

## Interactive lesson



*picture from MMMS collection*

What do you want for Christmas? <Let them respond>

Why? <Let them respond>

What do you actually expect tomorrow morning?

<Let them respond>

Is what we get usually different than what we expect?

<Let them respond>

What about for the people who were expecting the Messiah when Jesus was born – did they get what they wanted? <Let them respond >

Whatever gifts we want or expect, know that God understands our hearts and needs – and gives us so much better than we even understand to ask for.

## Gospel lesson

Let us hear now of God's great gift at Christmas:



*picture from MMMS collection*

**Luke 2:1-20**

**(NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

<sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

<sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

<sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

<sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

<sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

<sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

<sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

<sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;

<sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

<sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

<sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Special Music "O Holy Night">

Keven Simmons>

## Message: Christmas Eve



Foreground picture from  
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/god-of-the-dark-and-the-light/christmas-eve-year-a/christmas-eve-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Holy Lord whose birthday we celebrate now,  
as we take time now to further consider today's  
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may embrace You in new life. Amen.

Oh my goodness, did you hear the goings on?

Please  
tell!

Well, it started a while back when Joseph from the house of David decided to get married. He got engaged to this nice Israelite girl who turned out to be not so nice - she was pregnant before they got married! You would think he would discard her like a broken pot, but he says an angel told him in a dream to marry her anyway. Our Joseph is too soft-hearted - or maybe just desperate living up in that crazy north country! I'm sure we could have found him someone more suitable if he had stayed here instead of so far off.

*Their faith  
made it well.*

Then those greedy Romans decided they wanted to make sure they could tax each person, so everybody had to go to their hometown to enroll. What a racket, making us pay for “protection” when we would be safer without foreigners disrupting our lives!

*There will  
always be  
death and taxes.*

Anyway, Joseph had to come to Bethlehem to enroll. We were all shocked to see Mary waddling in with him – a pregnant woman should not be traveling so far from home! It’s embarrassing for her to be seen publicly like that and not great for the baby – I think Joseph was secretly trying to have her lose it.

...

We did not have any guest rooms available for a woman to give birth in – very little privacy there; the men certainly do not want to listen to those screams, and oh, the mess! – so we cleared out an animal stall and laid fresh hay for the ordeal.

*Readied  
hot water and  
towels too?*

Mary and Joseph had been traveling, so they did not have much prepared back for the baby. Once it was

born - a healthy baby boy, despite the traveling - we gave them some cloths to wrap him in and cleared out the manger for them to lay him in while the young mother tried to rest a little.

*She must have  
been exhausted.*

Just as things were settling down again, who should come to the door but nosy neighbors. And not the respectable kind, either, but scruffy shepherds who had come down from the hills. They were not even begging for help or food - they just wanted to gawk at the young mother and her new baby. How rude!

*How did they  
know the baby  
was there?*

Now I do not know exactly what shepherds do up in those hills, but they must have gotten into something powerful because they were telling a really strange story. They said angels came to tell them about the baby - not just one angel, but a whole skyful of them, all praising God for this child!

*Did anyone else  
see or hear  
any angels?*

When they said they saw that many angels, I took a look outside but I did not see any. I did see a really bright star, brighter than any I had ever seen, right overhead! I looked for it again later; it did not move like other stars in the sky that rise

and set and change with the seasons; this one stayed put right there.

★  
*A pretty  
amazing sign!*

If all the talk about angels is to be believed, then this baby is supposed to be the Messiah: you know, the heir of King David come to restore the kingdom. That's what the shepherds reported anyway, but just what do riffraff like shepherds know about kings?

*King David was a  
shepherd before  
he became king.*

It would be wonderful to finally have our Messiah. But even though Joseph named the boy Jesus, he does not work with weapons; he builds things. How is someone he raises to learn military strategy and how to govern? How can this carpenter's son put the Romans in their place and make them treat us right?

*Do unto others as  
you would have  
them do unto you?*

Anyway, now that the initial mess is cleaned up, we are putting Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus in a more proper room since they will be here for a while; Mary will not be ready to be presented for purification at the temple in Jerusalem for another month. The local priest will take care of the circumcision - whatever the circumstances of his conception, this little boy will be raised as a

proper Jew! We can all give God thanks now that it all worked out in the end.

*Glory to God in the  
highest heaven,  
and on earth peace!*

The Christ child was not what the Hebrews expected, but what they (and the world) needed. Let us praise our Lord, who gives us what we need instead of what we demand or expect. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace and goodwill to all!

Let us now respond with the bringing forth of our tithes and offerings.

### <Doxology>

### <Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

God of the stars and the angels' songs, as we gather this evening, all our attention is focused on a baby, lying in a makeshift bed in an "it-will-have-to-do" stable.

It's not lost on us that you sent your Son, our Savior, into the world among the poorest of the poor and told us: "This will be a sign to you."

As we present gifts to you, we pray that they might reach those in the greatest need, that they might lift those in the deepest despair, and that they might bring peace and compassion to those who find themselves amidst conflict.

(above prayer from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>)

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of



Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

- **Cassandra Marquard & Christopher** – difficult pregnancy
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- Thanks for
  - -
  - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
  - Family far off
  - Travelers
- Lord, please help all people who struggle, especially those to whom we remain oblivious.
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
  - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
  - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we lift up in Your holy name, praying as You taught us to pray: *<Lord's Prayer>*

*<Hymn "Silent Night" UMH #239>*

<Benediction>



background picture from  
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/god-of-the-dark-and-the-light/christmas-eve-year-a/christmas-eve-year-a-graphics>

We have good news of great joy to share!  
Go now and let the world hear through your love and  
actions what the angels proclaimed:  
Our Savior is born! Amen.