

We used this as a Christmas service opener
Scene: two readers behind lecterns

R1 And now for a Christmas recitation:

Have a Joyful Christmas by Patience Strong

Come on lads let's have a good time
 Down the pub and on the town
 Because another Christmas comes
 And all our sorrows we must drown

Hang the holly and the ivy
 And the santas on the tree
 Because its the only time

R2 (*interrupting*) Just a minute... Just a minute. That's utter rubbish and it's certainly not by Patience Strong

R1 Yes it is

R2 No it's not. Patience Strong writes twee verses for greetings cards, not about the drinking habits of jobs at Christmas

R1 My son assured me that it was a classic - he got it off the internet.

R2 Off the internet eh? I think you've been had. (*grabs sheet and looks at it*) This definitely isn't Patience Strong

R1 How did you know?

R2 I think the bit about carpet bombing Iraq in the fourth verse gives it away as a hoax.

R1 Oh..... Oh....I think you'd better read yours

R2 I got mine off a Christmas card - it's by Helen Steiner Rice. She's usually pretty safe you know

Feed the World by Helen Steiner Rice

(*robotically*)
 They said there'll be snow at Christmas,
 They said there'll be peace on earth,
 But instead it just kept on raining,
 A veil of tears for the Virgin birth.

I remember one Christmas morning,
 The Winter's light and a distant choir,
 And the peal of a bell and that Christmas tree smell,
 And eyes full of tinsel and fire.

R1 (*interrupting*) Stop, stop. That is *definitely* not Helen Steiner Rice

R2 Oh come on! How do you know?

- R1 Feed the World is the Band Aid song by Bob Geldolf and Midge Ure. Besides, you read the words to that really awful Christmas song by Greg Lake. It's not even Christian. I bet it was from that cheap Christmas card pack you got off the market. Now. Remember, our remit was to find a piece of poetry that encapsulates the meaning of Christmas
- R2 Oh... we're a bit stuck. Where can you get a good piece of poetry? We're kind of here now.
- R1 Let's try Christmas carols (*both pick up book and look sighing*) After all they're about Christmas (*both look*)
- R2 I'm not being enlightened here. Look at this
- The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes:
I love You, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.
- R1 What's wrong with that?
- R2 Not exactly in the Bible is it? It wouldn't have been normal for Jesus not to cry as a newborn baby.
- R1 Try this one for size then as it's much more festive:
- In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan;
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone.
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow;
In the bleak midwinter,
Long ago.
- R2 Very festive but a bit depressing. But it's not really correct is it? They don't get bleak midwinters in Israel. So that's not in the Bible either.
- R1 Why are we bothering here? Why should we pick the bad lyrics of old songs when we can be a bit more practical. Look here (*brings the Bible across and they both look at a page R1 is pointing to*)
- R2 That's cheating. But you're right - the Bible has poetry doesn't it - so go for it.
- R1 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself and became obedient to death--
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.