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**Christmas Eve**

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.” *Isaiah 9:2*

**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!

**HOLY GOSPEL** John 1:1-5, 9-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**INVOCATION and WELCOME**

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

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: When the eternal God entered human history in the person of His Son, He delivered His planned redemption of the world in ways that would turn understanding upside down. The Son of royal David, this One fulfilled the promises to Abraham, including for a sacrifice that God Himself would provide. He’d encourage sinners into His family and remember those repentant, giving forgiveness for their sins through His blood. He was born as Mary’s Son and laid in a borrowed manger where animals fed. But come let us adore Him! He is Christ the Savior born for you!

**CAROLS**

*“O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

O come, all ye faithful joyful and triumphant
O come ye, oh come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him born the King of angels:
Oh come let us adore Him, Oh come let us adore Him
Oh come let us adore Him Christ the Lord

Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,

Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;

Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!

Oh come let us adore Him, Oh come let us adore Him
Oh come let us adore Him Christ the Lord

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest
Oh come let us adore Him, Oh come let us adore Him
Oh come let us adore Him Christ the Lord

Yea, Lord we greet Thee, born this happy morning
Jesus to Thee be glory giv’n
Word of the Father now in flesh appearing
Oh come let us adore Him, Oh come let us adore Him
Oh come let us adore Him Christ the Lord.

*“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

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.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond’ring love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.

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;
Oh, come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!

*“Joy to the World”*

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.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hill, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow 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.

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.

**PRAYER**

Pastor: Let us pray. O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT** Isaiah 9:2-7

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**EPISTLE** Titus 2:11-14

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**CHRISTMAS GOSPEL** Luke 2:1-20

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**CAROL** *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”*

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 hosts proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven 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 Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

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!"

**SERMON *“Peaceful Focus”***

**CAROL** *“Go Tell It on the Mountain”*

*Chorus:*

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;

go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,

behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *(Chorus)*

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo, above the earth

rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth. *(Chorus)*

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;

And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *(Chorus)*

# PRAYER OF THE CHURCH / LITANY and LORD’S PRAYER

*(after each petition):* Pastor: let us pray to the Lord:

 **People: Lord, have mercy.**

**CAROLS**

*“Away in a Manger”*

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

*“Angels We Have Heard on High”*

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing over the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo; Glo-ria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav’nly song?
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo; Glo-ria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo; Glo-ria in excelsis Deo.

**THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

(*The pastor takes the light from the Christ candle and gives to those assisting. They pass the light on to the congregation. Tip only the unlighted candle. Holding the lit candles straight up prevents the wax from dripping.*)

**BENEDICTION**

**CAROL** *“Silent Night, Holy Night”*

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav’nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from Your holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

**FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH,**

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 **All are welcome …**

 **… Christ is honored.**