jews.

CAESAR: That makes no difference to me.

*HEROD nods and the ASSISTANT rolls the scroll.*

NARRATOR: Unwittingly Caesar would set into motion the events of Jesus' birth that would bring to fulfillment the prophecy in Micah regarding his birthplace. Listen to the what the prophet has to say.

*The crowds, CAESAR, HEROD and the ASSISTANTS freeze. MICAH enters carrying a lantern, and stands on the hill above all the others. He looks out unto the audience.*

MICAH: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephratha, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now *he* shall be great to the ends of the earth. And *he* shall be their peace." (Micah 5:2 - 5)

*MICAH exits.*

CAESAR: I trust you to keep the peace.

*HEROD stiffens and takes the scroll from the ASSISTANT, handing it to CAESAR. HEROD exits with his ASSISTANTS following. CAESAR watches them go. The BETHLEHEM CITIZENS exit. The INNKEEPER remains.*

NARRATOR: Oh, Caesar. Oh, Herod. You who knew no peace, shall know Peace soon...and be threatened by him.

*CAESAR stands, looking after HEROD, and then exits the opposite direction annoyed. The ASSISTANTS take the throne and follow him.*

NARRATOR (continued): You see, man's attempt at glory will often dictate what happens to the lives of so many other people. Joseph the carpenter, along with Mary his wife, knew the disruption well.

*JOSEPH and MARY enter, wearily. JOSEPH carries a lantern guiding their way. They approach the INNKEEPER.*

NARRATOR (continued): "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town 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 registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child." (Luke 2:4, 5)

JOSEPH (to INNKEEPER): Please. You *must* make an exception. She's in need!

INNKEEPER: That doesn't mean I have what you need, carpenter. The rooms are full, my own bed rented out...I can't give you what I just don't have!

MARY (in pain): Joseph.

JOSEPH (to INNKEEPER): Anything.

*The INNKEEPER sighs and slowly nods his head. He points in the direction of the cave.*

JOSEPH (continued): We'll take it.

INNKEEPER: I will do my best to keep it private, but we have people who are keeping animals in there overnight. I don't want you blaming me if some mule kicks you in the head.

MARY (in pain): Joseph.

*JOSEPH nods at the INNKEEPER, and the INNKEEPER steps out of the way nodding in impatient agreement. He watches them go, thoughtful, then exits. JOSEPH and MARY approach the cave and stand before it overwhelmed.*

NARRATOR: Joseph led his pregnant wife over the hills where David once tended his father's sheep. He led her into a busy little town too crowded to take them in. He put her in a barn to give birth to a son he couldn't claim. Joseph and Mary did not feel like royalty, like a descendent of the famous king. Both Joseph and Mary came because they were told. They were taxed in money *and*, in many ways, in spirit.

JOSEPH (to MARY): This isn't right.

MARY (in pain): It doesn't matter. He's coming anyway.

*JOSEPH leads MARY into the dark cave and they disappear.*

NARRATOR: Don't fool yourself this Christmas. There was nothing glorious about it.

*Lights down.*

*"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (LSB 357) is played into the opening of the next scene.*

### **Scene 3**

*Lights up to reveal SHEPHERDS sitting on the hill. A woman stirs something in a pot over an open fire.*

SHEPHERD 1: It's cold tonight.

SHEPHERD 2: It's always cold.

SHEPHERD 1: Not this cold.

SHEPHERD 2: Yes, it is.

*The SHEPHERDS attempt to bundle themselves up more.*

SHEPHERD 1: Is it getting colder?

WOMAN: No.

SHEPHERD 2: Yes, it is!

SHEPHERD 1: I don't think so.

WOMAN: Do you need something to do? Because I can give you something to do.

SHEPHERD 1: No, Ma.

SHEPHERD 2: Sorry, Ma.

NARRATOR: "And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8) From Caesar's decree, to an overwhelmed innkeeper, to shepherds sitting on a hill...the familiar Christmas story goes. But think of this: we know of the shepherd David who became a king and lived in his palace, who then had descendants numbered many, who in turn now sit on the hills and are shepherds themselves.

SHEPHERD 1: Don't sit on me.

SHEPHERD 2: I'm not sitting on you.

SHEPHERD 1: You're *sitting on me!*

SHEPHERD 2: Well if I *am*, it's because you're warm and I'm not!

SHEPHERD 1: Get away!

*The SHEPHERDS get into a heated argument and others must break them up.*

NARRATOR: We might call this a picture perfect moment, but the world didn't believe shepherds were a thing of glory. What glory from heaven would risk its beauty for the sake of some dusty, dirty servants tending family flocks? The task itself was dangerous and cold. A routine of going out and coming in again, of moving up the hill and down to the water, of fighting off beasts sometimes bigger than themselves. Thus, was the life of a shepherd. And, why would this night be different than any other? (BEAT) Was there more to look at? Brighter lights from town? Noisy caravans and disruptions that made the sheep run away from their master? If so, maybe tonight

would be a little different than all the rest. But, would they know the difference? Would somebody tell them? After all...they are only shepherds.

*SHEPHERD 1 rises, as if hearing something unusual.*

SHEPHERD 1: I hear something.

SHEPHERD 2: Go to sleep.

SHEPHERD 1: Didn't you hear that?

SHEPHERD 2: No.

*WOMAN stirs and looks up curiously.*

WOMAN: He's right.

*Suddenly a bright light fills the stage. The SHEPHERDS, startled, scramble backwards as they look up at the sky in the direction of the light.*

NARRATOR: But, Jesus came for the "only", for the distressed, for the kings and soldiers, for Mary and Joseph, and for the people who don't know anything about him at all...and *telling* somebody matters.  
(BEAT) And so, suddenly...

*A brighter light hits the stage, and the SHEPHERDS shout out in fear.*

SHEPHERD 1: Heaven help us!

SHEPHERD 2: What's happening!

WOMAN: Praise be to God!

*Suddenly, the ANGEL appears behind them.*

ANGEL: "Fear not..." (Luke 2:9 - 11)

*The SHEPHERDS whip around in fear and cower backwards, moving in the opposite direction.*

NARRATOR: "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..." (Luke 2:9 - 11)

ANGEL (continued): "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:9 - 11)

WOMAN: Lord, have mercy!

ALL SHEPHERDS: Lord, have mercy!

SHEPHERD 1: An angel!

SHEPHERD 2: Why now?

SHEPHERD 1: Why here?

WOMAN: Why us?

ANGEL: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12)

NARRATOR (continued): Glory? In a feed bin? And yet...how can you doubt the glory of the Lord when it's standing right in front of you? "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."  
(John 20:29b)

*The SHEPHERDS laugh in shocked and amazed joy. Suddenly, the stage is flooded with bright light and the SHEPHERDS shield their eyes and look around them with added amazement and glorious joy. ANGELS enter in "multitudes."*

NARRATOR (continued): But then "...suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying..."

ALL ANGELS: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"  
(Luke 2:8 - 14)

*The SHEPHERDS point in awe, smiling and laughing and cheering. They stand, hugging each other with eagerness.*

NARRATOR: Maybe it would be best to trust this new description of glory...coming from those who have seen it for themselves.

*"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (LSB 361) is played into the next scene as the SHEPHERDS rush off with great excitement.*

*Lights down.*

#### **Scene 4**

*Lights up to reveal MARY and JOSEPH sitting in the brightly-lit cave. MARY holds JESUS wearily.*

JOSEPH (to MARY): Can I get you anything?

MARY: I just want to look at him.

JOSEPH: Mary, this isn't the way I wanted it to happen.

MARY: I know. (BEAT) But none of that matters anymore. He's here. In our arms! We are safe, warm and fed. What else can we ask for?

NARRATOR: Mary and Joseph had no choice. The travel was arduous, the situation foreign to them. Everyone had the same task and no one had any room. Normal sleeping arrangements didn't exist for this couple, and so they humbly and hurriedly accepted a cave. A barn. A place where animals gave birth and no one else. What glory comes in *this*? What kind of king wouldn't give himself any better if he had the power to do so? And yet, "...while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:6, 7)

*JOSEPH gently takes JESUS and steps out of the cave, in awe of the baby.*

JOSEPH: Hello, little one. You are so small...and so *big*, more than we know. You are named Jesus. (BEAT) *That is your name!*

NARRATOR: Swaddling clothes. A sign of tender care. Mary washed Jesus, rubbed him with salt, and wrapped him. Warm, loved, and very much planned. The birth of a child always comes with hardship, but to *this one* the greatest hardship of all would come. And from *this* greatest act of sacrificial love, an eternal future for sinners. *Why?*

*JOSEPH looks out over the audience.*

NARRATOR (continued): Because he could and we couldn't. Because he wanted to when we didn't. Because he loves us, when we couldn't even love ourselves. With us there is death, but with him there is death to our nature and life for us everlasting. (BEAT) Humble us, O Lord. Humble us in the glory that is you.

*An introduction to "Away In A Manger" (LSB 364) quietly plays as the SHEPHERDS enter, first in excitement then with shy approach. JOSEPH welcomes them, allow them to see JESUS. They ALL join MARY at the cave as JOSEPH hands JESUS back to MARY. The SHEPHERDS bow and worship. MARY is in awe.*

NARRATOR (continued): Yes, the so-called glorious world inhabited by limited men of all kinds changed forever at Christmas. A new definition of glory presented itself: all man all God with hunger and human hair and a heartbeat. What did this new picture of glory look like to those who only know how to achieve glory with their limited means, with our crowns and our money and our best efforts? What kind of glory does a stable represent other than the glory of beasts that eat and sleep and give birth themselves? Herod would eventually hear about it, and wouldn't believe. Or did he? Is that why he panicked, because he knew his glory was limited? We are limited, and helpless, and in desperate need of a Savior. (BEAT) But wouldn't you believe...kings would come and bring gifts and worship Christ the newborn king.

*"Away In A Manger" ends and ALL freeze and lights dim, leaving the cave illuminated. DAVID enters and climbs the hill with his lantern. He looks out above the audience. He wears a crown.*

DAVID: "Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth!...Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name..." (Psalm 96:1, 7 - 8)

*DAVID removes his crown and looks at it thoughtfully, then turns to look at the cave.*

NARRATOR: Maybe this is it. Maybe glory is not found in the place in which he came...but that he *is* glory come. (BEAT) Believe, and you will be saved.

*Lights down.*

*"Angels from the Realms of Glory" (LSB 367) is played.*

*Congregational singing of "Angels from the Realms of Glory" is optional.*

youthESource is published on the Web by the LCMS Office of National Mission—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; [www.youthesource.com](http://www.youthesource.com). Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 12 NO. 11. November 2015.