

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD—CHRISTMAS EVE

Silently Ponder the Mystery

December 24, 2016

4:00 & 6:00pm

AS WE GATHER

From the Old Testament, we believe that God has spoken by His prophets. We also believe that God is speaking by His Spirit through the Means of Grace. But it is only because of Christmas that we can know this God of the prophets, this God the Holy Spirit. For it is only and solely through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Mary, that anyone can come to know the one true God. As John said, “No one has ever seen God,” but “the only God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known” (John 1:18). Jesus made God known by His faithful teaching, but then especially by His work of salvation in His own holy life and sacred death and mighty resurrection. But knowing all that is to come, tonight we silently ponder the mystery of the Son of God, who took on our flesh by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, being born into the world for us and for our salvation. Tonight we pray and sing:

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;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel! (*LSB* 361:4)

PRE SERVICE BELL ANTHEM “See Amid the Winter’s Snow”

WELCOME

HANDSHAKES & HUGS

✠ PREPARATION ✠

PROCESSIONAL HYMN #379 “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Please turn and face the entrance to the sanctuary.

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him Born the king of angels:

**Refrain: O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!**

Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing! **Refrain**

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God In the highest: **Refrain**

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, To Thee be glory giv’n! Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing! **Refrain**

INVOCATION & OPENING SENTENCES

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

People: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Pastor: But Mary treasured up all these things,

People: pondering them in her heart.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Pastor: On this most holy night wherein we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, let us enter His presence confessing our need for Him who came to save us from our sins.

People: O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is My paradise at which my soul reclineth. He whom the sea And wind obey Doth come to serve the sinner in great meekness. As you have come to join us and our children in our weakness, forgive us our sin and be born in us tonight.

Pastor: Thou Christian heart, Whoe’er thou art, Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee! For God’s own Child, In mercy mild, Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee! As a called and ordained servant of the Word made flesh and by His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE #380 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

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 the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! **Refrain**

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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. **Refrain**

SALUTATION & PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. O God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

(Be seated)

✠ WORD ✠

OLD TESTAMENT READING Isaiah 7:10–14 (The sign of Immanuel)

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

EPISTLE 1 John 4:7–16 (God is love.)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us; He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has

ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and him in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

4:00 ANTHEM

“O Come to the Manger” Patrick Lieberger

(Rise)

HOLY GOSPEL Matthew 1:18–25 (The birth of Jesus Christ)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(Be seated)

SERMON HYMN #364 “Away in a Manger”

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 baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

SERMON

“The Angels of Christmas”

HYMN #361

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, And, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wond’ring love.
O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king And peace to all the earth!

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;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!

(Rise)

NICENE CREED *(found on the inside back cover of the hymnal)*

(Be seated)

OFFERING As your offering is collected, **please sign our attendance book** located at the end of the pew. If you are a visitor, please leave your address and phone. After you are finished, please pass the book along to others in your pew, and return the book to the center aisle. You may check the register to see the names of those to greet after the service.

4:00 ANTHEM DURING OFFERING “This Peaceful Night” Don Besig & Nancy Price

6:00 BELL ANTHEM DURING OFFERING “Carol of the Bells”

(Rise)

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD’S PRAYER

(Be seated)

CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY

As Pastors light their candles from the Christ candle in the middle of the Advent wreath, the usher's come forward.

Pastor: The Lord is my Light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?

People: **The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?**

All: **Fill us with your Light, Lord Jesus, that we may live in the light of your salvation.**

After the above sentences are spoken, the ushers light their candles from Pastors’ candles. They will bring the Light to worshipers at the end of each pew.

(For the sake of safety, please hold lighted candles upright, dipping **unlit** candles into the flame of a lighted candle. We also ask that **young children not hold their own candle**, but instead hold a candle with one of their parents or use a battery operated candle.)

THE SPREADING OF THE LIGHT

CANDLELIGHT HYMNS

HYMN #366

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

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 all, From heav’n’s all gracious king.”
The world in solemn stillness lay To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats O’er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains They bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its babel sounds The blessed angels sing.

All you, beneath your heavy load, By care and guilt bent low,
Who toil along a dreary way With painful steps and slow:
Look up, for golden is the hour, Come swiftly on the wing,
The Prince was born to bring you peace; Of Him the angels sing.

For lo, the days have come to pass By prophets seen of old,
When down into the circling years Came Christ as was foretold.
His word of peace shall to the earth God’s ancient promise bring,
And all who take this gift will hear The song the angels sing.

HYMN #373 “See Amid the Winter’s Snow”

See amid the winter’s snow, Born for us on earth below,
See, the gentle Lamb appears, Promised from eternal years.

Refrain:

**Hail, O ever-blessed morn! Hail, redemption’s happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem: “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”**

Lo, within a stable lies He who built the starry skies,
He who, throned in height sublime, Sits amid the cherubim. **Refrain**

Sacred Infant, all divine, What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss Down to such a world as this! **Refrain**

Teach, O teach us, holy Child, By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee In Thy sweet humility. **Refrain**

BENEDICTION

Pastor: All out of darkness we have light,

People: Which made the angels sing this night:

Pastor: “Glory to God and peace to men

People: Now and forevermore. Amen.”

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you
and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you
peace.

People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN #363 “Silent Night, Holy Night”

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,
Heavenly 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 Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

(Please extinguish your candle)

Preacher

Liturgist

Lectors

Acolytes

Organist & Bell Choir Director

Choir Director

Pastor Gregg Stanton

Pastor Harold Bender

Dalen Heinzen, Russell Hurst

Emily Yakel, Riley Zacharias

Michelle Prince

Nancy Hoelke

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Merry Christmas