

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see, evermore and evermore!

At His Word the worlds were framed; He commanded; it was done:
Heaven and earth and depths of ocean in their threefold order one;
All that grows beneath the shining
Of the moon and burning sun, evermore and evermore!

He is found in human fashion, death and sorrow here to know,
That the race of Adam's children doomed by law to endless woe,
May not henceforth die and perish
In the dreadful gulf below, evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face, evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven adore Him; angel hosts, His praises sing;
Powers, dominions, bow before Him, and extol our God and King!
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert sing, evermore and evermore!

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Cover art: Painting by Lu Hung Nien; China (c. 1937). Mary stands in the snow in the foreground, while Joseph knocks at the gate. He carries their scanty effects in a bundle, Chinese fashion, on the end of a stick. The barking dog, the boy waving his hands, and the innkeeper not even leaving his table show the lack of preparation for the visitors.

Old Orchard Church

First Sunday of Christmas

December 29, 2013 — 10:15-11:50 a.m.

Art Work in print copy.

No Room in The Inn
Luke 2:7

Celebrating Our New-born King in His Three Comings

Jesus came, the heav'ns adoring,
Came with peace from realms on high;
Jesus came for man's redemption,
Lowly came on earth to die.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Came in deep humility.

Jesus comes to hearts rejoicing,
Bringing news of sins forgiven;
Jesus comes in sounds of gladness,
Leading souls redeemed to Heav'n;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Now the gate of death is riv'n.

Jesus comes on clouds triumphant,
When the heav'ns shall pass away;
Jesus comes again in glory;
Let us then our homage pay,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Till the dawn of endless day.

—Godfrey Thring (1884)



Today's Scripture

Old Testament Reading: Deut. 30:1-6

New Testament Lesson: Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 2:21

The Ministry of the Word

Teaching of the People of God:

A Time for Open Praise

Bethlehem

She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. -- Luke 2:7

It is Luke who tells us the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus and how the son of David (Jesus) came to be born in the city of David (Bethlehem). He lays his emphasis on two particulars—a decree of Augustus, the famous emperor of Rome, and the behavior of an anonymous innkeeper in Bethlehem. The emperor and the innkeeper were both—though quite differently and quite unknowingly—instruments of God's providential purpose.

On the one hand, Augustus, who reigned over the empire from 30 BC to AD 14, issued an edict that a census be taken of the whole population and that people must go to their own town in order to register. The census was doubtless with a view to taxation. As a result, Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It would have been unusual and unnecessary for Joseph to be accompanied by Mary, but probably he had resolved not to leave her behind in her advanced pregnancy.

On the other hand, no doubt relieved that their long journey was at last over, Joseph and Mary would have been devastated that the Bethlehem innkeeper could find no place for them to stay, except in what seems to have been a stable. When Mary's baby was born, she laid him in a manger, that is, in a feeding trough for animals. It was symbolic of the rejection that Jesus was later to experience.

Thus the emperor and the innkeeper both played their part in God's plan without knowing it. The emperor's edict brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:5-6). And the innkeeper, by reason of overcrowding in the town, ensured that the Savior of the world was born appropriately not in a palace but in a stable, not in splendor but in obscurity and poverty.

—John Stott in *Through the Bible, Through the Year: Daily Reflections from Genesis to Revelation* (2006)

