



God's Word Gives Our Lives Direction



***Candlelight Service
December 17, 2023***

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The Unexpected Gift:

Throughout the Advent season we've been reflecting on the various biblical titles of Jesus that are sprinkled throughout the famous Advent hymn, "*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*" These titles invite us to contemplate the character of God as we make our way to the manger on Christmas morning. Tonight's title invites us to reflect on the nature of Christ's Kingship and the unexpected manner in which he came. We welcome our Savior tonight, but we welcome him each and every day by making him room, receiving that great gift of love and life: Jesus, the Savior who is coming again.

*The majority of tonight's service will proceed 'unannounced.' Please note that the words to each song are printed in your bulletins, but will also be up on the screen. ... Also, make sure you have a candle to be used at the end of the service.

*** Please rise in body or in spirit**

"Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright."

Prelude

Ministry of Music: "*Glory in the Darkest Place*" – Sheri Link

Sung Call to Worship: LUYH #61 v. 1-7 "*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*"

Soloist

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Soloist

2. O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.

Soloist

3. O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

Soloist

4. O come, thou branch of Jesse's stem,
unto thine own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

Women Only Sing, All Stand

5. O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.

Men Only Sing

6. O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

All Sing

7. O come, desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of peace.

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Words: Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr. Composite, P.D.; Music: French processional, 15th c. P.D.; arr. Evangelical Lutheran Worship ©2006 Augsburg Fortress; All rights reserved. OneLicense.netLicense #A-711218 CCLI#678905

*Call to Worship

Leader: All God's people – Boys and girls, women, men:

People: Come and worship!

Leader: Shepherds, Magi, saints, and angels:

People: Come and worship!

Leader: All who need the Savior, all who long for comfort:

**People: Come and worship, come and worship Christ,
the newborn King!**

* Opening Carol: LUYH #76 v. 1-3 *“O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

1. 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!*

2. God of God, Light of Light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created;

Refrain

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
“Glory to God, all glory in the highest!”

Refrain

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

Refrain

Words: attr. John F. Wade, 1743; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1841, and others, P.D.;
Music: attr. John F. Wade, 1743; desc. © 1947 Hymns Ancient and Modern,
admin. Hope Publishing Company; CCLI #678905

*“Round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant,
so tender and mild,”*

Narrator Reading – The World is About to Turn!

Narrator #1

A decree. A census. Quirinius. If you've heard the Christmas story from Luke 2 enough times, you might think to yourself, "Enough with the names and the geopolitics—let's get to the good part!" Or maybe it's the first time you've heard it, and you are wondering why a Christmas celebration sounds more like a history lesson. But these opening verses are so important because it *is* history. It happened in history! There are many feel-good holiday stories out there—probably a hundred or more on TV and streaming services just tonight. But they aren't real. This one is. And Caesar? Well, he was real too, and really important. It took an important person to set the wheels in motion for this census that opens the Christmas story—a moment that would bring a man and his young wife to Bethlehem. But here's the twist: Caesar's also not that important at all. There's only one wheel-turner. The rest of us—even the Caesars—are just people. We're all human. Was Caesar so wrapped up in the world around him, the world he claimed for himself, that he lost sight of that? What about us? We're not emperors sitting on thrones, but each one of us has a throne in our hearts that we all, at times, claim as ours and ours alone. Are we so wrapped up in the world around us and our own dreams and desires that we can't see what's happening? The one eternal, holy, creator God is sending the greatest gift: Immanuel — God with us. The divine is reaching down to us and meeting us here in this moment of history. It's not just a story from the past. This moment, this baby, changed history and is still changing the lives of those who make him room.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20

* Hymn of Response: LUYH #87 v. 1,2,4 *"Once in Royal David's City"*

1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little child.

2. He came down to earth from heaven
who is God and Lord of all;
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor, and meek, and lowly
lived on earth our Savior holy.

4. And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love,
for that child, so dear and gentle,
is our Lord in heaven above:
and he leads his children on
to the place where he has gone.

Words: Cecil F. Alexander, 1848, P.D.

Narrator Reading – Bethlehem

Narrator #2

Rome was *caput mundi*—the capital of the world, the ancient “Big Apple,” if you will. People of prestige, position, and power were in Rome. But a prophecy of old pointed elsewhere. The first dwelling place of the holy infant, the promised king, was . . . Bethlehem. That’s a big clue that this isn’t the kind of king we tend to picture: one with a crown and flowing robe, sitting on a throne, introduced with a trumpet fanfare. And, of course, it’s not the kind of mighty king we imagine wields power, a conquering hero bending others to the royal will. Jesus didn’t come to be that king. He bends himself, humbles himself, so that we might be lifted up and filled with joy and peace, now and forever. His kingdom is eternal.

Scripture Reading: Micah 5:1-5a

* Hymn of Response: LUYH #89 v. 1,3,4 “*On Christmas Night*”

1. On Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring.
On Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring:
news of great joy, news of great mirth,
news of our merciful King’s birth.

3. When sin departs before his face,
then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before his face,
then life and health come in its place.
Angels rejoice with us and sing,
all for to see the newborn King.
4. All out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night.
All out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night:
“Glory to God in highest heaven,
peace on earth, and goodwill. Amen.”

Words: Luke Wadding (d. 1686), alt., P.D.; English Carol; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) P.D. sCCLI #678905

(During the singing of the last verse the Sunday School children are invited forward)

Ministry of Music – Sunday School Children

1. “O Little Town of Bethlehem”
2. “Away in the Manger”

(Following the conclusion of the two songs the children will return to their seats)

Offering: Neighbors in Need

Offertory

Narrator Reading – God’s Surprising Plan

Narrator #3

Sometimes we miss seeing things because
they are small and seemingly insignificant.
Sometimes we miss them because
they are unexpected or unlike our expectations.
Sometimes we miss them because we think
we’ve seen or heard it all before.
Let us listen with open ears and open hearts
to hear what God was about to do.
God’s plan is full of surprises.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

* Hymn of Response: LUYH #95 v. 1-3 *“What Child is This”*

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 for 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.

Words: William C. Dix (1837-1898), P.D.; Music: English ballad, 16th c., P.D.; CCLI #678905

“Holy infant, so tender and mild,”

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Message: ***“O Come, O Branch of Jesse’s Stem”***

Prayer of Application

Song Video of Reflection:

“To Thee My Heart I Offer” – Elaine Hagenberg

Narrator Reading – Glorious Joy

Narrator #4

Have you ever heard a piece of music that made you smile and weep and tremble all at once? Such an experience is likely rare for us. But that's how I imagine an angel chorus sounds. I imagine those *glorias* filled the hearts of the shepherds with such delight that they couldn't contain their joy. I imagine the angels spoke and sang with such awesome power that the shepherds felt as if their hearts might stop right then and there. I imagine a beauty so piercing it brought tears to the shepherds' eyes because they knew—as sure as anything—that this moment changed everything. “A Savior has been born for you; he is the Messiah, the Lord!”

Many kings have been greeted with trumpets and drums and cymbals. But angels? No earthly king has ever received this sort of welcome. Angels on a hillside would be hard to miss. Let's not miss it either. Because Christmas is never really over. We welcome our Savior tonight, but we welcome him each and every day by making him room, receiving that great gift of love and life: Jesus, the Savior who is coming again. ... Please stand in body or in spirit and let us sing together of the good news of great joy for all people.

* Hymn of Response: LUYH #92 v. 1-4 “*Joy to the World*”

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King.
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns:
let all 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 sin and sorrow grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessing 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.

Psalm 98; Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748), 1719, P.D;

Music: Lowell Mason, 1948, P.D. CCLI #678905

“Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.”

Lighting of Our Candles

Ministry of Music: *“See How Bright He Shines”* - Choir

* God’s Blessing

* Closing Carol: *“Peace, Peace”* with *“Silent Night! Holy Night”*
- Choir/Congregation

*(Congregation joins in singing
“Silent Night, Holy Night.” after first verse)*

Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright
‘Round you virgin
mother and child!
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

Postlude: *“Heaven Has Come to Us”* – Sovereign Grace

*Please extinguish your candle before departing
and have a Merry Christmas!*

Tonight's Participants:

Organist: Sylvia Van Zanten

Pianists: Marjo Rouw, Joni Beezhold

Narrators: Juliana LeClair, Amy Stiles,
Sheri Link, Brook Knoester

Scripture Readers: Bob Pippel, Julie Speck,
Pastor Brad Diekema, Greg Boon

Ministry of Music: Sheri Link,
Various Members of First CRC Choir,
Sunday School Children

Choir Director: Henry Van Zanten

Trumpet: Henry Van Zanten

CandleLighters/Readers:

Kiera Link, Joel Link, Rhyson Oostra,
Maddie Dykstra, Myra Vanden Bosch,
Nellie VanderHoek

Tech Team:

Sound: Tim Hibma

Projection: Caleb Link

Video: Isaac Dykstra

