

**As We Gather**

The shepherds had a sudden awakening when angelic light dispelled the darkness of night. God was entering human history in Bethlehem then, but for centuries He had been shedding light on His plans. This evening we thank God that His grace has dawned within us, giving us believing hearts to joyfully celebrate His birth. We not only recall what God has done in the past, but also we light our own candles to spread the warmth of God's love to one another. And then we go out into a world where many people still walk in darkness. What joy there will be when they see the Light!

**INVOCATION**

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

People: Amen.

**PSALMODY****Psalm**

*Psalm 96; antiphon: v. 2*

- ☐ Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day.  
Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day.

**HYMN** "Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" LSB 352 vv. 1, 5-6

**1 Let the earth now praise the Lord,  
Who has truly kept His word  
And at last to us did send  
Christ, the sinner's help and friend.**

**5 Bruise for me the serpent's head  
That, set free from doubt and dread,  
I may cling to You in faith,  
Safely kept through life and death.**

**6 Then when You will come again  
As the glorious king to reign,  
I with joy will see Your face,  
Freely ransomed by Your grace.**

- ☐ Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples!  
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the made the heavens.  
Splendor and majesty are before Him;  
strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.  
Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;  
bring an offering, and come into His courts!

**HYMN** "What Child Is This" LSB 370

**1 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!**

- 2 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!**
- 3 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!**

- ☐** Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth!  
Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;  
He will judge the peoples with equity."

**HYMN "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" LSB 380**

- 1 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!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"**
- 2 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!  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"**
- 3 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.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”**

## LESSONS AND CAROLS

### Lesson

*Isaiah 11:1, 4a; Numbers 24:15b, 17a; Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2*

Ⓛ Our gracious God did not become one of us unexpectedly; rather, through the ages, He promised to enter human history to save us. Let us hear some of the prophecies and respond in song.

Ⓛ Isaiah wrote about a descendant of Jesse, David’s father:

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. With righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”

**CAROL** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” LSB 359 v.1

1 **Lo, how a rose e’er blooming  
From tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse’s lineage coming  
As prophets long have sung,  
It came, a flow’ret bright,  
Amid the cold of winter,  
When half-spent was the night.**

Ⓛ In Numbers, chapter 24, we read that the Savior would be royal.

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, . . . I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

**BELLS** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Ⓛ Isaiah even wrote about our Lord’s virgin birth.

“The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

**CHOIR** “Savior of the Nations, Come” LSB 332 v.1

1 Savior of the nations, come,  
Virgin’s Son, make here Your home!  
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth,  
That the Lord chose such a birth.

### Part 1, Lesson 4

Ⓛ Micah foretold where Jesus would be born.

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.”

**CAROL** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” LSB 361 v.1

**1** **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.**

**P** It is not enough to look back at the historical fact of Jesus’ birth; today we celebrate the love God showers on us daily, which we share, and about which we sing in later stanzas of these same hymns.

**Gradual**

*Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1a*

**P** To us a child is born,

**C** **to us a son is given;**

**P** and the government shall be upon His shoulder.

**C** **And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**P** Sing to the Lord a new song,

**C** **for He has done marvelous things!**

**CHOIR** “Silent Night, Silent World”

**Lesson**

*1 John 4:7–9, 10–12, 15–16; Titus 2:11–14*

**L** In his First Epistle, John writes,

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.”

**CAROL** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” LSB 359 v.2

**2** **Isaiah ’twas foretold it,  
The rose I have in mind;  
With Mary we behold it,  
The virgin mother kind.  
To show God’s love aright,  
She bore to us a Savior,  
When half-spent was the night.**

**L** John continues,

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.”

**CAROL** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” LSB 357 v.7

**7** **O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!**

**L** And John concludes,

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

**CAROL** “Savior of the Nations, Come” LSB 332 v.7

**7** From the manger newborn light  
Shines in glory through the night.  
Darkness there no more resides;  
In this light faith now abides.

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## Part 2, Lesson 4

**L** Paul writes to Titus and us:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.”

**CAROL** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” LSB 361 v.3-4

**3** 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.

**4** 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!

**Offering** “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

Handbells

**CHOIR** “Christmas Sanctus”

## PRAYERS

Lord’s Prayer

**C** 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.**

**Benediction** (Sung by Choir)

- P** Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for He comes,  
for He comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness.  
Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day.

**HYMN** “Joy to the World” LSB 387

- 1 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.**
- 2 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.**
- 3 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.**
- 4 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.**

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