

Candle Light Christmas Eve Worship
7:00 p.m. December 24, 2023



Thought: At Christmas, God comes into the world in amazing ways in Jesus Christ, through a powerful light that enlightens our paths to God; through a profound joy that changes our attitudes and fills our lives; and through the newborn Christ's authority to shape human history.

Isaiah 9:2 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.

Prelude – Lillian Pinkston

Welcome and Announcements

Prayer Concerns

Sharing of the Peace

P: Unto you is born this day a Savior, Christ the Lord! We share this joy in our peace.

Call to Worship -

L: Night approaches;

C: shepherds lie awake.

L: Angels appear;

C: shepherds begin to quake.

L: Good news is proclaimed;

C: this is no mistake.

L: Tonight the Christ is born;

C: shepherd's praises we now make.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath – “The Candle of Christ”

Mark and Chris McCarrell

Unison Prayer:

Generous God, you have given us a time of preparation to receive again your gift of love and joy and hope and healing.

In the birth of the Child, Jesus, you have given new life to each of us.

May we experience the presence of Emmanuel, God with us, this day, and always. Amen

(As the Crèche is placed)

Christmas Hymn – “Angels We Have Heard on High” ELW #289

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHWqj6gKS9g>

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Gracious God, you show mercy from one generation to the next; you seek justice in a world that is proud and arrogant; you look with favor upon the lowly. Your grace knows no bounds.

A time of silence for reflection.

But we have been bounded.

C: We have been slow to trust in your promises. Adversities, uncertainties, and injustices have made us place hope in ourselves and our own abilities. We have forgotten to look to you, the one whose faith and love are steadfast, always looking to ground and strengthen us. Forgive us, merciful God. Break the bonds that ensnare us so that we might find ourselves tethered to your hope for each of us and for our communities, that we might be strengthened to view the world as you do.

P: God lifts up those who are downtrodden, offers a grace-filled presence to those who are broken, and continues to strengthen for great service and praise those that the world deems unfit. Stand firm in God's promise because nothing is impossible for God. We celebrate Jesus birth and by his glory we are forgiven.

C: Amen.

Christmas Praise – “O Come All Ye Faithful”

L: We gather this night to celebrate the Savior's birth.

C: O come, all ye faithful!

L: We gather as the holy family gathered in Bethlehem.

C: O come, all ye faithful!

L: We gather as the shepherds came from the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

C: O come, all ye faithful!

L: We gather to celebrate as faithful Christian saints have done for centuries.

C: O come, all ye faithful!

L: We gather with people around the world to worship the new-born Messiah.

C: O come, all ye faithful!

Hymn of Praise – “Angels, From the Realms of Glory” ELW #275

Prayer for Christmas Eve

L: Holy God, we come before you this night to proclaim a steadfast love, an undying care, a risk-taking grace.

C: As Shepherds watch their fields, you guard justice, you protect peace, you keep your eyes on your beloved.

L: May our worship be as such:

C: a holy watching, a patient waiting, a faithful presence. Amen.

Preparing for the Word

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” ELW #279

The Word

Old Testament reading – Isaiah 9:2-7

Christmas Eve is a time of waiting and watching. As night approaches, the birth of the beloved child comes near. This child will usher in the reign of God's peace and justice, and we teeter on the edges of our chairs and pews in anticipation of this display of God's shining glory.

²The 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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 96

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad.

¹Sing to the LORD A new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

³Declare God's glory among the nations and God's wonders among all peoples.

⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly ^l to be praised, more to be feared ^l than all gods.**

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they ^l are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

⁶**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**

⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: “The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity.”

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.

Epistle reading – Titus 12:11-14

The appearance of God’s grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity.

¹¹The 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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Christmas Gospel – Luke 2:1-14

The Holy Gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you O Lord.**

<https://youtu.be/UoT7Db0osJQ?si=xEcXZX-Q1RPeT-Z>

God’s greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger.

¹In 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.

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!”

“Love Has Come” ELW #292

Luke 2: 15-20

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.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

Christmas Message – “Wrapped in Swaddling Clothes”

<https://youtu.be/2t67yLJA1xc?si=qEAMg3v2jaPqMT0G>

Christmas Story – “Go Tell It on the Mountain” ELW #290

Prayers of Intercession

P: Trusting in God’s good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

L: Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ’s holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints (*especially*) who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

Amen.

Christmas Eve Thanksgiving

P: Gracious, generous God: On this day we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, Your son, Your Self in human form.

C: We celebrate the Son of God.

L: We are transfixed by the story of Jesus.

P: We looked for a warrior;

C: You sent a baby.

P: We looked for royalty;

C: You were born to peasants.

P: We looked for power

C: You showed us meekness.

P: We looked among rulers and politicians;

C: You were found among cattle and shepherds.

P: We looked for military victory;

C: You gave us resurrection.

P: We looked for riches;

C: You gave us selflessness.

P: We looked for a king;

C: You gave us a servant.

L: We worship Jesus, a child born unto us, God's Redemption Story.

Consecration

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Distribution

Communion Music – Lillian Pinkston

Post Communion Blessing – Pastor

Candlelight Liturgy

L: This, then, is how Love is born: like a seed planted in the darkest of soils that rises to meet the sun's warming rays, so love emerges from the deepest places. Despite our willing it, and without the force of hand, may love rise graciously to life.

C: This, then, is how Love is born: as the morning slowly dawns – first a sliver, then a burning horizon – causing the night to fade away, so love transforms our sorrow and fear. Into our need, moving against resistance, may love change things in our lives and in the world.

“Away in a Manger” ELW #277

(As Candles are lit – remember to tilt **unlit** candle towards the lighted candle)

When Candles are lit:

P: The light from even a single flame makes watching an easier task.

C: Christ's flame reminds us that God is with us.

P: May we live as people strengthened by God's hope.

C: May we live as people encouraged by God's peace.

P: May we live as people abiding in God's joy.

C: May we live as people sharing in God's love.

“Silent Night, Holy Night” ELW #281

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=magy2uWJMR8>

Dismissal

L: In this flickering flame, remember that in Christ your light shines before others because God's love is born in you. Have a blessed Christmas!

C: Thanks be to God for this special gift!

Postlude – Lillian Pinkston