

Christmas Eve Worship 2020 – Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

Christmas Eve Proclamation

Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be on his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful, mighty counselor, the Prince of peace. O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he has done marvelous things. Glory be to the father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

When our room is filled with shadows and we feel lost or alone or scared, Jesus brings glowing warmth. The people have stumbled in the abyss for so long but now have their paths illuminated. For those dwelling in a land of deep shadows, radiance shines forth.

When the world is filled with gloom, the divine shine of Jesus parts the clouds to show us the way.

In the beginning, when the world was in chaos, the divine Spirit hovered over the waters. In that same beginning, there was the Word; and the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God.

God's love, given to us in Jesus, gifts us with a flame that fills a room with brilliance and our lives with hope. The flickering flame will never be eclipsed.

God brought forth the bright blessed day and the dark sacred night and declared them to be good.

In the fullness of time, the Word, that divine shine, put on flesh to stay among us. And we saw the Word's glory, filled with grace, filled with truth.

In Jesus, brilliance illuminated the world, and the shadows did not overcome it.

We have been given the gift of glow. Sometimes it is a flicker and sometimes it is a blaze, but the divine shine is within us; it is what we carry into the world.

The places of shadows and stumbling yearn for the radiant beams we carry, this holy night. With the brightness of Christmas joy we hold our candles high and sing praises to our God.

Invitation

Gracious God, we have waited for your arrival, and here you are. As Mary and Joseph welcomed you into their lives, help us now welcome you into ours. Let us live in the Extra Ordinary Hope – Peace – Joy – Love that shines in the world, Just as your light now shines in us.

AMEN

Advent has been an Extra Ordinary Journey

Each week we lit candles that have brought us to this moment.

Living into this Extra Ordinary

HOPE – PEACE – JOY – LOVE

Help us to bring your light into the world for all to see

The Christ Candle reminds us that the light of the world has come.

Jesus – Emmanuel – God with us – is here. Let us rejoice!

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, You made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Isaiah 9:2-7

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And 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!”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I am missing the traditions this year.

As we think about the traditions of this season, there is much that we are missing. The tradition of gathering with family. The tradition of gathering with friends. The tradition of having a holiday work party. The tradition of caroling. The tradition of gathering and being together with other people. This year, our traditions have become extra ordinary, anything but normal.

We've thought much about what those traditions are for us and how they've been affected. I think it does us a lot of good though, to look at what our traditions are.

One of my favorite family traditions growing up in the Hunstad family, the grandson and nephew of pastors. Our family would gather most every year at Luther park Bible Camp. While our gatherings had many other traditions, whether it be snow football or sledding, the one tradition that sticks out to me is the time that we would pause, and we would slow our gathering down to hear the Christmas story. My Grandpa Wally would prepare for us, sometimes having one of us read it and perhaps have it accompanied by a carol or two, but we always heard the good news of great joy for all people that is the Christmas story.



I've been thinking about that tradition much lately. As we worked our way through advent, one of my aunts posted this picture on Facebook. This is a picture of my mom's family. My mother the oldest, proclaiming the good news that the angels brought. Her brothers there as shepherds keeping watch over their flocks. And her sister, Sarah knelt beside the manger.

This photo got me thinking about the tradition of the Hunstad family gathering around the Christmas story at our Christmas gatherings, and I soon realized that it didn't start when grandpa and grandma had grandkids, but rather it started when they had kids of their own. And, I would bet it went back further than that. My grandma, the daughter of pastors herself perhaps did this and many of had some variation of this tradition as well. And you could trace, I'm sure, that tradition of sharing the Christmas story far back in my family lineage.

But, much like all of our traditions of this season it goes back to the beginning. And it seems simple, but it goes back to that first Christmas when Christ was born in a manger and the people gathered. They heard the call of the angels, that "unto them is born this day, a savior." They brought good news of great joy for all people. And the people came to see the good news in a manger. And the people gathered. And the people brought gifts.

But as I think about that first tradition and how it worked its way through history and through families, I realize that it didn't happen where I'm missing the tradition the most. Right now, I wish nothing more than to have this sanctuary full of all of you.

I don't want to be sitting at home with my family in our living room right now. I'm glad I am, but it's not where I want to be. And, it's probably not where you want to be either, but as we look at that tradition and where it started, where people would come to see the good news of a baby in a manger...

They didn't come to a church.

They didn't come to the brick walls of a building, into a place with an organ and singers and instruments.

They came to a manger, in a stable, and they gathered. And they did it because they knew there was good news for them there.

So, I want you to think about those traditions you are missing this year.

I hope that coming to this place is part of your traditions, but I hope also that you realize what else you do when you're together. Where else is it that you gather? It's in your homes. It's with your family. It's with those that you love. What else do you do when you are together? Do you share good news of great joy for all people?

Because that is the tradition. The angels cried out from heaven. "I bring you good news of great joy for all people."

The beautiful thing this Christmas season is that good news is not confined to a box. It's not confined to a building, but rather this Christmas because of the world we are in and the situation we are in as a world that good news rings out through the internet all over in living rooms. In hospitals. In prisons. In places that maybe haven't always had Christmas Eve worship.

And who is it that is hearing that the mighty will be cast down? Who is it that is hearing the good news of great joy for all people?

People of God, the tradition that I would love for us to get back to this year, is that of the angels.

Without the angels, would the shepherds have come to hear the good news?

Without the angels, would Mary have known the goodness that was inside of her as the baby Jesus?

Without the word of the angels would the proclamation of good news of great joy for all people wrung out?

Let's make our new tradition, our extra ordinary tradition this year, to be that we find a way to be those angels. Because in that time they went into places that people maybe thought they couldn't, or shouldn't, get to. They went to people that some thought maybe didn't deserve hearing it.

Shepherds in a field. A virgin mother. A bunch of wise guys - the magi. And they went to a place where they didn't expect to find a new King.

But it happened. The good news of great joy for all people happened in the least ordinary way. A way that no one expected. Christ came down – God came down – Emmanuel, God with us, took on human form and lived among us bringing us good news for all people.

I pray that whatever your gathering is this year, however your tradition has been affected this year, that you be reminded of that good news – that a God who loves us so much would send God's son into the world as a baby, bringing good news and great joy for all people.

Thanks be to God. Enjoy your traditions. And make some new ones. Amen.

Nicene Creed

LITANY AND PRAYERS FOR THE CHRIST MASS:

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

To us you have brought abundant joy.

Before you we rejoice and sing.

O God, to whom glory is sung in the highest while on earth peace is proclaimed to all people of goodwill, grant that goodwill to us, your servants. Cleanse us from all our sins, and give perpetual peace to us and to all people; through your mercy, O God, who blesses and governs all things, now and forever.

Amen

Tomorrow the iniquity of the earth shall be blotted out.

And the Savior of the world shall reign over us.

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light.

For those abiding in the land of death, a new splendor has appeared.

God of love, Father of all, the darkness that covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to your Word, that we may bring your life to the waiting world.; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Today for our sake, the King of heaven is born of a virgin mother:

To reclaim the lost for the heavenly kingdom.

All the angels cry aloud with joy:

For God has come himself to save all humanity.

Almighty God, you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of Jesus Christ who came to share our humanity, and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen

Offertory Prayer

Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with these gifts, let them be a blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all the earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

God of abundance, with this bread of life and cup of salvation you have united us with Christ, making us one with all your people. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world born to us this Christmas.

AMEN

Amen.

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

“Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN”

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

Light of the World, All good things shine brightly in your kingdom. Change us so that we shine with the brilliance of your grace and truth, for the sake of the Christ-child who brought light to the darkness and life where there was death, Jesus Christ our savior.

Amen.

The Almighty and Incarnate God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.

Amen

Merry Christmas from all of us at Good Shepherd

We give God thanks for the promise of Christmas. As we bask in the hope of that promise, we cling to the hope of that day when we can worship together again. Until then we continue to give thanks for the opportunity to reach God's people, the Good Shepherd family, in this way. We hope that you feel the warmth of gatherings passed this Christmas Season and we can't wait until we are together again.

God's peace to you and Merry Christmas – Pastor Josh Toufar

Our worship for December 27th is a joint effort Lessons and Carols Service brought to you by the ELCA Congregations of Eau Claire. That service will be viewable on TV during the normal St Johns/Grace Lutheran timeslot, 10:30 am on WQOW and on the radio, 790 am, at 8:30.