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**ADVENT MIDWEEK 1**

When Heaven Met Earth: Advent Answers to Hard Questions Hardly Anybody Is Asking

*The Birth of God: How . . . and Why?*

**AS WE GATHER**

We all have questions, though for a variety of reasons some choose not to ask them. It is true in a classroom and in various aspects of life, and it is also true in our lives of faith. Some teachers tell their students, “There is no such thing as a bad question,” and for the most part that encouragement and attitude is a good one. Our heavenly Father would carry the same sentiment as He invites whatever we bring before Him, including our questions. This Advent season, a few hard questions will be asked about our Lord, and our answers will be found in His Word and through the awaited Savior born for us. Today begins with some “how” and “why” questions and answers as we journey together in Advent anticipation.

**+ SERVICE OF LIGHT +**

**VERSICLES and HYMN OF LIGHT**

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,

**People: the light no darkness can overcome.**

Pastor: Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,

**People: and the day is almost over**

Pastor: Let Your light scatter the darkness

**People: and illumine Your Church.**

Pastor: Joyous light of glory:

**All: of the immortal Father;
heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.
We have come to the setting of the sun,
and we look to the evening light.
We sing to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:
You are worthy of being praised
with pure voices forever.
O Son of God, O Giver of life:
the universe proclaims Your glory.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT**

Pastor: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,

**People: who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.**

Pastor: Enlighten our darkness by the light of Your Christ;

**People: may His Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;**

Pastor: for You are merciful, and You love Your whole creation

**People: and we, Your creatures, glorify You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**+ PSALMODY +**

**PSALM 141**

Pastor: Let our prayers rise before You as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice.

**All: O Lord, I call to You; come to me quickly; hear my voice when I cry to You. Let my prayer rise before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

Pastor: Set a watch before our mouths, O Lord, and guard the door of our lips.

**All: Let not my heart incline to any evil thing; let me not be occupied in wickedness with evildoers.**

Pastor: But our eyes turned to You, O God; in You may we take our refuge. Strip us not of our lives.

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Pastor: Let our prayers rise before You as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Let the incense of our repentant prayer ascend before You, O Lord, and let Your loving-kindness descend on us that, with purified minds, we may sing Your praises with the Church on earth and the whole heavenly host, glorifying You forever.

**All: Amen.**

**+ READINGS +**

**READING**Jeremiah 33:2–3, 14-16

Lector: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**READING** Luke 1:26–38

Lector: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

Lector: In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

**People: But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.**

**HYMN** *“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”* (*LSB* 356)

**MESSAGE**

**+ CANTICLE and OFFERING +**

**HYMN** *“My Soul Rejoices”* (*LSB* 933)

**OFFERING**

**+ PRAYER +**

Pastor: Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Send Your peace and salvation from above. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Unite all people by the power of Your cross and empty tomb. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Enlighten those who serve Your Church with wisdom, discernment, and a spirit of peace. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Inspire those who bring beauty to this world through art, music, literature, and theater. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Grant favorable weather for the nourishment of Your creation. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Deliver all those who suffer oppression, persecution, and the darkness of this world. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

Pastor: Send healing and care to all those who suffer illness and grief. Light of the world,

**People: shine in our darkness.**

**COLLECT FOR PEACE**

Pastor: O God, true peace can only be found in You. Though we have often walked in the darkness, You have sought us with the light of Christ. Cease all our sad divisions and bring peace to every nation of the world; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**HYMN** *“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”* (*LSB* 357, vs. 1-3)

**BENEDICAMUS**

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**BENEDICTION**

Pastor: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the +Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

**People: Amen.**

**HYMN** *“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”* (*LSB* 338)

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 **All are welcome …**

 **… Christ is honored.**