

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
December 24, 2021 - 2:00 – 4:30 – 9:00

Introduction to the Day

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.

PROCLAMATION

P: 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.

P: When our room is filled with shadows and we feel lost or alone or scared, Jesus brings glowing warmth.

C: 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.

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

C: 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.

P: 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.

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

P: 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.

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

P: 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.

C: The places of shadows and stumbling yearn for the radiant beams we carry, this holy night.

ALL: With the brightness of Christmas joy we hold our candles high and sing praises to our God.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN OF PRAISE "Oh Come All Ye Faithful"

#28

INVITATION

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

He is the Light no darkness can overcome.

At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

With the heavenly host we sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven."

In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

GREETING

Pastor: The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

WELCOME

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you C: **And also with you**

P: Let us pray.

C: 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.

READING **Isaiah 9:2-7**

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness —
on them light has shined.
You 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.
For 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.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors

and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For 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.
His 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.

L: The word of the Lord. **C: Thanks Be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Silent Night”
“Still, Still, Still”

Children’s Bells 2 & 4:30 p.m.
Heavenly Bells 9 p.m.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Anne Weber

GOSPEL **Luke 2:1-20**

Our Christmas Eve story comes from the Gospel of Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON – “Joy to the World – Except when you don’t. Because, sometimes, you won’t.”

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

That refrain is one that we need to hear.

To us is born a Savior. Jesus Christ the Lord.

Truth be told, we need to hear it every year, but there seem to be years where that message seems needed more than others. And this certainly seems to be one of those years.

But Christmas happens.

And there is something about our world that makes us believe that we need to have our lives together and everything in order for it to happen.

One of the best selling Dr Seuss books ever printed sums up a lot of what I think many of us are feeling this Christmas season.

Oh the Places You’ll Go.

Dr. Seuss beautifully builds up this character to believe that they are off to great places, today is their day. With brains in your head and feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself any direction you choose.

We can relate. The world tells us this a lot. The world is your oyster. Pull yourself up by the bootstraps. Got on out there. Nobody is stopping you.

This character in “Oh the Places You’ll Go” is continually built up to believe that they are going to have the best life with all of the greatest things and opportunity around every corner. Being the best of the best and on top of the rest is promised. This is what we all want! This is how Christmas has us feeling.

Except when you don’t. Because, sometimes, you won’t.

That's true to. We don't always feel the best of the best. We don't always feel we are in the lead. On top of the rest? Forget about it.

Then what?

Maybe that's why we celebrate Christmas?

Jesus came into a world that didn't want him. The prophets spoke of what his birth would mean for God's people. The mighty will be cast down and the lowly lifted up. That is the song that his mother sang after the angel visited her. Those in power feared his birth, and acted awful when they heard of it.

After his birth, the angel visited shepherds, societal nobodies, to bring them the good news. To go and find the baby. It was star gazers in the east that noticed the star and knew they had to go see what it was about. They brought their gifts and asked the king where the NEW king was located. It was in a dream that they realized that they shouldn't go back to that king to tell him of Jesus' location.

And we read this story, and think that we have to have it all together for it to happen in our lives.

Except when you don't. Because, sometimes, you won't.

The truth, the beauty, of the Christmas story is that we, indeed, don't need to have it all together.

God STILL comes among God's people and says, "I've got a home here. I've got a place in this story."

There are some who are ready to embrace God's presence in those moments, and if that is you, that is fantastic. But, know that there are others who can't fathom God touching their story with a 10-foot pole. And that could very well be the person sitting next to you.

And here is the beauty of it. What happens at Christmas isn't up to us. Whatever we do. Preparations we make. Meals we prepare. Sure, they make us feel good, or maybe not. But God's presence isn't contingent upon whether we put our Lutefisk on top of or alongside our potatoes before covering them in butter.

The magic, wonder, and amazement of the story, the joy that we do find amid all of it, is that promise that God does, indeed, take on human form and live among us, entering our lives as a baby at Christmas.

To us is born a Savior. Jesus Christ the Lord.

This statement is as much a proclamation as it is an affirmation.

Yes, we proclaim the good news of the promise in those words. But we also affirm those things we've been told to be true, that in our moments of "except when you don't, because, sometimes, you won't" seems so distant.

God comes down. Immanuel. God with us. And makes a home in our lives. In our crazy messed up world. And says, "these are my children. These are my people." And, as the song says, "A weary world rejoices. And yonder breaks, a new and glorious morn."

For those who are weary, we don't know when that rejoice will come, but we trust that it will. We don't know the day of that new and glorious morn, but we know it is out there.

So we cling to that hope. The hope of a story of a savior who comes as a baby to a broken world, bringing peace for all people, no matter where they are at in their story.

Thanks be to God. AMEN.

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

LITANY AND PRAYERS FOR THE CHRIST MASS:

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

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

P: To us you have brought abundant joy.

C: Before you we rejoice and sing.

P: 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.

C: Amen

P: Tomorrow the iniquity of the earth shall be blotted out.

C: And the Savior of the world shall reign over us.

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

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

P: 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.

C: Amen

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

C: To reclaim the lost for the heavenly kingdom.

P: All the angels cry aloud with joy:

C: For God has come himself to save all humanity.

P: 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.

C: Amen

P: The peace of Christ Be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

OFFERING

“Away in the Manger”

Senior Choir

OFFERING PRAYER

P: Good and loving God,

C: 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

COMMUNION

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Night of Silence”

Senior Choir

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LIGHT:

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

P: 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.

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

Amen

HYMN

“Silent Night” (all sing) *(words will be in the bulletin)*

1. Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

3. Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from your holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

P: Go in peace, God's Word has become flesh and lives among us.

C: Thanks be to God!

All extinguish candles.

POSTLUDE