

A Shepherd's Tale  
First pass at the 2009 Christmas Play

Overview

The story is about a shepherd boy (Tommy) who is tending the sheep when the angels appear to tell them about the birth of Jesus. He goes and gets his older brothers (who always make him pull the night watch because they can). They all hear the message and want to go, but Tommy realizes that someone needs to stay with the sheep. He volunteers to stay behind.

The brother go to Bethlehem and sees the baby Jesus in the stable (all to a musical interlude).

While they are there, Jesus appears to Tommy back in the field and promises that some day he will be a “shepherd of people” because of his faithfulness.

The next act skips forward many years to when Tommy is now grown. He is in Capernaum and has been diligent in studying the Scriptures. He hears about a man who teaches with authority and can heal people. Tommy comes to see if he is the one who appeared to him that night in the field. It is Jesus and Jesus calls him to follow him.

The narrator does a quick synopsis of Jesus' ministry and what the disciples' experience was. Then there is a brief portrayal of the Last Supper, Gethsemane, and the Crucifixion.

The story picks up again with the disciples coming to get Tommy because Jesus has appeared to them. Tommy doesn't believe it. Then there is the scene in the locked room where Jesus appears to Thomas. Thomas now believes and sends him out to be a shepherd in the church—to lead, guide, protect, inspire, nurture the believers.

Ideas

Act 1: The Nativity

The play begins with the opening narration being interrupted by the “baaa-ing” of the sheep. They enter singing, *I Just Want to Be a Sheep*. They are led in by Tommy and his brothers dressed like shepherds. The sheep are in single file and kind of doing a little dance/shuffle. We could add a “sheep dog” that follows them who keeps shouting “dog” when they say “sheep”.

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I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah  
I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep, I just wanna be a sheep!  
Bah bah Bah Bah Bah

1. I don't wanna be a BILLY GOAT....  
'cause they don't have a WOOLY COAT!  
I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah

2. I don't wanna be a COW THAT MOOS!  
'Cause I'm a SHEEP THAT GROOVES!  
I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah

3. I don't wanna be a BIG, FAT PIG!  
'Cause I don't wanna DANCE THAT JIG!  
I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah

4. I don't wanna be a PUPPY DOG!  
'Cause I don't wanna stay UP THAT LONG!  
I just wanna be a sheep! Bah bah Bah Bah Bah

When they get in, Tommy tells them that it's time to go to bed. They ask for a bedtime story and want to hear the one about "the stars." Tommy then tells the story of God telling Father Abraham that his descendents will be as numerous as the stars. The sheep pipe in with appropriate responses.

TOMMY All right you guys... you ewes, too. Time to start settling down. It has been a long day.

SHEP Buuuuut we're not tired!

TOMMY You say that every night!

SHEP Buuuuut I mean it every night!

TOMMY Now who's the shepherd here?

ALL SHEEP Tommy is.

TOMMY That's right. And you know that it's my job to make sure that you get a safe, good night's sleep.

CURLY Why are you always the one that puts us to beeee-d? Why don't any of your broooooothers ever do it?

TOMMY Because they all agree that I am the most qualified and responsible to keep you safe all night.

*And as an aside to the crowd...* And because I'm the youngest and they get to tell me what to do!

SHEP Buuuuuut it's still early!

TOMMY Early?!? Look at all the stars that out... And you say that it's early!

RAMBO Tell us a Baaaa-dtime story...

*(after a pause)* Tell us the one about all the stars... About Abraaaaaaham!

TOMMY Okay... but you have to promise to go to sleep!

ALL We will!

TOMMY There once was a man named Abram who lived in Iraq.

RAMBO I thought his name was Abraaaaaaham.

TOMMY Just wait... We're not there, yet.

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So Abram, his wife Sarai, his father and nephew left Iraq and moved to Syria. One day, in Syria, God spoke to Abram and said, [Genesis 12:1-4]

"Leave your country, your family, and your father's home for a land that I will show you.

I'll make you a great nation and bless you.

I'll make you famous; you'll be a blessing.

I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse.

All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram left just as God said, and his nephew Lot left with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Syria.

SHEP Wow!!! Abraaaaam was older than you are!

TOMMY Yes, He was even older than me (*smiling*).

Abram travelled many, many years. . . He went way down south to Egypt.

Then he traveled back north.

Finally, he came to this land.

CURLY Where we are now?

TOMMY Yes, this very land.

CURLY So God gave Abraaaaam what he promised because he gave Abraaaaam this land.

TOMMY God did give Abram the land... but there was a problem. Abram was getting older and older...

And he still did not have any children?

RAMBO No little lambs?

TOMMY No little lambs.

RAMBO That's baaaaaad.

TOMMY Abram was getting kind of worried. His wife Sarai was getting older, too.

[Genesis 15:1-5]

Then one night, this word of God came to Abram in a vision: "Don't be afraid, Abram. I'm your shield. Your reward will be grand!"

Abram said, "God, Master, what use are your gifts as long as I'm childless and my servant is going to inherit everything?" Abram continued, "See, you've given me no children, and now a mere house servant is going to get it all."

Then God's Message came: "Don't worry, he won't be your heir; a son from your body will be your heir."

Then he took him outside and said, "Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants! You're going to have a big family, Abram!"

SHEP How many stars were there?

TOMMY The same number that there are now... Can you count them?

SHEP 1...2...3...4....

TOMMY Don't you see more than that?

SHEP Yes. Buuuut I only have 4 hooves!

RAMBO When does Abraaaaam get a new name?

TOMMY When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God spoke to him again, [Genesis 17:3-8]

"This is my covenant with you: You'll be the father of many nations. [5] Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, meaning that 'I'm making you the father of many nations.' [6] I'll make you a father of fathers—I'll make nations from you, kings will issue from you. [7] I'm establishing my covenant between me and you, a

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covenant that includes your descendants, a covenant that goes on and on and on, a covenant that commits me to be your God and the God of your descendants. [8] And I'm giving you and your descendants this land where you're now just camping, this whole country of Canaan, to own forever. And I'll be their God."

And God kept the promise.

Abraham had a son Isaac, who had a son, Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to "Israel."

Do you know who the sons of Israel are?

*All is silent because while Tommy is telling the last part of this story, the sheep fall asleep.*

*Tommy looks around at them and says to the audience,*

*The sheep always go to sleep when they are counting!*

*Tommy then lies down and goes to sleep himself.*

*End of Act 1*

Luke 2:9-15

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 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:

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

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

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

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

15 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."

The stars which start coming out one by one will eventually become angels. The stars are the little flashlights that we have in the Resource room. They could be behind the "wall" by the lectern and just stick the lights up at first. Then, after the main angel has given the message, then they could stand up and start singing! There could even be some "mountains" which are a backdrop to the sheep that will allow the angels to sit, stand at different heights behind it. The main angel could appear at the lectern and speak right into the microphone. As the sheep start falling to sleep, the angels start "appearing" singing "Glory to God" and "Alleluia". It should start slow and quiet. The main angel appears and dazzles and scares Tommy so Tommy goes and wakes up his sleeping brothers. They all hear the message and then all the angels show up singing.

Work in "Angels We Have Heard on High" (on Powerpoint).

After the message, the angels just become stars again. Tommy's brothers talk about going and seeing this newborn "king".

After the other shepherds leave, the sheep start asking Tommy what a "king" is and what the "messiah" is. Tommy tells them about the Great Shepherd, King David. The Messiah is believed to be a new King David who will once again reestablish Israel as God's kingdom on earth. Tommy finishes up with a version of Psalm 23 (attributed to David). The sheep want to say that Tommy is the Great Shepherd, but he deflects.

King=Shepherd

12 tribes=12 flocks

Israel=the pasture

If there are 12 sheep, they can all have the names of the tribes of Israel. The sheep could become other characters after this because this is the only scene they are in. They could become the 11 other disciples... there is some nice symmetry to this.

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The action shifts to the brothers finding the stable, opening the doors and paying homage to Jesus. Sharleigh could sing an acapella solo of “What Child Is This?” when the shepherds go to the manger. The stable could be set up with some “barn doors” that open up to allow the view of the Nativity Scene. I envision it right by the Christmas Tree.

The action shifts again to Tommy with the sleeping sheep. Jesus appears to Tommy (just a bright light and a voice) and asks him why he didn’t come. Promises to make him a shepherd of people. Tommy wonders how he will find him. Jesus tells him, “Just seek the truth and when you have found me, I will have found you.”

Act II: Tommy becomes a Disciple

This action could happen out in the main aisle.

Act III: Last Supper & Crucifixion

Last Supper happens around the Lord’s Table with the 12 disciples (including Tommy).

Have a brief scene in the Garden of Gethsemane with the disciples running away and Jesus being taken away by the Temple Police (out the side aisle in front of the pulpit).

The congregation starts singing “Were You There”. While they are singing, Jesus enters carrying the cross down the main aisle, up around the chancel, and disappears from view. A large shadow box is used to portray his being nailed to the cross and crucified. When the singing stops, the light on the shadow box fades. The shadow box portrayals can be continuous silhouettes or a series of still scenes.

The act continues with Tommy, dejectedly coming in from the back of the sanctuary. He is still in the impact of having Jesus die. One of the other disciples comes running up to him and excitedly starts telling him that Jesus is alive. He tells him that all the others are gathered in the Upper room. There, they confirm his story and then Jesus appears to them and shows Tommy his hands and side. “You cared enough to doubt. You have faith enough to believe.”

Jesus final words tie together the light in the darkness that first told Tommy about the light coming into the world.

“Remember when I appeared to you in the darkness of the pasture 30 years ago. Even though your brothers believed because they saw, you believed the light had come without seeing. The time has now come to act on your faith...”

The light that was in Tommy led him to be his disciple.

Now it is time to take God’s light into the world. Leads into the singing of “Go Light Your World.”

At this the cast passes out candles to the audience and lights them. We all sing one final song like “Joy to the World.”