

Jesus, Rising Sun, Shine On Us!

by
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Summary: A Christmas liturgy that includes audience participation through the lighting of candles. Based on Zechariah's words, "The rising sun shall come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:78b-79), the liturgy answers several questions: Who is the rising sun? Who is the light the people saw? Who is the light that chased away the shadows of death? Concluded with five prayers, accompanied by the spread of candlelight throughout the audience, the liturgy focuses on Jesus, the light of the world. (Duration: 20 minutes)

(Each participant will have a candle in order to participate towards the end of the liturgy.)

Leader: In his prophetic song after the birth of his son, John, Zechariah said, "The rising sun shall come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:78b-79).

Reader 1: Who is the rising sun?

Leader: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2a).

Reader 2: Who is the light the people saw?

Leader: "On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2b).

Reader 3: Who is the light that chased away the shadows of death?

Leader: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Sing: *O Come, O Come, Immanuel*
O come, O Bright and Morning Star
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light.

Refrain:
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Immanuel shall come to you,
O Israel.

Reader 4: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9: 6-7).

Sing: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise the lost on earth,
born to give them second birth.

Refrain:
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Leader: Jesus, the rising sun that Zechariah spoke of, was born in a stable. Seemingly powerless, the Son of God came to earth as a baby.

Reader 5: Luke 2:1-7

Sing: *Silent Night! Holy Night!*
Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace! Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, source of light
now lies crying in Bethlehem’s stall,
tiny child, Creator of all,
infant, Savior, and King! infant, Savior, and King!

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, loves pure light
shines anew from your heavenly face,
greet the hour of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at your birth! Jesus, Lord at your birth!

Leader: When shepherds saw the brilliant light of the angel’s presence and the dazzling glory of the Lord, they heard the startling good news of salvation.

Reader 6: Luke 2:8-14

Sing: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye bright hosts of heaven above:
“Glory to God, all glory in the highest!”

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!

Leader: The shepherds didn’t hoard the good news. They went out and spread the light of the gospel, telling others what they had heard about the Christ.

Reader 7: Luke 2: 15-20

Sing: *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching
o’er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. **Refrain:**

The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior’s birth. **Refrain:**

Down in a lowly stable
the humble Christ was born
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. **Refrain:**

(At this point the leader lights her candle. She holds it high when she comes to Jesus’ words “I am the light.”)

Leader: Long ago the prophets foretold that Jesus would be the light. And while on earth, Jesus confirmed what they said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

(When the leader has read this passage, she lights the candle of Candleholder 1. At this point Candleholder 1 speaks.)

Candleholder 1: Shine your light on us, Jesus, so we will be guided on your path. Your path leads to peace with God and peace with our neighbours. Without your light, we will stumble in spiritual darkness.

(Candleholder 1 lights the candle of Candleholder 2. This process of lighting candles from one Candleholder to the next continues.)

Candleholder 2: Jesus, shine your light on us so we will grow spiritually. Just like all living things on earth need light to grow, we need your light to grow spiritually. Without your light, we will die.

Candleholder 3: Shine your light on us, Jesus, so our hearts will be warm and loving to others, forgiving them as you have forgiven us our sins. We need your warmth in our hearts so we'll strive to restore broken relationships, to love those whom we dislike or hate, to give ourselves to others as you continually give yourself to us.

Candleholder 4: Shine your light on us, Jesus, and destroy the shadow of death. Save us from spiritual death. Take away any fear of death we may have. Thank you that your perfect love in us casts away our fears and fills us with courage.

Candleholder 5: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, rise over us with healing in your wings (Malachi 4:2). Heal us by restoring us to God through the forgiveness of our sins. Heal us from the consequences of our sins and our wrong choices. Heal us from emotional, psychological and physical pain.

(There will be a moment of silence when the Candleholders light the candles of all other participants.)

All: Jesus said about his followers in the past and today,
"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Leader: *Prayer*

Shatter our darkness with your light!
Usher in day! Obliterate night!
Jesus, rising sun, we give you praise.
Help us to love you every day!

If you are interested in obtaining other Christmas programs for Coffee Break use (see summaries below), please contact Sonya VanderVeen Feddema at 905-937-6203 or sonyavf55@hotmail.com. If you e-mail her, please type Coffee Break in the subject line. Cost per item is \$15.00 US.

Summaries of Christmas Programs

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Amazing Grace

A Christmas program that incorporates a short story and a drama. In the story, First Guitar, the narrator tells about a childhood Christmas when she experienced Easter. The story ends with her comment that Amazing Grace is a Christmas song. Intermittently throughout the drama, a soloist sings the five stanzas of Amazing Grace. Each stanza is meaningfully related to the biblical narrative of salvation. In a gripping scene where wood from a shattered manger is used to build a cross, women will see the connection between Christmas and Easter. (Duration: 20-30 minutes)

Jesus: Born a Child and Yet a King

A Christmas liturgy that challenges women to reflect on this question: Are you welcoming Jesus as the almighty King of Kings -- “the good news of great joy” -- or as a baby who never grows up, who rests in a manger year round and is dusted off at Christmastime? Scripture readings, hymns, narration, and quotations from several Christian authors show women who Jesus is. (Duration 20 minutes)

Christmas Means God is True to His Word

A Christmas program that incorporates a short story and a liturgy. In the story, The Third Christmas, a 12-year-old girl realizes that God never breaks his promises, despite the results of the broken promises she sees in the lives of her sister, whose husband has abused her, and Matungulu, a Congolese refugee her family has befriended. Pointing women to fulfilled prophecies, the liturgy reflects on these questions: What kind of God could work out a plan over hundreds of years, and have every detail happen precisely the way he said it would? What kind of God would do this to save us from eternal death? (Duration: 30 minutes)

Receive Jesus With Praise!

A Christmas liturgy that celebrates how Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, and the Magi, despite their varying circumstances, recognized Jesus as the Son of God and received him into their lives with praise and adoration. (Duration: 15 minutes)

God of Surprises

A Christmas liturgy that explores how God's ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Opening with a plea for God to open our eyes to his astonishing deeds on humanity's behalf, the liturgy contrasts how we might have arranged Jesus' birth and how God actually did it. (Duration: 15-20 minutes)

Quitting Times

A Christmas program consisting of a short story and a drama. When Natalie considers quitting college, her father shares a story about a time in his life when he wanted to give up but was inspired to keep going because of Jesus' example. In the drama, an actress confronts Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, urging them to quit the tasks to which they were called because the personal cost would be too great. When she realizes that Jesus didn't quit but was obedient to God, she has a life-changing experience. (Duration: 30 minutes)

Unwrapping Christmas

A Christmas liturgy in which a cardboard box wrapped in layers of wrapping paper is unwrapped throughout a program that includes narration, Scripture reading, and singing. As the layers are stripped away the audience will celebrate God's love that sent his Son into the world to live, die, and rise again for humanity. The closing prayer is a plea for God to unwrap the layers of our sin and to wrap us in his love, peace, gentleness, and forgiveness so that we will be a present, God's presence, in the world until Jesus returns. (Duration: 20 minutes)

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