

CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE

2010

Josiah Meyer

OPENING

Pastor Welcomes People, says a few words.

Congregational Song: "Oh Holy Night"

ACT ONE: Longing

Set: [Five people wearing no-logo, grey t-shirts and black pants walk to the front during the song. They are each holding a candle. Lights dim. Instrumentally play song “oh come oh come emmanuel”]

Candle-holder 1 (with boredom): God, Can I admit something to you? [deep sigh] Everything in my life just seems so meaningless. I mean, what's the point? I work so hard to get money. Why? So I can afford to do fun stuff. But so what? It's never enough! I've tried music, I've tried food, I've tried love. Everything is fun for a while, but then it fades away. My ears aren't satisfied with hearing, and my eyes aren't satisfied with seeing. And love? Who has ever been loved and not betrayed? Everything is pale and empty - no happiness lasts more than a few minutes. Only a few more years and I will all be over. God, what's the point of it all? It just seems to so meaningless.... [extinguishes candle, steps back]

Candle-holder 2 (with deep weariness): God, I am tired. I am just so *tired* of all of this. I rise early, I stay up late - working my fingers to the bone. And for what? What is *accomplished*? The sun rises and the sun sets. The rivers run, and the seasons turn - and yet the earth is still the same. So it is with my life. Will anybody even notice when I am gone? Who is all this working for? It certainly isn't for me - I don't even have time to enjoy it! Who will get it when I die? Will they deserve it? Will they squander it? Will my money make them fat and lazy? Or will I even have an estate to pass on? Chance and fate could sweep it all away tomorrow, and I could die flat broke. God, what is the point of all this? It all just seems so meaningless... [extinguishes candle, steps back]

Candle-holder 3 (with pent-up rage/frustration): God, if there is a God, can you help explain a few things? Today, I saw a big kid beat up a little kid and take his lunch money. You know why that made me so sad, and so angry, God? Because that is the whole story of human existence right there! In the place where there should be justice, there is injustice! The fields of a poor man produce plenty of food - but injustice sweeps it all away. Power is always on the side of the oppressor - there is never anyone to help the little guy. Nobody notices, nobody wipes away his tears. I have seen good people die young, and evil people die old and rich. Money is the answer to everything: but it's always the *wrong* people who have all the money! God, does anybody care about justice? Does anybody see? It all just seems so meaningless - so, so *wrong*. I wish I hadn't been born, rather than having to witness so much injustice... [extinguishes candle, steps back]

Candle-holder 4 (in a very broken voice): God...I know that I don't deserve to talk to you, God. I've done such terrible things - I can't help it! I wasn't raised the best, and

the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, you know? You want me to be clean from the inside out - but I'm not! I feel so dirty, so awful - like my bones are rotting away, I am so evil inside. I know that I'm not really good enough to speak to you, God. I've probably said too much already. I don't know why I'm even talking to you - you are so much above me! I won't say very much. I guess all I've got to say is please have mercy on me...please? [extinguishes candle, steps back]

Candle-holder 5 (sadly): God, how do I know? How do I know there is something more, something lasting after death? How do I know this isn't the end? Where does our spirit go when our bodies are lowered into the ground? How do I know that our fate is different from the birds, from the trees...from the dogs? Youth is so fleeting. And death - who can avoid it? You have given me a soul which cries out for the stars, but my feet - they cling to the earth. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust - here today, gone tomorrow, like a puff of smoke. That'll be me in a few years - gone, and forgotten. God, is this all that there is? It is all just so meaningless, like chasing after the wind... [extinguishes candle, steps back]

Song: "Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuel" - Solo or Trio

Slide-show "Candle in window, hands praying in black and white"

[candle-holders gather around microphone, which is directly below the overhead light]

ACT TWO: Emmanuel

Candle Holder 1: How long, Oh Lord?

Candle Holder 2: Will you forget us forever?

Candle Holder 3: Have mercy on us!

Candle Holder 4: Rescue us!

Candle Holder 5: Come and show us your face, come and *help* us!

Candle Holder 1: We crave refreshment!

Candle Holder 2: We need purpose!

Candle Holder 3: Give us justice!

Candle Holder 4: Please have mercy!

Candle Holder 5: Send us hope!

[All together] : God, have mercy on us!

[Light clicks on above speakers. "God" speaks into a microphone offstage]

God: Shall I send you a king?

Candle Holder 4: "Another king to take our money?"

Candle Holder 3: "Another king to rule with an iron fist?"

Candle Holder 1: "Another king to kill our sons and steal our daughters?"

[All together]: "No, not a king! Don't send us a king!"

God: "Shall I send a wise man?"

Candle Holder 5: "Another out-of-touch philosopher?"

Candle Holder 2: "More arguments about words?"

Candle Holder 3: "Another brainiac to make us feel stupid?"

[All together]: "No, don't send us another wise man!"

God: "Shall I send another religion?"

Candle Holder 3: "Another faith to fight over?"

Candle Holder 2: "More rules? More expectations?"

Candle Holder 4: "Don't we feel guilty enough already?"

Candle Holder 1: "We need *help*, not more legalism!"

[All together]: “No, don’t send us another religion!”

God: I shall send you a child.

Candle Holders: [dead silence – this will need to be practiced]

(pause)

Candle Holder 3: “A...a *child*?”

God: Yes. A child shall lead you. Watch! Wait! A virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel – God with us. The government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. He will not make a big fuss about himself, or come shouting in the streets. He will be gentle and tender to the weak and hurting. He will bring forth my justice in this evil world. Those who are walking in darkness will see a great light: for he will be the light of the world.

Congregational song: "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"

ACT THREE: Birth

[Angel begins walking down center aisle, holding a candle. Angle needs to arrive at Mary by the end of Narrator's piece.]

Narrator Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. [if angel is not there yet, wait before saying the last line:] And coming in, he said to her,

Angel: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Narrator: "But she was very perplexed at this statement, and wondered what kind of greeting this was. The angel said to her,

Angel: "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

Mary: "How can this be, since I am not married?"

Angel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Mary: "I am a servant of God. May it be done to me according to your word."

[Mary receives the candle]

Narrator: And the angel departed from her.

[Angel leaves the same way he/she came]

[Mary leaves]

Children Sing "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem"

[All children are asked to come to the front. A leader leads the children in the first verse of "oh little town of Bethlehem." This is unrehearsed]

ACT 3: Jesus

Narrator 1: Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Narrator 2 (child?): And Jesus remained with Mary and Joseph. He kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. As a man, Jesus began to in his hometown of Galilee,

[Jesus, holding a candle, walks on-stage.]

Narrator: ...and He said,

Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[Jesus walks off stage]

Narrator: Jesus was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness is not able to overpower it. Jesus came to His own and – although the world was made by Him – his own did not receive Him. But to as many as have received Him, He gave the right to become the children of God.

[John 3:16 appears on the projector-screen with the instructions: please read out loud with us...]

For God so love the world that He gave His one and only son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Narrator: Jesus died in our place. He was bruised for our sins, broken for our iniquities. He rose again to make a way for us to live again in Him.

Congregational Song: "Oh the Deep Deep Love of Jesus"

Act 4: Hope

[Jesus walks back onstage, holding candle. He sits in center-stage. People from act one walk up to Him, kneel before Him and talk to Him. He replies to their needs, and re-lights their candles.]

Candle-holder 1: Jesus, I feel so empty and dry. What is there in this life that is worth living for?

Jesus: (joyfully) Come, let's make a deal! You can buy from me food and wine – without money, and without cost! Come, taste and see that the *Lord is good!* Come work with me, learn from me, *follow* me. It will be a hard road. You may not know what the future will hold – or even when you will sleep from night to night. But I will fill your cup so full you won't know what to do with it all! You will have a spring of living water bubbling up right inside of you. Are you ready? Do you want a drink?

Candle-holder 1: Yes, Jesus. I am ready! [lights candle, stands at bottom of stage]

Candle-holder 2: Jesus, my soul is tired. I don't see the point of it all! Is there *anything* in life worth fighting for? Is there anything that will last?

Jesus: My child, you have been investing in a sinking boat. What you see – all this – it is all passing away. Don't focus your attention here – don't waste your time storing up treasures *here*. Look upwards, look forwards. Think about an investment that will last. Store up treasures *in heaven*.

Candle-holder 2: How do I store up treasures in heaven?

Jesus: I have given you much. Money, time, influence, power. Don't hoard it on yourself – invest it! Give it away! – to the poor, to the needy, to the helpless. When you help the least of these, my brethren, you help me – and I will not forget it! Make many friends – poor friends, needy friends, desperate friends. These people are special to me. When you invest in these weak and lowly people, you are building up treasures that no man can take away. Are you ready? Do you want to start building up your portfolio?

Candle-holder 2: I am ready. I want to invest in something that will last! [lights candle, stands at bottom of stage]

Candle-holder 3: Jesus, life is so unfair! I just can't *take* it – it makes me so *mad!*

Jesus: My child, I understand the fire of wrath within you. It is righteous, because it belongs to me. But – listen closely – you need to give it to me. It is mine. I will bring

justice in my own way. That is my job. You will only bring more injustice to the world if you try to bring your own justice, in your time, in your way.

Candle-holder 3: But then what do you want *me* to do?

Jesus: Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. Do not resist evil people, but when they hurt you, help them. When they insult you, bless them. When they call you their enemy, pray for them. Pierce their hearts with love. In so doing you will become my true child.

Candle-holder 3: But what about the oppressed? Do I just stand there and do *nothing*?

Jesus: My child, this is so close to my heart! You *must* stand up for them! Plead their case! Be their voice! Don't be alarmed, and don't be afraid. Don't let anybody intimidate you. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Be their defender. But most of all, be their friend. When you visit the widows and orphans in their time of grief, when you visit the prisoners, when you care for those robbed and mistreated – then you care for me.

Candle-holder 3: If you send me, I will go.

Jesus: Go, with my blessing, child. [lights candle and stands with the others]

Candle-holder 4: Jesus, I've got nothing to give you, nothing at all to offer. All I have is my tears, and my brokenness. Jesus, is there any hope for me?

Jesus: I love you. You are so precious to me! I am so glad to see that you have finally stopped running away! I am so glad that your pride and your anger is finally broken! Now listen to me – have you had enough of your own way?

Candle-holder 4: Yes, Jesus. I only mess everything up.

Jesus: Then turn. Turn away from your old ways of thinking, your old ways of doing things, your old ways of having fun. It's time for a new start. It's time to start doing things my way. Follow me and learn from me, and you will find rest for your soul. Are you ready to follow me?

Candle Holder 4: I am so desperately ready for a blank slate!

Jesus: Do you believe that Jesus is God, that He paid for your sins by dying for them on the cross, that He lives again, and lives for you?

Candle Holder 4: Yes, I do believe.

Jesus: Are you ready to live a new life, following in His footsteps?

Candle Holder 4: Yes!

Jesus: Then come on home, my child! [lights candle, stands with others]

Candle-holder 5: Jesus, I miss my friends and family that have gone on before me. And I am scared. Death is just so...so *final*. Is there really any hope beyond the grave?

Jesus: It is appointed to men once to die, and after this comes the judgment. For those who believe in me, and hold on fast to the end, I will give eternal life. Listen, I will tell you a mystery: you will not all sleep, but you will all be changed. In a moment, in a twinkling of the eye. In an instant, at the last trumpet, the dead in Christ shall rise first and then also those who are alive will rise to meet with me in the air. And so you will always be with your Lord. Then you will say, "Oh death, where is your victory, oh death, where is your sting?" The last enemy to be destroyed will be death: in that day, death itself will die.

Candle-holder 5: [lights candle]

[all candle-holders stand below stage and wait in a line. When all are ready, Jenni & co. will begin playing "Joy to the world." They will all go and light all of the candles in the auditorium. The band will pick up the song and we will congregationally sing all verses of "Joy to the World."

CLOSING

Lights turn on. People blow out candles.

Pastor: closing words and instructions

Closing song: Joy to the World