



**Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
December 24, 2023 9:00 a.m.**

Thought: It is time to remember in joy and hope the journey that God has given from Creation to the coming of Jesus born unto us in Bethlehem.

Welcome and Announcements

Prayer Concerns

Gathering Hymn – “Savior of the Nations, Come” ELW #263 vss. 1-3

Bidding Prayer

P: Beloved in Christ be it this Christmas day our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels; in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

L: Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and let us make our church, glad with carols of praise:

P: But first let us pray for the needs of His whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for unity even in our differences.

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: Christ is born and your Spirit is poured out upon us. Renew your church through the gift of baptism. Unite your faithful people across both distance and denomination. Teach us to live by your grace. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: You reveal your presence over the heights of the mountains, through the cloud and lightning, and beyond the trembling of the earth. Still the storms that threaten the lands and send relief to all places and peoples experiencing natural disasters, extreme temperatures, or famine. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Let all the ends of the earth know the promise of your reconciliation and renewal. Make beautiful the work of peacemakers, community organizers, and advocates who work to ensure that all people flourish in safety and dignity (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: God, be our comfort and our redemption. Seek out all who feel forsaken or forlorn, especially those who are marginalized because of their race, sexuality, gender expression, or immigration status. Heal all who struggle in any way (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

L: Following the example of Mary and Joseph, let all our families, whatever their shape or size, reflect your holy and life-giving love. Bless adoptive families, foster families, and guardians. Hold in mercy all who are childless, by choice or by life circumstance. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: As you have guarded the lives of the saints, so shield us from evil and danger. Teach us by their example to serve you with joy and honesty of heart, that we live as heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 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.

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.

Blessing

P: The Almighty God bless us with His grace: Christ give us the joys of everlasting life: and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all.

C: Amen.

First Lesson – Genesis 3:8-15, 17-19

God announces in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve's punishment for their rebellion and that the seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

⁸They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁷And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Carol – “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” ELW #254

Second Lesson – Genesis 22:15-18

God promises to Abraham that by his descendants all the nations of the earth will obtain blessings.

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Carol – “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” ELW #257 Vss. 1,2,4,7

Lighting of the Fourth Candle on the Advent Wreath

“Promise”

Tim and Leslie Leitner

Unison Prayer:

**Loving God, we thank you that you have fulfilled your promise.
Emmanuel has come. We rejoice in your faithfulness. Give us courage to
respond with love and compassion.**

Amen.

(ornament of “Promise” is hung on the tree)

Third Lesson – Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The prophet announces the birth of a king to a people in darkness.

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. 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.

Carol – “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” ELW #272 Vss. 1,2

Fourth Lesson – Micah 5:2-5a

The king is coming and will usher in a reign of justice for the poor and peace for all God’s creation.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

Carol – “O Little Town of Bethlehem” ELW #279

Fifth Lesson – Luke 1:26-35, 38

The angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will give birth to God’s promised Son, whose kingdom will never end.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel

said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Carol – “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” ELW #270

Sixth Lesson – Luke 2:1-7

Against a backdrop of emperors and taxes, Jesus is born.

In 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.

Carol – “The First Noel” ELW #300 vs. 1

Seventh Lesson – Luke 2:8-16

The shepherds go to see the Savior of the world and find him lying in a manger.

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!” 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.

Carol – “What Child Is This” ELW #296

Eighth Lesson – Matthew 2:1-11

The wise men follow a star to find the child Jesus, the King of the Jews.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Carol – “In the Bleak Midwinter”

ELW #294

Ninth Lesson – John 1:1-14

John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of

the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

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

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Benediction

