Joy to the World!

Words by ISAAC WATTS Music by JAY ROUSE and GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL

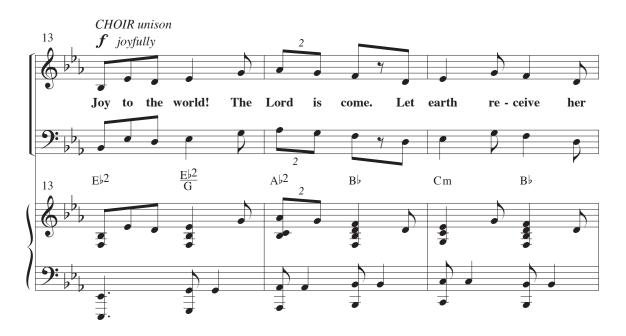
Arr. by Jay Rouse

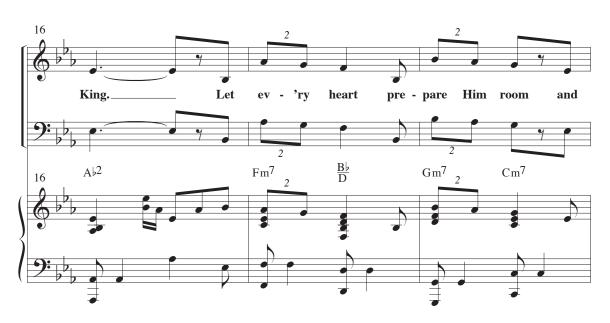
Optional Opening: Today, we have an opportunity to enter the Christmas story in a unique way. We will hear the promises from the scriptures. We will see their fulfillment in the firsthand stories of those who lived them. In each of these stories and songs we will witness some of the events that led up to the birth of the Messiah, the Christ. The world had waited for so long. Now, at last, the fullness of time had arrived. Jesus was the Word made flesh. He came and He dwelt among us. Now witness the irresistible love of the Father for His people. Joy to the world! The Lord is come!



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The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'" (Mark 1:1-3)

The angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you will name him John." (Luke 1:13)

The Fulfillment:

Zechariah: What shall we say of Him? This God of Israel—the God of our Fathers? Just this—that Yahweh will do what Yahweh will do. Now, answer this. When have we needed Messiah more than now, hmm? And what shall we say of this old man, this priest of the division of Abijah!? This—that in the winter of my years I hold the promise of God! Listen, I'll tell you how it happened.

The day before Sabbath, I traveled to Jerusalem to assume my sacred duties. It is as I've always done. The lots were cast and the honor to offer incense in the Holy Place fell to me! Never before had I been selected! Never would such an honor happen again. I'm an old man you see, my Elizabeth an old woman. We have no son—no child to care for us. Our lifelong sorrow. But Yahweh—blessed be His name—offered this kindness—and I will not forget. I, Zachariah, would have the honor to serve Him in His temple. That morning, I washed and dressed. I entered the chamber, the bowl of incense in my hand. I could hear the chants of the Levites. I scattered the incense over the coals—tears on my face! "Hear the prayers of Your people, Lord!"

Then suddenly—from the smoke—a voice! "Zechariah, do not be afraid. Yahweh has heard your prayer." Heard my prayer?

"Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son." But how? Elizabeth is too old. I am too old! To my eternal shame, I could not believe! "I stand in the presence of God!" says he. "I was sent to bring you this good news! Now because you doubted, you shall be deaf and mute until the day that these things come to pass!"

And it was as he said. I left the Holy of Holies. I could not hear. I could not speak—until the day of his birth—when my son, John, the promise of God was born.

O Come, Emmanuel, Rejoice!

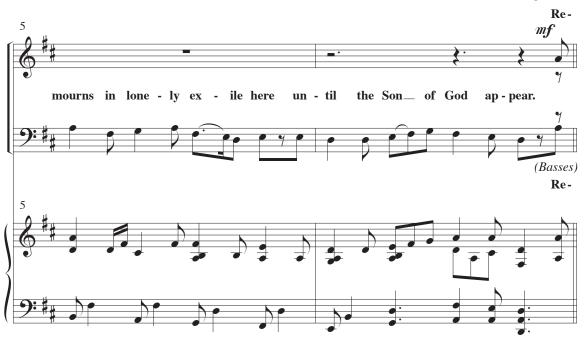
Words: Latin Hymn Music by PIETRO YON Adapted from Plainsong Arr. by Jay Rouse

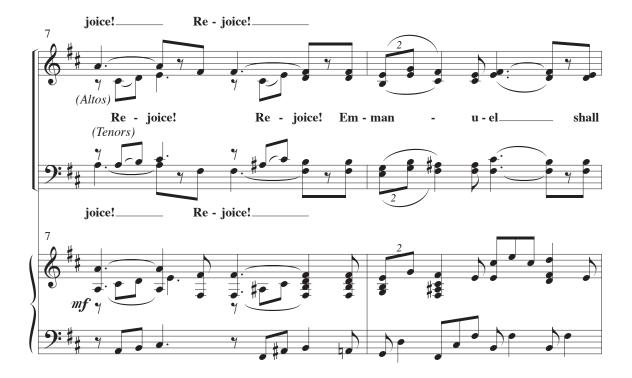




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(Sopranos)













"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with Child and give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High..." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:30-32, 34)

The Fulfillment:

Mary, the Mother of Jesus: The Spirit of the most High will overshadow me? I don't understand. Am I supposed to? God's Son! I am to bear God's Son! Oh, blessed am I! Of all the women of the world, He's chosen—me! Me. Generations have longed for this promise! And I'm the one to carry it? Oh truly—truly, nothing shall be impossible with God!

I can see now how God is remembering to be merciful to the lowly—the outcast! And all history hinges on this alone—Yahweh has chosen to make a home among us—His people! He proves that He loves the forgotten. (opt. music begins) He rescues the helpless—the helpless. Like this Baby will be helpless. One of us! How can I bring God's Son into the world? Strange how joy mixes so easily with fear. What will tomorrow hold? I don't know—but I say yes! Yes! May the mighty hand of God do all that He wills! For God alone my soul waits. May it be to me as He has said.

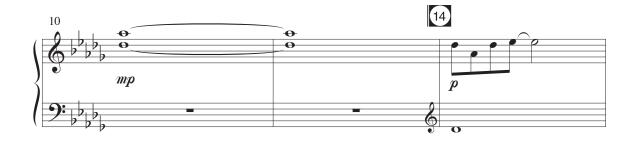
Magnificat (Mary's Song)

Words by ROSE ASPINALL Music by JAY ROUSE Arr. by Jay Rouse















But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:20)

The Fulfillment:

Joseph: "Jehovah increases." My name—it means, "Jehovah increases." It's never been more true. He has added blessing upon blessing. I've chosen to walk this path of obedience though it may mean my own disgrace. Still I didn't think my betrothal to Mary would bring disgrace.

Nazareth is a small village. It didn't take long for word to spread. I understood the looks—the judgment, the disappointment. But I would not—could not abandon Mary to them. Even in those first moments when I became aware something was amiss, I knew it couldn't be Mary. Whatever else happened, she didn't deserve that punishment. Maybe I couldn't ignore the hurt, but I would not put her through the public humiliation. (opt. music begins) This - this was the only thing I did know.

That was before the dream. Before the angel spoke His name, Jesus! Before my world turned upside-down and now I see the task, the blessing. Mary needs me. This Baby needs me. I will be His shelter. I give my word.

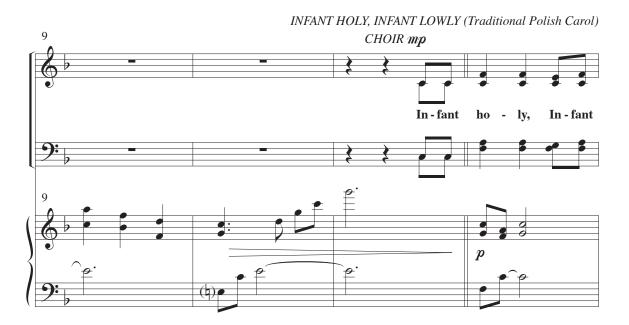
He Is Your Son

with Infant Holy, Infant Lowly (Joseph's Song)

Words by ROSE ASPINALL Music by JAY ROUSE Arr. by Jay Rouse



















And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a Baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12)

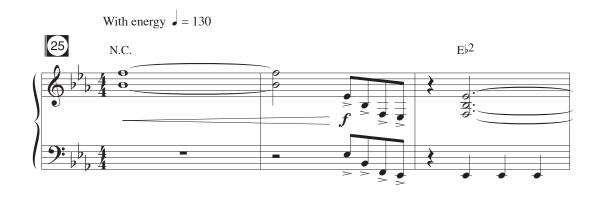
The Fulfillment:

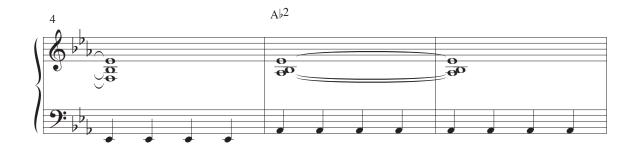
Shepherd: Where should I start? Stars falling from the sky? No. Lightning? No—not lightning. Not stars. The truth is—we didn't know. But we were scared—all of us. As scared as we'd ever been. And I don't scare easily. Lions, I know. I can defend a lamb from a lion or any predator if need be—but this? This was like nothing I'd ever seen. Who'd believe us? An angel appearing in the sky isn't very believable, but a thousand of them—ten thousand? I wouldn't expect anyone to believe that. I wouldn't believe it—except that I saw it! With my own eyes, I saw it!

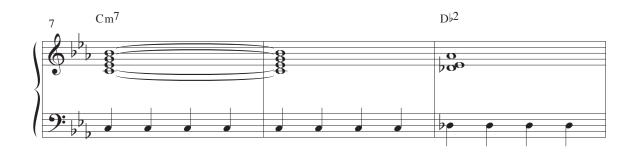
And as unbelievable as this sounds, most unbelievable was the message. Peace to men. His favor rests—on us! On us? You mean shepherds? We don't have anyone's favor! We're unclean. And that means one thing. We're unwelcome. It's always been that way. I suppose we're used to it. But, doesn't mean we don't know the scriptures. We do, we know the promises. And we've waited for Messiah as much as any priest. Maybe even more so. But, a stable? A manger? Messiah cannot be born in an animal's feeding trough. Maybe we misunderstood. All we knew was that we had to find out. The angel said go, and so we did! We went. And we found Him there, this Baby—this Messiah, wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Shepherds Run

Words by ROSE ASPINALL Music by JAY ROUSE Arr. by Jay Rouse























Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2:1-2)

The Fulfillment:

Wise Man: It was neither wealth nor influence, though I have both, that took me on this journey. I'm a scholar and an old one at that. Tired too. I've long since passed the day and desire to travel. I'm a pragmatic man of books and letters. And I would've stayed among my sacred writings—except for this; it was written! You see?! The prophetic implications were clear. I could not shake it.

The prophecies read thus. "But you, O Bethlehem...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. A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." This we've studied. This we've known!

And there it was, the star of prophesy! The star of the Messiah! In the night sky! Yes, Messiah would come—and soon! One does not sit on his cushions when one encounters such a sign.

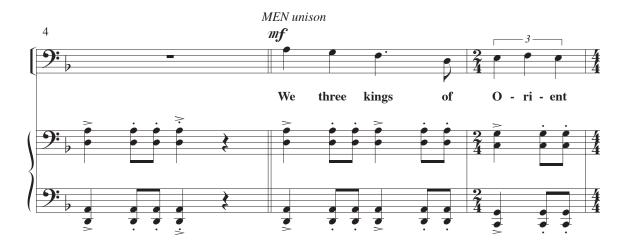
No, neither wealth nor power—but longing! This is what compelled me. And so, a journey to end all journeys! Where would it lead, we did not know. But we could not do otherwise.

We Three Kings Medley

Words and Music by JOHN H. HOPKINS, JR.

Arr. by Jay Rouse

















Pastoral Encouragement (optional reading):

Behold Jesus, the Promise. Behold Jesus, the Fulfillment. He's both—for every promise ever made finds its fulfillment in Him. Tonight we've read the scriptures, we've heard the testimony and we rejoice because the much longed for Christ has come. He was born that man no more may die.

This is more than a nice story about a baby in a manger. This is God in flesh come among us to redeem us. This is Emmanuel, God's Son, who was willing to give up His rights. So that He could become like us, He took on the very nature of a servant. Who but God would have done that? It was His choice. It was His plan, and it's what makes the gospel so amazing!

Today, we heard from Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. In each of their stories we see redemption from fear and shame. We heard from the wise man who came searching and we realize that it was Jesus all along who came searching for us!

If you keep your heart and mind open, if you will be receptive to His seeking, no story of fear or shame can keep Him away. There is redemption offered for every one of us. Tonight, may the astonishing grace and humility of Jesus draw you to Himself and to His love. Amen.

Behold a Savior!

Words by ROSE ASPINALL Music by JAY ROUSE Arr. by Jay Rouse



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Angels We Have Heard on High

Traditional French Carol



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