

youthESource Drama

Glory Be, A Christmas Drama

by Sarah R. Larson

Limited Dialogue with Congregational Sing

Suggested Use: Best used for morning, day or evening worship settings

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

Hymns taken from *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB)

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

Scene 1

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

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.

Lights go down as the chorus is repeated instrumentally.

NARRATOR (in darkness): Jesus Christ came to us from realms of glory, from a kingdom of unspeakable majesty. From undeniable dignity. From unimaginable peace. (BEAT) Why?

Lights up to reveal a hill with a dark cave set against a blue sky filled with stars.

NARRATOR: God chose to come to us and to redeem us in this way: "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) 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?

DAVID enters, 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, a 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. David wrote...

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)

DAVID sits comfortably on the hill.

NARRATOR (continued): David knew that the Lord "sits in the heavens [and] laughs" at this, because this is false glory! David wrote...

DAVID: "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. DAVID stands respectfully, descends the hill, and greets SAMUEL. SAMUEL urges him to kneel, and DAVID does so. SAMUEL lifts his eyes and hands to the heavens in prayer.

NARRATOR (continued): Was David any better than this? 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 (continued): Not ours.

SAMUEL motions DAVID to stand. JESSE gathers the shepherd staff and lantern and leads the other two off the stage. ALL exit.

Lights down.

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

An introduction to "Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle" (LSB 454) is played as lights come up slightly.

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle;
Sing the ending of the fray.
Now above the cross, the trophy,
Sound the loud triumphant lay;
Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer,
As a victim won the day.

Tell how, when at length the fullness
Of the appointed time was come,
He, the Word, was born of woman,
Left for us His Father's home,
Blazed the path of true obedience,
Shone as light amidst the gloom.

Lights down.

Scene 2

Lights up to reveal the same scene, but with a throne center stage.

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 (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)

CAESAR enters in a stately manner, with ASSISTANTS trailing him. One ASSISTANT carries a scroll.

NARRATOR (continued): Now, 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.

CAESAR seats himself on the throne. HEROD enters from the other side and approaches the throne.

NARRATOR (continued): 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 waves to his ASSISTANT who hands him the scroll. CAESAR opens it and HEROD leans in to read.

NARRATOR (continued): And yet 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.

NARRATOR (continued, MICAH optional): Micah says...

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)

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

The crowds exit. MICAH exits. CAESAR rolls up the scroll and hands it to HEROD who nods obediently. CAESAR and HEROD exit, the ASSISTANTS carry the throne off stage. The INNKEEPER remains.

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, and JOSEPH pleads with him.

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 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.

The INNKEEPER waves JOSEPH and MARY towards the cave, and the INNKEEPER exits. JOSEPH and MARY stand before it overwhelmed.

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

Lights down.

An introduction to "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (LSB 357) is played as lights come up slightly.

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

O come, oh come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh come, Desire of nations, blind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Lights down.

Scene 3

Lights up to reveal SHEPHERDS sitting on the hill.

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.

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

NARRATOR (continued): Orchestrated, prophesied, beautiful. 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.

One SHEPHERD rises, as if hearing something unusual. He/she begins to wake other SHEPHERDS and they rouse themselves, wondering what the sound is.

NARRATOR (continued): 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 bright light hits the stage, and the SHEPHERDS cower in fear.

NARRATOR (continued): "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 VOICE: "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)

The SHEPHERDS begin to rise, stunned yet hopeful.

NARRATOR: Disbelief. What is this and why now and why here?

A growing confidence appears in the SHEPHERDS as they rally around each other, gazing towards the direction of the bright light. They begin to smile.

ANGEL VOICE: "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: Glory? In a feed bin?

The SHEPHERDS laugh in shocked and amazed joy. Suddenly, the stage is flooded with bright light and the SHEPHERDS shield their eyes and look on with added amazement and glorious joy.

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

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

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

An introduction to "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (LSB 361) and the SHEPHERDS rush off with great excitement.

Lights dim to half.

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

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 wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king
And peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous Gift is giv'n!
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 sins and enter in,
Be born to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
Oh, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

Lights down.

Scene 4

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

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.

NARRATOR (continued): 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.

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.

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

Away in a manger,
No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down His sweet head
The stars in the bright sky
Looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing
The poor Baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle
'Til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus,
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever
And love me I pray
Bless all the dear children
In Thy tender care
And take us to heaven
To live with Thee there.

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.

"Away in the Manger" continues to quietly play in the background.

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.

NARRATOR (continued): David writes...

DAVID VOICE (unseen): "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)

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.

An introduction to "Angels from the Realms of Glory" (LSB 367) is played.

CONGREGATION or SOLOIST

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light:

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen his natal star:

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Lights down.

"Angels from the Realms of Glory" continues to play as congregation recesses

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