

Voices of Christmas

By

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Theme:

This play conveys the true story of Christmas through the telling of the stories by those who were there to experience the birth of Christ. The play is set as a living nativity scene. Each of the characters take their turn coming to life to tell their version of the story.

Biblical Reference:

The Christmas Story

Approximate Running Time:

45 minutes without music
60 minutes with music added

Cast of Characters:

Narrator: An off-stage voice that introduces the characters and conveys what the characters have learned at the end of the play.

Mary: The Mother of Christ. She should be dressed in traditional biblical attire. She should come across as a simple girl who is humbled by the heavenly task asked of her.

Joseph: The Father of Christ. He should be dressed in traditional biblical attire. He should present himself as confident, caring, and proud to be the father of this child.

Shepherd 1, 2, 3: Three of the Shepherds who were in the field the night Christ's birth was announced. The three monologues can be consolidated if need be. The shepherds should be dressed in traditional biblical attire. They should speak with 'country' or 'hick' accents, or as uneducated people would speak. Their awe of the situation they found themselves in should be evident.

Wiseman 1, 2, 3: Three of the wisemen who saw the new star in the sky and journeyed to see the Christ Child. The three monologues can be consolidated if need be. The wisemen should be dressed in traditional biblical attire. They should speak with an air of aristocracy, but their manner of speech should not make them appear to be conceited. The fact that they are honored to be a part of history should come through.

Notes:

A simple or elaborate set can be used for this production. A couple of bales of hay, a manger, and a baby are all that is needed to conjure an image of the birth of Christ in the minds of the audience. Or you can use a complicated set depicting a manger scene. The choice is up to you.

Although this play was not written to be used as a musical, appropriate songs, either contemporary or classical, can be used to separate the monologues. Simply insert the selected songs between the appropriate monologues and you have a musical presentation. You may also wish to have a chorus standing off to either side of the stage to serenade the audience as carolers.

This play can also be performed as reader's theatre. Instead of coming to life and performing where they are standing, the characters of the nativity could come to life and move to a podium positioned to one side or another. If you choose to use this option, be sure that the actors are familiar enough with their scripts to make their 'reading' come across as 'performing.'

Scene:

[The stage is dimly lit. A nativity scene is set at center stage. As the characters are introduced, they make their way to the stage and take their place as following: Mary and Joseph are positioned right next to the manger. They are looking at the Christ Child lying in the manger. The Shepherds are just off of the immediate manger area, but close to the Christ Child. Far off to one side, as if still on their journey, the three Wise men are standing, looking towards the nativity scene.]

The play opens as the narrator reads his/her part from off-stage. A spot is used to highlight each of the actors as they tell their own story. The rest of the nativity scene remains still as the other stories are being told. Then the narrator tells how each of their lives were changed by the experience of being a part of the birth of Jesus.]

Narrator

Christmas is a special time for all of us. We all love to entertain ourselves with the various traditions of Christmas that we've participated in since we were young. Santa Claus, elves, presents, Christmas trees, brightly colored lights, tinsel, Christmas carols, mistletoe, and holly are but just a few of the things that focus our thoughts on Christmas. But do you know that all of these things were missing from the very first Christmas? Do you know that the true Christmas story had just a few simple elements and that it involved only a few simple players?

Tonight we're going to introduce you to those players and ask them to tell the story of the very first Christmas from their own perspective. Each of their stories reveals what the Christmas story means to them, and when we combine all of their stories together we learn exactly what Christmas means to us today.

[At this point the nativity scene is formed as the narrator introduces each of the characters one by one. Upon the first mention of the character's name, that character is to quietly walk onto stage and take their place within the nativity scene. They remain still until it is their time to speak and then they return to their appointed place and remain still until they leave the stage as the narrator refers to them again at the end of the play. Another option is for Mary, Joseph, and the baby to be on-stage, dimly lit. The lights come up on them as the narrator begins to tell about them.]

[Narrator should emphasize the characters names and pause slightly as the characters begin to walk on stage.]

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was just a simple girl. She was barely old enough to be considered a woman. Her simple faith allowed her to believe that God was about to perform a great miracle through her and her willingness to be used allowed it to happen.

Joseph, Jesus' father, was a simple carpenter who was well respected in the community. A man of God who was willing to listen to the Lord's commands and obey. His obedience supported and confirmed Mary's decision to believe and obey what the Lord asked her to do.

The shepherds were simple people. They were uneducated in the ways of the world, but they had a simple, well-defined faith in the God of their forefathers. They were willing to listen to what was told to them and believe that it was true. By believing and acting on the information given to them they were able to play a part in the greatest birth mankind would ever know.

The wisemen, or magi, were highly educated, intelligent men who noticed a new star in the sky. They came to investigate the significance of the star. As they found the true meaning of the new star in the sky their eyes were opened to the true significance of the birth of the child whom they found.

These players make up the Christmas story that we are going to tell tonight, but yet they each have their own story to tell. Their words make up the voices of Christmas. Listen carefully to the truth of their words, for therein you will find the true meaning of Christmas.

[Mary stirs from her stillness, adjusts the blanket around the baby, kisses him, etc., then addresses the audience and begins to tell her story.]

Mary

My name is Mary. I'm just a simple girl. I'm not special, I'm not important, I don't stand out in a crowd, and I like it that way. I want to quietly serve the God of our fathers, live an obedient life, raise a family, and raise that family the way that I've been raised - to honor and obey the Lord.

My parents had arranged my marriage to a man named Joseph. I knew that he was a fine man and I was looking forward to the day when we would be married. Some think that I was unfaithful to him, but I wasn't. An angel, named Gabrielle, came to me when I was alone and spoke to me. "Greetings, you who are highly favored," he said. "The Lord is with you."

I must tell you that I was very afraid of the angel who stood before me. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I didn't know what to do. There was an angel of the Lord standing before me, talking to me, and telling me that I was highly favored.

He noticed that I was afraid. He told me not to be afraid because I had found favor with God. He told me that I was going to become pregnant, and that I would give birth to a son, and that I was to name him Jesus. He told me that Jesus would grow to be a great man and that he would be called the Son of the Most High. He was to receive the throne of his father David and that he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

I was confused. How could I be with child if I haven't ever been with a man? He knew my confusion and calmed me. He told me that the Holy Spirit will come upon me, and the power of the Most High will overshadow me. He also told me that Elizabeth, my dearest friend, will even have a child in her old age. Surely this was a day for rejoicing.

Still, I couldn't believe that the Lord had chosen me to carry the Messiah. I couldn't believe that He had chosen me to bring this child into the world and raise Him as my own. I wasn't a princess, but I felt like one. I wasn't rich, but I knew no one else had ever carried the treasure I was soon to carry.

Then as time passed, and the baby's birth was drawing near, I knew that it wasn't a good time for us to go to Bethlehem. But there was a census throughout the land, and we had no choice but to report to the town of David to be counted.

As we entered the town of Bethlehem I knew we were going to be in trouble. Joseph couldn't find a place for us to stay. All of the inns were full and I knew that it was about time for the baby to be born. Finally, a nice man offered to let us stay in his stable, and although it wasn't what we were looking for, we gratefully took it because we really had no other choice. It was there that Jesus was born. I wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger that Joseph had made ready for Him.

As I looked into this precious child's eyes I couldn't help but wonder what things were going to be like in the future. The birth of this precious child was a miracle sent from heaven. He had been given to me by God. He was the greatest gift that anyone had ever given to me and he was to become the greatest gift ever given to anyone and everyone.

[Mary returns to her place in the nativity scene, greets the baby. Joseph stirs, rubs Mary's shoulders, smiles at the baby, etc., then addresses the audience as he begins to tell his story.]

Joseph

I couldn't believe that she was pregnant. She had been pledged to be my wife and I had agreed to marry her because she was said to be simple, faithful, and a godly woman, and then I learned that she was pregnant. I knew that I had the right to cause her some public disgrace for the things she had done against me, but she was a sweet girl, and I decided to divorce her quietly instead.

After I began to plan how I would go about divorcing her, an angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream and told me that I was to take Mary as my wife, as I had planned before. He told me that the baby she was carrying had been fathered by the Holy Spirit. He told me that she would give birth to a son, that we were to name him Jesus, and that Jesus will save His people from their sins. I believed and obeyed this angel of the Lord, and I don't regret the decision, no matter what others had to say to me regarding the matter.

As the time of her pregnancy was nearing an end we were called to return to the town of David to take part in a census and pay our tax. We had no choice in the matter. We had to go, even though I knew that Mary shouldn't be traveling. The journey was tough on her, but she endured it well. She didn't complain even though I knew the travel on the rough terrain was not easy for her. As we entered Bethlehem I knew we were in trouble. There were people everywhere and I assumed that we would have a hard time finding a place to stay for the night. Unfortunately, I was right.

I went to every inn that I saw, imploring the keeper of the inn to let us have a room, hoping that they would have pity on us for Mary's sake. I wasn't ashamed to tell them that my wife was with child and the time to deliver the child was nearing. Each told me that there was no room for us in their inn and that we had to move along. I wondered if part of the reason they didn't let us stay was because Mary was so close to giving birth, and I wondered if Mary thought that too. Finally we came upon a nice man, who had an inn on the outskirts of town, who allowed us to rest in his stable. I knew that Mary needed to rest, and I thought that a bed of hay would be better than sleeping out in a field under the stars.

It was that night, there in the hay that the innkeeper left in his stable, that Mary gave birth. It was a boy, just as the angel had told us it would be, and we did name him Jesus, just as we were told to do. It was hard for me to believe that the birth of the child the Jews had long awaited had taken place in a small stable behind an overcrowded inn, but I knew that the Lord God Jehovah was in control, and I wondered in amazement at His plans and how he had used Mary and myself to bring them into being.

[Joseph returns to his place in the nativity scene, smiles at the baby, and The Shepherds begin to tell their story.]

Shepherd 1

There aint much to bein' a shepherd. We just watch over our flocks of sheep, by day and night, we care for them, we harvest their wool, but that's about all we have to do. Don't get me wrong, it's not like we just sit around with nothin' to do all day. You see, sheep aint too smart and it takes a lot of care and attention to keep them out of trouble. We got about 600 sheep in our flock and there's about six of us shepherds that keep 'em in line.

Sometimes those sheep really get into trouble. They can get caught in a stream, caught in a thicket, caught in thistles, or lost in high grass, or in the woods. We also have to watch out for lions, dogs, and snakes. If one of the sheep get caught up in something we have to stay with the sheep until we get them free. Sometimes we get all muddy, sometimes we're covered in thistles or thorns, and sometimes we get all cut up trying to help out those stupid sheep. But without us they'd be in trouble, all right. Us shepherds keep them sheep alive sometimes.

Most days there aint much interesting goin' on in the fields. It's pretty rare for something special to happen to a shepherd when he's out minding his flock. For the most part we're just keeping the sheep out of trouble and trying to keep ourselves out of trouble while doin' it.

Shepherd 2

It may be a dirty job, but somebody's gott'a do it. No matter how rough our job is, or how much trouble those sheep are, no matter how hot, or cold we are, no matter how tired we get, no matter how bad a day can possibly be, things usually settle down at night and we get a much needed rest. The sheep are really tired from walking all day and they go to sleep pretty easy. Then we shepherds make a fire and have some fun. The dogs keep a good eye on the sheep and let us know if any are thinkin' about takin' off on us. That gives us a good chance to relax and have a good time with our friends.

Ah, there's nothing like a campfire after a hard day of shepherding. We sit around and relax, have a bit to eat, tell stories, sing songs, and learn more about the God of our fathers.

That's what we were doing earlier tonight, just outside of Bethlehem, when all of a sudden there's a great light in the sky and this man is kind'a floating in front of our campfire. I had never seen anything like it. It was as if there was a ghost haunting us or somethin'.

But then we found out that it was really an angel of the Lord. We had heard about angels as we learned some of the stories from our ancestors, but I never thought I would ever see one, and I never would have guessed that he'd look anything like the angel we saw. He was so bright it was as if there was a sun shining down on us and talking to us. None of us could see. We fell back away from the fire blinded and afraid.

He told us we didn't have anything to be afraid of. Like any of us believed that. He told us that this was a day of great joy, a day that we would never forget. He said that a Savior was born in the town of David, which was Bethlehem, which just happened to be a few miles down the road from where we were that night.

We all knew about this Savior that the angel told us about. Just that night we had talked about him around the campfire, but I couldn't believe that he had been born tonight and that he was so near to where we were. Then the angel told us that we could go and see him. He said we'd find him lying in a manger all wrapped up in cloths.

It was right then and there that I decided I was going to see this newborn Savior that the angel had just told us about.

Shepherd 3

Suddenly there were a ton of angels - all over the sky. They were saying "glory to god," "peace on earth," and stuff like that. It was so bright we could hardly see them.

Then they went up into the sky and disappeared. We just sat around trying to figure out if what we just saw was real, or if it was like a dream or somethin'. Finally, I says, "Let's go to Bethlehem and check it out."

It didn't take much to get the others going. We all wanted to see if the great things that the angel had told us about were true or not.

We decided that only half of us should leave the flock, so half of us stayed behind with the sheep and the rest of us took off to the city to find this child the angels had told us about. It didn't take us too long to find the baby, lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, just like the angel told us we'd find him.

We stayed there for a while, just kind'a takin' the whole thing in. This was something that we had looked forward to for a long time, and we couldn't believe that we, a bunch of smelly shepherds, were actually a part of the birth of the Savior of the world.

We left the stable and told everyone who would listen to us about what had happened to us that night. People couldn't believe what we had said, but they found out that we were telling the truth when they went to see that Baby Jesus for themselves. Then they believed everything that we said.

I'm so glad that I was a part of something so special. God sent His Son to earth to save all of His people and I was able to be a part of the story. I'll never be the same again.

[The Shepherds now position themselves in the immediate manger scene, bowing down before the Christ Child, etc., and The Wisemen begin to tell their story.]

Wiseman 1

Many knew of the impending birth of a messiah. The prophets had long foretold the events surrounding his birth. Blessed is he who lived during the time that the prophets foretold of, for he would be a witness to the greatest birth known to mankind. Little did I know that the events that were soon to take place, events that I became an integral part of, were those that were written about hundreds of years before the date of my birth.

I am an astronomer. I spend a large amount of time studying the stars in the sky, creating charts of the stars we have discovered, determining how they can be used for navigation, and making the charts available for others to use as they travel.

The Torah is one of the books that I have been educated with. I am well versed with the writings of Moses, Abraham, David, and others who were followers of the mosaic law. I am a staunch keeper of the mosaic law and an attentive student of the prophecies written regarding the one who would come to redeem God's chosen people.

We knew that a bright star would be an indication that the birth of the Savior had taken place. Upon first recognition of the new star in the east we speculated that this was the sign the prophets had long foretold. We determined to travel to Jerusalem to investigate the appearance of the star and hope to visit the new born king.

Wiseman 2

We were surprised to find that Herod was still the king of the land. We thought that the new king would replace the old king and began to question him regarding the birth of the messiah. We were beginning to wonder if the star in the sky was an omen of some other significance.

Herod wasn't aware of the new star in the sky and unsure of our claims. He called together all of the people's chief priests and teachers of the law and asked them if our words were true, and if they were, where the Christ was to be born.

They told him that the prophet had written, "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

Herod didn't take these words lightly. He was concerned that the birth of the new king would mean the end of his reign. He dismissed everyone but us and secretly asked us when we had seen the star and how far we had traveled. He asked us to go to Bethlehem, which wasn't very far away, and find the child we had traveled in search of. He requested that we return with the information so that he too could worship the newborn king.

As we left Herod's palace and headed south to Bethlehem we noticed that the same star we had seen in the east went ahead of us until it stopped over the place where the child was. It was as if God wanted us to find the child. Rather than canvas the city in search of this precious child, we had only to follow the leading of the star to the very house wherein he was. We rejoiced over God's provision of that star and the realization that we were about to find the child we had traveled so far to find.

Wiseman 3

I can remember the excitement I felt as we approached the home of the King of the Jews. I had been around royalty for many years, but I never felt as nervous of being in the presence of royalty as I did the day we found Jesus.

We presented gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. We gave Him gold because it is the purest, most expensive metal we know of. This signified his royalty.

The Frankincense was an expensive perfume that was often used to anoint high priests as they entered the priesthood. He was to become the high priest for us all.

The Myrrh was a fine spice that is often used to prepare a body for burial. The gift of this spice represents the redemptive death and resurrection of this precious child as a man.

I wish I could have spent more time in his presence. It's not often that I'm able to be in the company of a man as great as he, and I didn't want that time to end. I made a vow to follow the life of this newborn king and learn all I could from him.

I thanked the Lord for allowing me to take part in this historic event. I shall remember it for as long as I shall live.

[The Wisemen now position themselves in the immediate manger scene, bowing down before the Christ Child, offering their gifts, etc. All players hold their positions until the narrator tells of what they learned through their experience with the birth of Jesus. At this point they quietly say good-bye to the Christ Child and quietly exit. Mary and Joseph remain where they are until curtain.]

Narrator

[Spoken slowly, with suspense and emotion.]

Jesus was born on a silent night in a quiet stable in the midst of a busy town. The birth of this newborn king was not surrounded with celebration by the highest of men. It was the humble members of society that celebrated His birth for they knew the true significance it carried. They recognized Jesus as the Messiah they had long searched for. They knew that through Him they would receive reconciliation with God, a new relationship with Him, and a promising future in a new covenant.

The shepherds came to see the baby that the angels told them about. They left with a realization that the baby will be the great shepherd who can lead them to a closer relationship to the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to a final resting place in a pasture that is beyond our wildest dreams.

The wisemen came to pay the newborn king the homage he was due. They left for home knowing that Jesus was the most important person they had ever met. They recognized the significance of his lordship even though they were men of learning and knowledge and He a simple child born in a manger.


Mary and Joseph could only wonder at the way the Lord had used them to bring about the birth of his son as a human child to live in a small town and the way that He used simple people to celebrate that birth. They knew that much was expected of them, for raising the son of God would not be easy for them, but they knew that they were blessed beyond comprehension.

Christmas is a special time for all of us, but it's a really special time for some of us. It's the time of the year that we contemplate the true meaning of the season, how Jesus humbled himself by leaving his throne in heaven to be born as a human, a creature He created, to live alongside of us, to minister to us, to teach us, and to die for us. For within his death and resurrection are the keys to eternal life. The Bible says that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life, and that the only way to get to heaven is through Him.

Have you placed too much emphasis on the worldly aspects of this holiday? Are you willing to change your priorities and give Him the tribute due to Him? Are you willing to become like those who told their stories tonight and be used of Him in whatever way He has chosen for you? Are you able to celebrate Christmas as the birth of your Lord and Savior, or have you yet to accept his sacrifice for you?

He became the first, and greatest, Christmas present ever. Remember the voices you have heard tonight. The voices that convey the true meaning of Christmas. These Voices of Christmas. Meditate on them. For within these voices you find the true meaning of life, and life everlasting. Amen.

- CURTAIN -



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