

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24, 2015

11:00 p.m.

“The Light Shines in the Darkness”

As We Gather

On Christmas, the grace of God appeared bringing salvation for all people in the person of Jesus. The angelic proclamation to the shepherds of Bethlehem was “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10–11). This Jesus is the Child on whose shoulders the government rests. He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. For this gift of grace called Jesus, let all people rejoice and sing, “Glory to God, now and forever!”

Prelude

Fellowship Greeting

Opening Hymn #387

“Joy to the World”

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.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found.

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.

(Rise)

Christmas Prayer

Pastor: Tonight we gather to celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace. He came to calm our troubled hearts in this world of turmoil and sin. He came to bring us grace and mercy, making peace for us with God, our Father. He came that we might live in peace with one another, sharing His love and

grace with all people. Therefore, let us pray that He would come and fill our hearts, our homes, and our lives.

People: O God, our heavenly Father, so many years ago you sent your only-begotten Son into our world to be our Savior. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we may worship Him with heartfelt devotion. Fill our lives with His truth, His grace, His mercy, that we may be at peace with you, our heavenly Father, and live at peace with all people. Even in the face of this world of troubles and trials, give us His peace which surpasses human understanding. May the Light of His truth lead and guide us all our days; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Be seated)

+ Word +

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

New Testament Reading: 1 John 4:7-16

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 loves 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 he 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.

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.

(Rise)

The Holy Gospel of Christ's Birth: Luke 2:1-14

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and they were terrified. But the angel said

to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

(Be seated)

The Sermon Hymn #370 *“What Child Is This”*

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!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mary!

Christmas Sermon *“The Light Shines in the Darkness”*

John 1:1-5, 14

Christmas Eve Offering

(Rise)

Christmas Eve Prayers

Pastor: Lord God, our heavenly Father, on this Christmas Eve we give you our heartfelt thanks and praise for the birth of your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for the salvation he brings.

People: **Grant us to live in the joy of his salvation day by day.**

Pastor: Almighty God, ruler of all, we pray for our troubled world filled with sin and strife. We pray for peoples at war, that hostilities would cease through coming to terms of peace.

People: **We pray for people who don’t know Jesus as their Savior, that their lives might be filled with joy and peace through believing in the Christ Child.**

Pastor: We pray for our families, friends, and loved ones, that all would know the love of Christ and would live in the peace he brings us day by day.

People: We pray for our world which is so often filled with warring and bloodshed, praying for all wars to come to an end through the second coming of the Prince of Peace.

Pastor: Almighty God, giver of comfort and joy in Christ, we pray for all your children who face difficulties in these days. We pray for the sick and afflicted, that they would find healing and hope in the promise of Christmas. We pray for the lonely, that they would know the presence of Immanuel.

People: We pray for all your children, experiencing joys or facing sorrows, those having abundance or those impoverished, that all would find refuge, peace, and security in knowing Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Pastor: Almighty God, your Son took on flesh and blood to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. As we partake of his precious body and blood, fill us with the peace of sins forgiven.

People: Fill us this night with the joy, the comfort, the hope, and the peace of Christmas. Fill us with Christ himself, that the promise and peace of Christmas would be with us each and every day.

Pastor: All these prayers and whatever else you know we need we lift before you in the name of the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Brief Order of Confession and Absolution

Pastor: The angel came to Joseph and told him what to name the Child and the reason why: "You shall give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." Jesus came to save us from our sins. Let us confess the reason we need Him as our Savior.

All: Almighty God, I am a sinner. I have sinned against you in so many ways. Some of my sin I am aware of. Some of my sins I do not even realize. I need to have them all covered by the grace of Jesus Christ. Father, forgive me for Jesus' sake.

Pastor: Our God is gracious and merciful...and so He sent Jesus that first Christmas to be your Savior. As a called and ordained servant of Christ

Jesus, 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.

Words of Institution

Pax Domini

Pastor: The peace of the Lord Jesus be with you this Christmas and always.

People: Amen.

(Be seated)

Distribution

Those guests who desire to commune who are members of another LCMS congregation may do so; if you are coming from another church background, please see the pastor or an elder first.

Hymn #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**

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.

Common Dismissal

Candle Lighting Ceremony

*As Pastor lights his candle 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 Pastor's candle. 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 one of the battery operated candles.)

The Candlelight Hymns

#361 "O Little Town of Bethlehem" Stanzas 1, 3 & 4

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

#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 heav-en-ly peace, Sleep in heav-en-ly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heav-en afar, Heav'n-ly 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 candles)

(Rise)

The Closing Sentences and Benediction

Pastor: I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints--but let them not return to folly.

People: Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Pastor: Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

People: Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

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 His favor and give you His peace.

People: Amen.

Closing Hymn #379 “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

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**

Silent Prayer

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Preacher/Liturgist
Lector
Acolyte
Organist
Music Coordinator

Pastor Gregg Stanton
Grant Gundersen
Jennifer Moyle
Roger Gottschalk
Kim Woller

Bulletin Sponsor ~ Mae Zepnick in loving memory of Ralph.

Merry Christmas

