

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Cantata Narration with Lyrics

Narrator 1: (Sings)

*Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest*

*Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name
O Savior of mankind*

(Music continues)

(Spoken) In the long history of the world, no event has meant more to us than the coming of Jesus Christ our Savior, to teach us, to redeem us, and to bring us the hope of eternal life with our Heavenly Father. He was in the beginning with God; He was the Creator, the great Jehovah, the Messiah foretold by the prophets. And yet, when He came to earth it was not as a king of men, but simply and humbly, as a babe in Bethlehem. How I would love to have been there to look on His face; to see the heavens alight with the glow of a new star; and to hear the tidings the shepherds spread abroad. At last the promised Savior was come, and the long years of waiting were over.

(Choir: Alleluia! Christ is Born)

Who is this Child in a lowly manger?
Laid down to rest on a bed of hay?
'tis God's own Son, born to be our Savior
Born to turn our night to everlasting day

Lift up your voice, tell the joyful tidings
Rejoice and praise His name forever more
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to God on high
Sing alleluia! Christ is born

Who is the Child in the arms of Mary?
With Joseph nigh in a Father's place?
'tis God's own Son from the realms of glory
Filled with light and love, filled with truth and grace

Lift up your voice, tell the joyful tidings
Rejoice and praise His name forever more
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to God on high
Sing alleluia! Christ is born

His wondrous birth sets the heavens singing

As angel choirs o'er the earth proclaim
'tis God's own Son, hear the heavens ringing
Born is our salvation, Jesus is his name

Lift up your voice, tell the joyful tidings
Rejoice and praise His name forever more
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to God on high
Sing alleluia! Christ is born

Narrator 2: (Sings)
Promised Savior, promised King
Come down to earth from heaven
Child of whom the angels sing
Their song of adoration
Behold the star above Him rise
'tis heaven's brightest gem
A beacon to our longing eyes
When the light of day grows dim

Shepherds watching in the fields
Now hasten to the stable
There to honor Him, there to kneel
And worship at his cradle
While in the east the wise men greet
The light that o'er them shines
And goes before to guide their feet
As they seek the child divine

(Choir: Promised Savior, Promised King--continued)

The holy infant long foretold
In lowly manger sleeping
Is comfort to the sorrowing soul
He is solace to the weeping
He is hope; He is love sent from afar
God's lamb and offering
He is Lord: He is sovereign of my heart
Promised Savior, promised King

Narrator 2: The shepherds spread the tidings among our people, and we rejoiced to hear the news. The promised Messiah was come at last. But soon the shepherds returned to their flocks, the skies that had known such wonders were still, and again we waited. We kept the Law; we raised our children; we saw our grandchildren come into the world. And then at last, a new teacher came among us--one who taught with authority; who healed all manner of afflictions; who suffered even our little children to come to Him and be blessed. Could this be the one who was born on that miraculous night so long ago?

(Music begins)

We followed this Man, Jesus; we heard Him speak; and we felt the power of heaven testify to our hearts that this was indeed the Messiah. We saw Him heal the sick; we watched as He gave sight to the blind; we saw Him cleanse lepers and we rejoiced with them as they returned at last to loved-ones long missed; we marveled as the burdens that many had carried for a lifetime were lifted at His command. Never had we seen power and compassion so great.

The Mighty Wonder of His Love

Solo:

I could but touch the Master's hem
I could but reach out trembling hands to Him
And yet His pow'r has made me whole
His kindness soothed my troubled soul
Somehow my faith was faith enough
To know the mighty wonder of His love

Solo:

I could not follow Him, nor stand
How could I seek a blessing at His hand?
He saw my yearning; heard my cries
And in compassion bade me rise
Somehow my faith was faith enough
To know the mighty wonder of His love

Solo:

I could not see the Master's face
Nor stars by night, nor light of day

Solo:

I could not hear his gentle word
Nor rushing wind, nor calling bird

Duet:

Until that hour when Jesus came
To touch my eyes and speak my name

Choir:

Oh, how He loved them! How He carried
every grief and pain they had to bear
Oh how He loves His children still!
And He will carry us until
Our faith is grown to fit our need
To heal our doubt and unbelief

We cannot see, we cannot hear
Until we reach and feel His presence near
His power will bind our wounded hearts
And heaven's healing grace impart
And grant us faith, and faith enough,
To know the mighty wonder of His love

Narrator 1: (Reads) "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the

border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole." I too reach out in faith to this same Jesus for healing and comfort.

(Music begins)

In times of discouragement or heartache, I turn to His promises for hope; when I am blinded by uncertainty and doubt, I turn to His teachings for counsel. I hear His voice as I read the scriptures and as I listen to the prophets, and in His words I hear the power, the peace and the love His disciples heard as they listened to Him so long ago.

The Master's Voice (Choir)

Come unto me, the Savior said
Learn of me, listen to my words
The multitudes that followed, there in Galilee
Marveled at His wisdom and the truths they heard Him speak

For in the Master's voice
They heard the power that framed the heavens
The peace that stilled the tempest
The love that saves us all
Oh, can you hear His voice
Re-echo o'er the ages?
With the promise of salvation to our souls
With the hope of life and everlasting joy
To the humble who will hear the Master's voice

Abide in me, the Savior said
Walk with me in meekness and be blessed
He taught them on the mountain; He taught them by the sea
In word and deed He taught them, and He said, "Come, follow me."

And in the Master's voice
They heard the power that framed the heavens
The peace that stilled the tempest
The love that saves us all
Oh, can you hear His voice
Re-echo o'er the ages?
With the promise of salvation to our souls
With the hope of life and everlasting joy
To the humble who will hear the Master's voice

Narrator 1: Jesus spent only three years ministering to His people, yet in that short time He reshaped the hearts of men and the thinking of the world. Then during the last days of His mortality, He performed for us a mighty work that only He could do.

(Music begins)

It began in Gethsemane. He knelt before His Father, and in submission to His Father's will, took upon Himself the consequences of our sin, of every errant thought, every moment of weakness, pain or sorrow. Jesus, sinless and perfect, in some incomprehensible way, suffered for every imperfect soul that ever had or ever would walk

the earth; a suffering so intense that it caused even the Son of God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain and to bleed at every pore. No other could have endured it; and still there was more to come.

Narrator 2: How He loved us! And how we loved Him. But there were some who feared and envied Him; who craved power more than truth; whose hearts were of stone, not of flesh. All through His ministry they had sought to trap Him in words, to find something with which they could accuse Him, to turn the people against Him. At last, seeing they could avail nothing, they took Him by night to be tried before the chief priest.

They delivered Him up to the Roman governor, who, in defiance of all reason and justice, consigned Him to death. It was unthinkable. It was beyond belief. He had done nothing but good; He taught nothing but truth. For this, they mocked him; they scourged Him; and they led Him out to Golgotha where they nailed His hands and feet to a cross, and lifted Him up to die as a common criminal. But so great was His love for all His Father's children, that even in that dark hour His heart was filled with compassion for His tormentors, and He pled with His Father, "...forgive them, for they know not what they do."

They Know Not What They Do (Choir, piano/organ/violin, Choir)

They know not what they do
With cruel lash and bitter rod
They scourge and mock the Son of God
By his pain their very souls are bought
Yet they know not what they do

They know not what they do
They pierce his hands and feet with nails
Creation shudders; nature quails
The sun above them dims and fails
Yet they know not what they do

They know not what they do
The blood that heals them falls like rain
The temple veil is rent in twain
The trembling earth cries out in vain
Yet they know not what they do

They know not what they do
What pure and perfect love is His
He entreats the Father to forgive
And dies that even these may live
Yet they know not what they do

To Save the World from Sin (Choir)

Jesus, King of all kings, Lord of all nations
Filled with the grace of the Father and love without end
Willing to suffer and die to redeem His creation
He offered His all to save the world from sin

Laden with infinite grief and every affliction
Counted as naught and betrayed in the house of His friends

Raised on the cross, wounded for all our transgression
He offered His all to save the world from sin

Dearly salvation was purchased, yet freely 'tis given
Merciful, merciful gift to the children of men
He offered his all as a ransom to fit us for heaven
He offered His all to save the world from sin

Narrator 1: The sacrifice He made to redeem us from death cost Him more than we can ever understand, and yet, He offers this as a gift to each one of us. I know that Jesus bore the sins of all the world; that He died to save all of His Father's children. But I also know that He died to save me, personally.

(Music begins if using organ)

As I try to comprehend this great love, I consider how much I love my own children. There is no sacrifice I would not make to save them from any danger that threatened them, but I would do no less for one of them than I would do for all of them. How much greater is my Savior's love for me!

(Sings)

*Every earthly sorrow; every mortal pain
Every sinner's anguish; the bitterness of shame
The weakness and the heartache that burden all mankind
For these the Savior suffered, for these He bled and died
And the lost and fallen multitudes of all the earth
Are ransomed by His offering of love*

*But if I alone had stumbled; if I alone had strayed
If I alone had wandered from the straight and narrow way
If I alone bore guilt for which my all could never atone
He would have come for me
For me alone*

*Tears of all creation; every debt unpaid
Warfare of the nations; every trust betrayed
Every falsehood uttered; every truth denied
For these the Savior suffered, for these He bled and died
And the lost and fallen multitudes of all the earth
Are ransomed by His offering of love*

*But if I alone had stumbled; if I alone had strayed
If I alone had wandered from the straight and narrow way
If I alone bore guilt for which my all could never atone
He would have come for me
For me alone*

*For love of all God's children Christ redeemed us from the fall
His mercy without measure is sufficient for us all
But if I alone had stumbled; if I alone had strayed
If I alone had wandered from the straight and narrow way
If I alone were foolish; if I alone were frail
If I alone had faltered when the power of hell assailed
If I alone bore guilt for which my all could never atone
He would have come for me
For me alone*

Narrator 2: The sun was darkened; the earth shook. Jesus cried out to His Father, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," and gave up His life for our sake. His body was taken from the cross, and placed in a borrowed tomb. It had to be done in haste, for the Sabbath approached, and much remained for us to do after it had passed. We grieved and we wept; we were without understanding. Our hope was in ruins, and our hearts were heavy, for we had placed all our trust in Him, and we did not yet know that His power and love were stronger than even the bands of death.

(Music begins)

At the rising of the sun on the first day of the week, three of our faithful women visited the tomb, bringing spices and oils to properly finish the burial. But they found the tomb open and empty, and they saw there angels sent from God, who said to them, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen..."

At the Rising of the Sun (Choir)

At the rising of the sun
When the Sabbath day was done
There at the tomb in the light of dawn
Angels came from heaven

Fear not ye, the angel said,
Seek not the living among the dead!
Lo! How the shadows of night are fled
Christ the Lord is risen

Alleluia! Alleluia!
Welcome tidings! Glorious morn!
Sing at the rising of the sun
All hail the risen Lord

Come rejoice in the wondrous news
Christ has forsaken the empty tomb
Joy upon joy, shall our hearts have room?
Christ the Lord is risen

Crowned with glory; robed in light
Savior triumphant; God of might
Author of mercy and endless life
Christ the Lord is risen

Narrator 1: Never, not even at His birth, had such joyful tidings been told. The great atonement was complete; Jesus had triumphed over death and brought about the resurrection of all mankind.

Narrator 2: Jesus was risen. He appeared to many who left their witness for all the world, and for every generation that follows, that He lives. How blessed we were to see the risen Lord, to feel the prints of the nails in His hands and feet; to know that He had conquered the grave and brought salvation to us all.

(Music begins)

Narrator 1: How I would love to have been there, to see what they saw and to hear what they heard. But I know now as they knew then that He Lives; that His atonement is my hope and my salvation, for the Holy Ghost has testified to my heart that these things are true.

Narrator 2: We saw Him; we heard His voice; and we felt in our hearts a witness sent from God that Jesus is His beloved Son, our Redeemer. What greater witness could we know?

(Sings)

*I have seen the leper healed at His command
I have witnessed wonders wrought by Jesus' hand
I have heard Him teaching by the peaceful sea
And could not know more surely of His love for me*

Narrator 1: (Sings)

*Had I heard His voice and followed where He led
Had I been among the multitudes He fed
Had I knelt before him, learning at His feet
I could not know more surely of His love for me*

Duet:

*For I have come before the Father's throne in prayer
I have found in answer sweet assurance there
That Jesus is my Savior, Counselor and Friend
Whose everlasting love redeems my soul from sin*

*He is strength unto the weary; sight unto the blind
Help in all our trial; Healer of mankind
This is the conviction born within my soul
The Spirit bears Him witness; this is how I know*

Narrator 1: He loved them then and He loves us now.

(Music begins)

As they watched, He was taken up into heaven, but He left them with the promise that He would always be with them. That promise is also ours today. He invites us all to come to Him; to bring Him our every affliction, and every burden we have to bear, that He may heal us. When I am faced with difficulties I can't overcome alone, or sorrows that would break my heart, I can rely on the atonement of Jesus Christ, on His power and His compassion, to sustain me.

Cast Your Burden on the Lord (Choir)

Cast your burden on the Lord
and He will make it light
Come unto him, ye heavy laden
Find your rest in Christ
Bring him your sorrows, all your grief
Lay every weakness at his feet
He will sustain you, give you peace
And lead you into life

Cast your burden on the Lord
and He will heal your soul
Place on his altar all your sin
and He will pay its toll
Bring him your blindness born of pride
Give him your broken heart to bind
It was for this He bled and died:
That He might make you whole

Cast your burden on the Lord
and He will carry you home
He will attend you and defend
through perils yet unknown
Put your unwavering trust in him
Christ, your constant heavenly friend
Has graven you in the palms of his hands
And ne'er forsakes his own

Narrator 1: In the long history of the world, no event has meant more to us than the coming of Jesus Christ our Savior. I know by the power of the Spirit that He lives and loves each one of us dearly. One day soon this same Jesus will return to us in glory to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. In that day I will see Him as they saw Him long ago--face to face, and I will know Him then, for I know Him now; my Redeemer and the Savior of mankind.

(Sings)

*Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest*

Choir: (Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee--continued)

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame
Nor can the memory find

A sweeter sound than thy blest name
O Savior of mankind

O hope of every contrite heart
O joy of all the meek
To those who fall, how kind thou art
How good to those who seek

Jesus, our only joy be thou
As thou our prize wilt be
Jesus, be thou our glory now
And through eternity