

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
Rev. John R. Hanson
December 24, 2021, 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

J. Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

On these longest of winter nights, we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announced that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. It is tempting to avoid the struggles and injustices of the world during the Christmas season and opt instead for a message of happiness and beauty. Unless we take the radically transforming nature of God's Kingdom Reign seriously – the reason Christ came – we miss the point of the season, and we miss an opportunity to be witnesses to, and agents of, God's liberating Kingdom. Paul has a reminder that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all. Amid our broken world we proclaim that the Prince of Peace is born among us. God comes to us in flesh and blood so that we may bear this light to all the world.

CANTICLE

“O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide”

Green # 38 v 1, 2, 3

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Four candles, four promises (hope, peace, joy, and love) continually offered to us by God, and all of them manifest in one light tonight: the Christ candle. In Christ we find the hope of transformation, the peace that unites community, the joy of relationship, and the love that encompasses all, empowering each of us to make a contribution to the world. In Christ may we find light, life, and the courage to answer his call and follow him.

WELCOME AND VERSE

We rejoice in God's steadfast presence in our lives and in the presence of God's son, Jesus, born of Mary. This son witnesses in ministry and manifests the hope, peace, joy, and love of God. His is a voice undimmed by the centuries. His call and his promise are beacons to us as they were to his disciples so long ago. Come to us, Lord Jesus, be born in us this night - in our hearts, our minds, our lives. May the light of your life be rekindled in us to receive Emmanuel, God with us, God in us. Amen.

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)

HYMN

“Holy Child within the Manger”

Blue # 638 v 1, 2

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 (God's action)!

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.

DIALOGUE & HYMN

“Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”

Green # 34

CCLI Song No. 31982 CCLI License No. 1713417

Let us go, just as we are, to see what has happened. Let us go with the shepherds:

Let us go to find the one who comes to lead us home to God's kingdom.

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

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.

*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.*

Let us go with those who are wise:

Let us go and find the one who brings God's truth to us.

*Oh, come, thou wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.*

Let us go, together, to find the Babe of Bethlehem; O come, let us adore him!

Emmanuel! God with us! Let us go and find the one of whom the angels sang.

*Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind,
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease, fill the whole world with heaven's peace.*

Let us go with friends and family, neighbors and strangers, with all the children of God:

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

He came not to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved.

We receive you, Lord. We worship you.

Heaven and nature proclaim your arrival.

Come, captive! Come, depressed! Come, overburdened!

This is the hope of every nation, the good news of marvelous grace!

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

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Gracious God, you sent your son to us to show us the way. Even when we have turned our backs and followed our own paths, you offer light. Forgive us when we are so willful and stubborn. Forgive us when we think more about ourselves and our comforts. Remind us again that Jesus witnessed 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 your light into our lives once more, that 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, may we be reassured again that God continually breaks into our lives. In gratitude we offer our praise and our love. In awe, may we receive the forgiveness of all our sins.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

HYMN

"Joy to the World"

Green # 39

CCLI Song No. 4194811 CCLI License No. 1713417

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 Holy Night"

COC # 18

CCLI Song # 7018955 CCLI License # 1713417

NEW TESTAMENT READING: Titus 2:11-14

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

GOSPEL & HYMN

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Green # 71

CCLI Song No. 27721 CCLI License No. 1713417

HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 2:8-20

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.

HYMN

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Green # 71

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"

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

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE *"The Redeemer comes to REDEEM US!"*

SHARE A CHRISTMAS GREETING - A greeting of hope, peace, joy, and love.

OFFERING PRAYER

In this, the darkest hour of the night, 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.

CAROLS OF CHRISTMAS CANDLE CEREMONY

Candles will be distributed as you enter the church. Receive only one per responsible person (adults- please limit young children by sharing a candle with them) as we distribute the light. Keep the lit candle upright at all times, especially when you light other candles. At the service conclusion, please hold the candle upright till wax cools.

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"
"Away in a Manger"

Green # 54 v 1, 3
Blue # 644

PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

Great and 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.

HYMN

"Silent Night"

Green # 65

EXTINGUISH CANDLES - (*as candles are extinguished, keep upright until wax cools*)

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SENDING TO WITNESS

For unto us a child is born!! O God, whose grace and truth are revealed in the Word-made-flesh, bless us as we go and share your word with those who are unable to fellowship with us. Nourish and strengthen those who receive this communion, that through the witness of your Son's birth, all may rejoice at his coming and experience his presence among us now and always. Amen.

BLESSING

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

Amen.

CANTICLE

"O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide"

Green # 38 v 1, 4

COMMUNION HYMNS

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
"The First Noel"

Green # 41

Green # 56

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Christmas Poinsettias 2021

In Honor or Celebration of:

Our Children, Hailey and Ryan
Our Church Family
Our Parents
Family and Friends
Autumn, Leo, Addie, and London
Pax, Dana, Jen, and Pete
Thanksgiving for Pastor John and Julie
Family
Our Children and Grandchildren

Given by:

Brad & Jennifer Schumacher
Brad & Jennifer Schumacher
Peder, Tashia, & Stone Parizek
Jon & Sandy Veenendaal
Craig & Gloria Rasmussen
Craig & Gloria Rasmussen
Jim & Sharon Hauschild
Doris Hansen
John & Julie Hanson

In Memory of:

Michelle Bluedorn
Friends and family no longer with us

Given by:

Lori Kent
James & Shirley Shearer

Patrice Bergseng Rasmussen
Gertrud and Edward Melander
Mary and Elmer Schmidt
Stanley and Carolyn Hanson
Ken Parizek

Phil and Anne Hammer, Leroy Doornink, David Cowles,
Lacey Woodruff, Uncle Butch, and Robert Anderson

Doug Hutchins
Roger Hink
Earl and Sophy Hauschild
Danielle Houchins
Cory Hink
Kenzie Kae Walton
Arlene Wangen
Vaughn Jensen
Our Parents

Dean & Mary Bergseng
Don & Joanne Melander
Don & Joanne Melander
Shelley Wynveen
Peder, Tashia, & Stone Parizek

Kurt, Becky, & Kaylee Shaleen
Grant & Amy Hutchins
Jim & Sharon Hauschild
Jim & Sharon Hauschild
Jim & Sharon Hauschild
Jim & Sharon Hauschild
Justen & Ashley Walton
Chris Wangen
Judy Jensen & Family
John & Julie Hanson



*Thank you for assisting in decorating our church.
Poinsettias may be taken home following the Christmas Day service.*

(Please accept our apologies for any errors.)

Worship, as an action, continues to change.
Use these prompts to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.
Use the space to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

We've domesticated the Christmas picture beyond all recollection. If you've been on a farm, you can probably imagine the stench that accompanied Jesus' birth. And if you've been anywhere near the labor room you know it's not all meek and mild. Mary was probably a frightened teenager, Joseph in way over his head. And the shepherds? These were the undesirables.

Why do we prefer to Photoshop the picture of the nativity, when life is hard enough already? Day to day, we struggle to keep our lives intact, calming the tide of chaos that threatens to

overwhelm us at home or in the world. Haven't we had enough "realism"? We came to church for a vision of something that is undeniably good, pure, beautiful.

It's understandable, we put a lot of time and energy into managing things, controlling as many parts of our lives as possible, and we're worn out. We come to church wanting not just a rest from the frenetic pace of everyday life but something more, something comforting and comfortable, something, preferably, warm, cozy, and inspiring. And so we hear Luke's nativity scene like it's a kind of spiritual comfort food for a worn-out soul.

But not Luke's nativity scene! Luke knows something about wanting to order chaotic lives, too. In fact, his story begins just there, naming up-front the rulers of this world who were responsible for trying to maintain and enforce - the *Pax Romana* (*peace in Rome*).

Luke sets his story amid a census, the act of ordering (registering, counting) and taxing everyone! Yet this is only background for Luke; the main action takes place on the fringe, away from the center of power, in a little backwater town called Bethlehem, where a scared young girl and her equally scared husband can't find any decent place in which to birth their first child and so are forced to take refuge with animals, with only dirty shepherds and even dirtier sheep to notice.

Why does Luke tell his story this way? Even more, why does God do it this way? This whole story is a ruling about "order," an accusation against things "as they are." By playing out this redemptive story on the fringe of things, just where you'd least expect God to be... God is telling us that the way things usually are... just isn't good enough.

It's like God is whispering something to us that we know already, deep down but are afraid to admit, even to ourselves: *these lives we've so carefully created - this world we work so hard to manage - these are beautiful, precious, and wonderful ... but they are also vulnerable, fragile, and ultimately insufficient.*

Even the best of life is filled by measures of regret and disappointment, and if we take even a moment, we will see how many people lead lives that are difficult, painful, and all too short. So, God comes not at the center of the world to straighten things out a bit, but on the fringe to call the orders and structures of the day into question and herald a new beginning altogether. Ultimately, Luke's story -- if we're willing to listen -- witnesses to the simple yet scary fact that God didn't come in Jesus to make things a little better, a little more bearable... God came to turn over the tables, to create a whole new system, to resurrect and redeem us rather than merely rehabilitate us.

★ Take some time to reflect on the things in your life that are in disorder - the things you have moved to the storage areas of your mind.

★ Take some time to open the hidden things to God's son, for him to see. Maybe he is already there, trying to breathe new life into that space of denial and disorder.

★ Take some time to welcome Jesus into the places of your home, work, school, or neighborhood that could use some redemption, guiding you to a good life, .no, a new life.

★ Receive the presence of Jesus - not in fine linens or royal robes - but in our worst attire and wearing some of our worst stains and helping us live as one fully, totally, completely REDEEMED.