

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
Rev. John R. Hanson
December 24, 2020, 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

J Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

We gather on this dark winter night to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all. In the account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest." In the broken-ness of our world we proclaim that the Prince of Peace is born among us. God comes to us in human flesh—in Christ's body and blood—so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.

WELCOME AND VERSE

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. (Luke 2:10-11)

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.

HYMN

"Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful"

Green # 45

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the king of angels;

Oh, come, let us adore him, oh, come, let us adore him, oh, come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God in the highest:

CCLI Song # 31054 CCLI License # 1713417

The God who "Was" - John 1:1-8 In the beginning...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

HYMN

"It Came upon the Midnight Clear"

Green # 54

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heav’n’s all gracious king.”
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

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The God who “Is” - John 1:9-14

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Let us go to find the one who comes to lead us home to God's kingdom. Let us go with the poor in spirit and in flesh. Let us go with those humbled by life. Let us find the Glory of God born in a stable and placed in a feeding trough. Let us go with friends and family, neighbors, and strangers, with all the children of God!

HYMN

“Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”

Green # 34

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Oh, come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

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The God who “Is Yet” - John 1:15-16

John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

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.
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.

HYMN

"Joy to the World"

39

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

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CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Gracious God, you sent your son to us to show us the way. Even when we have turned our backs, followed our own paths, you offer us light. Forgive us when we are so willful and stubborn. Forgive us when we think more about ourselves and our comforts than we think of reaching out to others. Remind us again that Jesus witnessed to us the Light of Love that serves, guides, and heals. Thank you for loving us so much that you would give us this most precious gift. And when we falter and fail, lift us again with your gentle touch. Pour the light into our lives once more, that finally we will fully understand the power and depth of your love for us. AMEN.

May the light of the stars which sparkled in those dark skies again illuminate our lives guiding, healing, and leading us to the Christ child. As we gather in this time and place, hearing the story of the birth, reassure us again, blessed God, that you continually break into our lives. In gratitude we offer our praise and our love to you. AMEN.

HYMN

"What Child Is This"

Green # 40

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!

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!

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NEW TESTAMENT READING: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

The 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.

HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

In 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.

HYMN

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Green # 41

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dream-less sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shin-eth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

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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!"

HYMN

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Green # 71

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?

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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.

HYMN

"The First Noel"

Green # 56

The first Noel the angels did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the king of Israel.

They look-ed up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

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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.

HYMN

"Away in a Manger"

Green # 67

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay; the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

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A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE - John 1:17-18

"The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known."

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong.*

*And man at war with man hears not the love song which they bring;
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing.*

Love was born at Christmas. Many don't understand God's gift of Christ. It isn't power. It isn't might. It isn't knowledge. It isn't right. It is a love for you that can't be contained! So, be a new and different person filled with his love, with a freshness and a newness in all the things you think and in all the things you do!

HYMN

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Green # 60

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all ye nations rise; join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the son of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth, born to give them second birth.

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OFFERING 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 your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION - *Holy Communion will be served as you exit the service.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Saving God, you have gathered your scattered people around gifts of grain and wine, the body and blood of our Savior, Christ. As we, like the shepherds, return on our way, may we proclaim all we have heard and seen, praising you in word and loving deed for the gift of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SERVICE OF THE LIGHT - *Use this time to light your candles and sky lanterns.*

HYMN

"Silent Night"

Green # 65

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.

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!

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.

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SENDING OF WITNESSES

O God, whose grace and truth are revealed in the Word-made-flesh, bless those who will go and share your word and sacrament with those who are unable to fellowship with us. Nourish and strengthen those who receive this holy communion, that through the body and blood of your son, all may rejoice at his birth and in his presence among us now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

Go now, bringing the joy of a Father's love with you to all that you meet. Remember that his Spirit is with you in all you do. Rejoice, dear people, for the Light of Christ has come for the whole world. Go in peace and may the glorious peace of Jesus go with you in all ways.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Go in peace. Christ goes with you.

HYMN

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

Green # 70

***Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!***

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

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