

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS

Article written by Pres. Thomas S. Monson (ENSIGN, Dec. 1990)

Adapted as a Choir Presentation by Betsy Bailey

“Hear the Angels Singing” - (Arr. by Lloyd Larson, Alfred Music) – Sung by Choir

In the New Testament of our Lord, John describes a journey by those who worship.

“And there were certain...among them that came up to worship at the feast: That same came therefore to Philip...and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.” (John 12:20-21)

Little children have another way of expressing the same wish. They might say, *“Tell me the stories of Jesus, I love to hear, things I would ask him to tell me if he were here.”*

They seek after Jesus and so it has ever been. No search is so universal. No undertaking so richly rewarding. No effort so ennobling. No purpose so divine.

“Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” – HYMNS 141, Sung by the Congregation

For generations, enlightened mankind in the Old and New worlds anxiously sought the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by righteous men inspired of Almighty God. Then came that night of nights when the angel of the Lord came upon shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks, and the pronouncement, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2: 11)

Thus personally invited to undertake a search for the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, did these shepherds concern themselves with the security of their possessions? Did they procrastinate their search for Jesus? The record affirms that the shepherds said one to another, *“Let us go even unto Bethlehem...And they came with haste.”* (Luke 2:15-16)

“Shepherds, Shake Off Your Drowsy Sleep” - (Arr. by Betsy Lee Bailey) – Sung by Choir and Baritone Soloist

Wise men journeyed from the East to Jerusalem, saying, *“Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him...When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

“And when... they saw the young child with Mary his mother, they fell down, and worshipped him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:2, 10-11)

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment — a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the promised Messiah, even Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

“The First Noel” (arr. by Betsy Lee Bailey) – Sung by the Choir

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, he came forth from heaven to live as a mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During his earthly ministry, he taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick, he caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

What was the reaction to his message of mercy, his words of wisdom, his lessons of life? There were precious few who appreciated him. They bathed his feet. They learned his word. They followed his example.

There were many who denied him. When asked by Pilate, *“What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ?”* They cried, *“Let him be crucified.”* (Matt. 27:22) They mocked him. They gave him vinegar to drink. They spat upon him. They crucified him.

Can we in part, appreciate the suffering of God, the eternal Father, as his Only Begotten Son in the flesh was placed on a cross and crucified? Is there a father or a mother who would not be moved to complete compassion if he or she heard a son cry out, as the Savior did, *“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.”* (Luke 22:42)

As God witnessed the suffering of his Only Begotten Son, he beheld his agony, there was no voice from heaven to spare the life of Jesus. There was no ram in the thicket to be offered as a substitute sacrifice. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

“Lord of All” - (written by Betsy Lee Bailey) – Sung by the Choir

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of Galilee, he said, *“Follow me.”* To Philip of old came the call, *“Follow me.”* To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instructions, *“Follow me.”* And to you and me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, *“Follow me.”*

But how do we follow him if we first don't find him? And how shall we find him if we first don't seek him? Where and how should we begin this search for Jesus?

The formula for finding Jesus has and always will be the same – the earnest and sincere prayer of the humble and pure heart. The prophet Jeremiah counseled, *“Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart.”* (Jer. 29:13)

“If With All Your Hearts” (from *Elijah* by Mendelsohn) – vocal solo

Before we can successfully undertake a personal search for Jesus, we must first prepare time for him in our lives and room for him in our hearts. In these busy days, there are many who have time for golf, time for shopping, time for work, time for play—but no time for Christ.

Lovely homes dot the land and provide rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, playrooms, sewing rooms, television rooms, but no room for Christ.

Do we get a pang of conscience as we recall his own words: *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."* (Matt. 8:20) Or do we flush with embarrassment when we remember, *"And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn."* (Luke 1:7)

No room. No room. No room. Ever it has been.

"Room in the Inn" (by Vanja Watkins, Jackman Music) – Sung by Choir

As we undertake our personal search for Jesus, aided and guided by the principle of prayer, it is fundamental that we have a clear concept of him whom we seek. The shepherds of old sought Jesus the child. But we seek Jesus, our Older Brother, our Mediator with the Father, our Redeemer, the Author of our Salvation; He who was in the beginning with the Father; He who took upon himself the sins of the world and so willingly died that we might forever live. This is the Jesus who we seek.

And when we find him, we will be prepared as were the wise men of old to provide gifts from our many treasures? They presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These are not the gifts Jesus asks of us. From the treasures of our hearts Jesus asks that we give of ourselves. *"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."* (D&C 64:34)

In this marvelous dispensation of the fullness of times, our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

Fortunately, the privilege to render service to others can come to each of us. If we but look, we, too, will see a bright, particular star which will guide us to our opportunity.

"Gentle Jesus" (by Michael Moody, arr. by B. Bailey) – Sung by Choir and Children

Every member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the waters of baptism, has covenanted to stand as a witness of God *"at all times and in all things, and in all places"* (Mosiah 18:9) and has expressed a willingness to *"bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."* (Mosiah 18:8)

By fulfilling this covenant in our lives, we will become acquainted with him who declared, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world." (3 Nephi 11:10) This is the Jesus whom we serve. I testify that he lives, for I speak as one who has found him.

"Sing Choirs of Angels" (Arr. by Jay Althouse, Alfred Music) – Sung by Choir and Congregation