

If you looked down from space on the night before Christmas, what would you see? If you peered carefully through the velvety blue sky, you would see upon the earth, thousands of tiny lights, mirroring the stars of heaven. In cities and villages, on hill-tops and down in the valleys, in urban jungles, suburban deserts and market towns, you would see the glow of worship. In churches throughout the land, lit up like beacons, you will see heaven touching earth. If you listen very carefully on the night before Christmas, you will hear the songs of the faithful soar like an eagle in the sky, carrying upon its' wings the newborn Sun of Righteousness. It is the most mysterious of all nights, when time and eternity collide. We gather to sing '*It came upon a midnight clear*', or '*Silent Night*', and the music and the words take us right back to Bethlehem. We become witnesses with the Shepherds, sheep and oxen, and with Joseph and Mary, to the wondrous gift, given to us by a God of Love. O Come, let us adore him!

On this holy night, choirs and angels sing of this incarnation, which resounds through the whole created order. The music gathers up God's people in worship, but it also sends them out in mission. As our worship draws to a close, we might stand and sing the final hymn like a rallying cry or herald of a new beginning as Christmas Eve tips over into Christmas day. *Adeste Fidelis*, often sung at the conclusion of our Christmas services reminds us that we have work to do. Someone once said that when worship ends, the real service begins. The heart of mission is worship, and mission begins with adoration. '*O come let us adore him*' we sing again, as we get ready to leave the church and follow Christ into the world he came to save.

As I stand at the church door at the end of Midnight Mass, and bid 'Merry Christmas' to the congregation, no one can deny that something incredible has happened. The word is made flesh, and dwells among us. We have been changed and transformed. A new day has dawned. Yes, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; but because of this holy night, we can live as people who know that God is still with us, two thousand years later. In our Emmanuel, a new work has come on hand, and the world waits to hear more of this good news.

So, after wonder and adoration, may we, like the shepherds, also return to our ordinary lives, our work, our home and our families, glorifying and praising God for all the things we have heard and seen on this most holy night. This gift of which we sing, is new every morning. It's given for a lifetime, not just for Christmas. And this gift, God's own Son, is for everyone. So come, let us adore him, and then let us proclaim him, Christ the Lord!

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