

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRISTMAS I - REJOICE BELIEVERS!
Reverend John R. Hanson
Sunday, December 26, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

PRELUDE

J. Hanson

INTRODUCTION - *On the first Sunday of Christmas we jump from the manger to the Temple when Jesus is twelve years old. We are faced with a Jesus who is very human – learning, debating, growing, looking rather like Samuel did when he was a boy. One of the toughest choices we will make in our faith is whether to really take the human growth of Jesus seriously. As we worship ‘God with us’, may we also encounter a real Jesus this week.*

THEME AND VERSE (light Christmas candles)

We come to you, O God, knowing that not all children are joyful in this time of year, not all families have a safe place to lay their heads, not all parents know where their children are. We pray for your comfort, your strength, and your peace to work through us as we live out your mercy and righteousness in the world.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

HYMN

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Green # 60

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the new born 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 new born king!”

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, the incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!

CCLI Song # 5055973 CCLI License # 1713417

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION God is good. **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52 - *Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.*

⁴¹Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they

went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the

festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but

his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his

mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather together to worship

in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, we are encouraged to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These qualities form the fabric of our lives - the threads which form the foundation for God's weaving in us. God action brings the threads of our lives together with love. There are times when a lack of compassion weakens the fabric of our relationship with God and with other people. For these errors we ask for forgiveness as well as strength to overcome our failures.

Forgive us, O God, when we have failed to be compassionate, we have failed to be kind, we have failed to show humility, we have failed to be gentle, and we have failed to show patience.

We are called to bear with one another and to forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven us. We are invited to let his peace rule in our hearts and to be thankful and with gratitude in our hearts sing praises to God. This gratitude is our response to the good news that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit! Amen.

HYMN

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Green # 60

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

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

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON "Christmas Still!"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Shine into our hearts the light of your love, O God, and open our minds to the knowledge of your word, that in all things we may think and act according to your good will and may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ, your son, our Lord. Amen.

HYMN

"Love Came Down at Christmas"

Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine.
Love was born at Christmas, stars and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the God-head, love incarnate, love divine.
Worship we our Jesus, but wherewith for sacred sign.

Love shall be our token, love be yours and love be mine;
Love for God and all men, love for plea and gift and sign.

CCLI Song # 1737412 CCLI License # 1713417

READING: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Having dedicated her son to God's service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband, Elkanah, come to the Lord's house to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel, under Eli's care, gains favor with God and his people.

¹⁸Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with

children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

READING: Colossians 3:12-17

Just as newly baptized Christians were clothed with white robes upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are instructed to live in compassion and peace, covered with the character of Christ.

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray.
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!

CCLI Song # 27879 License # 1713417

SERMON - *“Where do we go to find Jesus? Mary, Joseph, and his community hadn't figured it out, so when will we understand the significance of Emmanuel?”*

HYMN

“The Bells of Christmas”

Green # 62

The bells of Christmas chime once more; the heav'nly guest is at the door.
He comes to earthly dwellings still with new year gifts of peace, good will.

Oh, join with me, in gladness sing, to keep our Christmas with our king,
Until our song, from loving souls, like rushing mighty water rolls!

Come, Jesus, glorious heav'nly guest, and keep your Christmas in our breast;
Then David's harp-string, hushed so long, shall swell our jubilee of song.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

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.

BENEDICTION & SENDING

Never put your faith in worldly status, and never underestimate your heavenly importance. Let your trust in the coming of Christ soar within you like wings of joy.

Go out into the world and serve one another as those who bear God's word.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, through Jesus our Savior, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us this day and evermore.

Amen! We go in Christ's name; let us love and serve the Lord!

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Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.

The readings take us on a strange journey this year. Having just celebrated the birth of Christ, we now fast forward to the one story in the Scriptures from Jesus' childhood – when his parents forgot him in the Temple. Then, next week, we go back in time again, to the visit of the magi.

The reading from 1 Samuel forms a kind of parallel with the Gospel. Both Samuel and Jesus were at home in the temple from a very young age. Both had parents who valued and visited the Temple. Both became teachers and leaders of God's people. And both were completely human. As such, both had to learn and grow and be nurtured into their ministries. Finally, in Colossians, God's people are also called to learn and grow into the life of following Christ – a life of compassion, harmony and peace.

So, as much as we celebrate the divinity of Christ, and acknowledge that in him God has become flesh, the focus this week is on how the humanity of Jesus enabled him to understand and experience life as we do, and made it possible for him to be an example for us to follow. This means that we can't use the divinity of Jesus as an excuse to accept lower standards for our lives than those embodied in his. His call for us to follow him is based in the truth that his life was completely human, and therefore completely accessible for us.

It also means that as we follow Jesus, we do so with the same need to grow, learn, change, fail and develop as Jesus did. Our faith is not a doorway to a magical life free of the usual human struggles. Rather it is a pathway that enables us to journey through our humanity with deeper meaning, understanding and connectedness. The implications of following a human Christ will be the focus of our worship this week.

The humanity of the incarnate Christ has strong implications for our lives and ministry in our homes, communities, workplaces and neighborhoods. When we recognize the extent to which God is concerned for the details of our lives, when we really embrace the incarnate nature of Christ, we can no longer devalue the daily realities we must face. If incarnation becomes the basis for our lives, we cannot help but heed the call to be always growing and learning. We cannot help but view this life as more than just a test for eternity, but as having value in and of itself. This means that we must become just as concerned for the physical, emotional and mental well-being of those around us as we are for their spiritual well-being.

It means that we can no longer live with a dualistic view of ourselves, but must embrace the essential unity of spirit, mind and body, of God and creation. In the light of this we will discover that following Jesus means that we get involved in play, companionship, advocacy, service and acts of generosity as much as we are engaged in worship and evangelism. Suddenly we discover that so-called "spiritual" pursuits are not separate from our normal "human" pursuits. And out of all of this we will find that following Jesus becomes something that engages every facet of our lives – our relationships, our learning, our work, our leisure, our money, our values, our ethics and, yes, our spirituality. The Christ who grew, who challenged, who debated, who ate and learned becomes a true model for how we choose to live our lives, and how we can best bring life to those around us.

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