



*What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap, is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!¹*

What Child is this that we celebrate tonight? A child foretold in Scripture to become the Prince of Peace. A child foretold to bring us all together as children of God. A child who grows up to challenge the powers of the day and as a

result will die at the hands of those in authority. So many hopes and dreams put upon an infant who lies in a manger in a barn, kept warm by animals and Mary and Joseph. Fragile and yet wonderful. Oh, the possibilities that this newborn child will somehow change the world.

Angels sing and shepherds guard. Earth and heaven unite this night in all that this child represents. And we are called to honor Him, the one whose birth has been foretold. The one on whom we place our trust.

*Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
The Cross be borne for me, for you,
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!*

What Child is this that we celebrate tonight? One who is recognized by ox and ass. One who bears our sins that we might live. One who dies that we might have eternal life. We celebrate a God who loves us so much that his only son took on our flesh and lived among us to show us how to live and how to love. How much God loves us to give us Jesus!

*So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise, the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby,
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!*

¹ "What Child is this?" Hymnal 1982, 115.

What Child is this that we celebrate tonight? A child that we shower with incense, gold and myrrh – in other words we honor with our worldly goods. A child who accepts our offerings of praise and thanksgiving. A child who becomes Lord of peasant and of king – socio-economic status is not an issue for this child. Perhaps because he is Lord of all it is right that Jesus be born in a manger. Jesus comes from where many of us come from and so knows what our lives and our struggles are like. This child is honored by peasants, shepherds, kings – this child asks for you to recognize who he is and who he can be to you.

This child brings us salvation – eternal life. We give our loving hearts to him and raise our voices in song to praise God's love for us, this night and for ever more. We rejoice in communion with those present and those far away who recognize the pure gift of love that we have been given in the birth this night.

We who too often walk in darkness have been given a true light in the Child born tonight. The darkness cannot overcome the light of Christ, born this night and every night in our hearts.

Be like Mary and ponder in your heart the amazing gift that we have been given in this child. Discern how your life may be improved by following Jesus in all that you do and all that you are. Recognizing God's great gift to us in this child, let us raise our voices in songs of praise. Acknowledge the possibilities if we all accepted that Jesus is our Savior, born to make us free. Go now into a world that desperately needs to hear that this child, *this child*, is Jesus Christ, our Lord. Born this night to us, God's children, so that we might know love and joy, forever more. Amen.