

The Morning After

A Christmas Morning Worship

By Mary Kuhlmann Antholz

In honor of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we stand for our first hymn.

Opening hymn: 379 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Invocation: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

You may be seated.

(Enter 2 Israelite women from the 2 outside back corners. If possible, each should carry what looks like a large water jug. A large picture cut out of poster board or cardboard works nicely. Any other costuming and props would be fantastic. The women begin talking to each other as soon as they turn the front corner. They need to carry on much of this dialogue in the aisle between the front pews, but end this segment exiting thru the main entrance.)

Rebecca: Good morning, Sarah! The Lord be with you.

Sarah: And with you, my friend.

Rebecca: Goodness, Sarah, you've had a lot of activity over your way!

Sarah: Yes, Rebecca. All these travelers pouring thru town have really kept us hopping! It's good for business, but I'm tired—and it's barely mid-morning!

Rebecca: I'll bet you're worn out, especially with that commotion last night. I could hear it clear over at my end of town! And that light—wasn't THAT one for the history books?!?

Sarah: What light? When? I don't remember seeing anything—but then when you cook for 100 guests and clean up the kitchen so you can get them on their way this morning, you fall asleep before you hit the pillow!

Rebecca: You didn't see it? Why, about midnight the whole sky lit up out south of town. It lasted several minutes, and then just faded away.

Sarah: Was it a thunderstorm, maybe? It doesn't look like it rained.

Rebecca: This was no thunderstorm. In fact, it sounded more like music than thunder and lightning. And not long after that several people came down from the hills and headed toward your old stable. That much I could see in the moonlight.

Sarah: Our stable? I hope they didn't steal anything. Why would anybody go there in the middle of the night?

Rebecca: Beats me! That's why I'm asking you.

Sarah: I must have slept right thru it. Come to think of it, Eli said something this morning about having let a young couple stay there overnight because the woman was so obviously pregnant that she was probably already in labor when they showed up on our doorstep long after supper. Beyond that, I haven't a clue.

Rebecca: I wonder what on earth was going on . . . (*Exit SARAH and REBECCA together, center aisle*)

Reader 1: *Micah 5:2*

Reader 2: *Luke 2:6-7*

Reader 1: It now becomes our privilege to tell these women that story, in song.

370 *What Child Is This*
374 *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child*
364 *Away in a Manger*
361 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Reader 2: *Luke 2:8-14*

366 *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*
380 *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*

Reader 1: *Luke 2:16*

368 *Angels We Have Heard on High* (antiphonally: men v 1, women v 2, all sing v 3)

Reader 2: *Luke 2:20*

(*Women re-enter by center aisle*)

Sarah: You mean all that REALLY happened last night?

Rebecca: In our town?

Sarah: Right under our noses??

Rebecca: In sleepy little Bethlehem?

Sarah: In MY stable!!

Together: And no one even told us!?!?

Sarah: Well, I'd better get back to work. More people will be on the move today.

Rebecca: You better get some rest before they arrive. Shalom, Sarah!

Sarah: Let's talk about this more tomorrow. Shalom, Rebecca!

(Shaking their heads, they go their separate ways, muttering)

Rebecca: Do you suppose it could be true?

Sarah: Well, it WOULD fit some of the ancient prophecies.

Rebecca: So close, and I missed it!

Sarah: So close, and I slept thru it all!!

Rebecca and Sarah: But I wonder, really wonder, why no one ever told me!

Sermon

Confession of sins: Lord, we have been guilty, again this year, of keeping Your Birth to ourselves, as though it were a secret. We have talked about it, and sung about it, in our own little church, and in our own little family, but so often we have failed to share the true story of Christmas with our co-workers, our classmates, our friends and neighbors. Help us to celebrate the rest of this day as YOUR Birthday, and empower and embolden us to share You with all those around us, for it is when we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and when we share this message of life and salvation that You have brought to us, that we fulfill the purpose for which You placed each of us here on this earth.

Absolution:

Nicene Creed: Let us, then, profess our faith in Him, for He has forgiven us:

Offering

General Prayers

Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Communion Hymns:

389 *Let All Together Praise Our God*

390 *Let Us All With Gladsome Voice*

Post-Communion Canticle: 381 *Let Our Gladness Have No End*

Prayer

Benediction

Closing Hymn: 387 *Joy to the World*