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**Christmas Day**

“Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth; ye who sang creation’s story, now proclaim Messiah’s birth. Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ, the newborn King.” *LSB* 367:1

**AS WE GATHER**

Imagine the surprise of the shepherds when the sign of Christ the Lord was not a palace or a crib radiating light beams or a baby surrounded by a fierce army of guards. The sign was just a baby in a manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths! As John declares in today’s Gospel, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Even today, the Word comes to us in plain spoken words, in the water with God’s promise of Baptism, and in the bread and wine of Communion. God’s ways are not our ways; He comes in seemingly lowly, simple, and unspectacular ways that we end up discovering are full of His grace and truth.

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

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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,
    and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

**INVOCATION, CONFESSION and ABSOLUTION**

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

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**People: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

 *Silence for reflection on God’s Word and for self-examination.*

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

**People: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Pastor: Dear Christian friends, take heart! The darkness of your sins will never be able to overcome the light of God’s love for you in Christ Jesus. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. The One who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, came to forgive sinners and to set us free to be children of God. The light of Jesus’ forgiveness shines on you today!

**People: Amen.**

**+ SERVICE OF THE WORD +**

**CAROLS** *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”* (*LSB* 380) and *“Joy to the World”* (*LSB* 387)

**COLLECT OF THE DAY** *(bulletin insert)*

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** Isaiah 52:7-10 *(bulletin insert)*

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**INTROIT** *(bulletin insert)*

**EPISTLE** Hebrews 1:1-6 *(bulletin insert)*

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** John 1:1-14 *(bulletin insert)*

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

**NICENE CREED** (*back, inside cover*)

**CAROL** *“What Child Is This”* (*LSB* 370)

**SERMON *“Announcing God’s Presence”***

**RETURNING OF OUR FIRST FRUITS**

# PRAYER OF THE CHURCH and LORD’S PRAYER

**+ SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT +**

**Divine Service and the Close Fellowship of Holy Communion**

*Our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. Faith that is born from what is heard acknowledges the gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise. The gifts include the Holy Supper in which we receive His true body and blood to eat and drink. Those welcome to the table acknowledge the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, confess their own sinfulness, and in true faith wish to receive the forgiveness and strength promised through this Holy Sacrament, as* ***instructed*** *… and* ***in unity of faith*** *… with God’s people here in this congregation. It is our sincerest desire that you join in the intimacy of this fellowship. However,* ***if you are not, yet, an instructed and confirmed member-in-good-standing of a congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, please visit with the pastor about such a fellowship before communing****. If you wish to come forward for a blessing, you are welcome to join us at the rail to receive such. Please cross your arms in front of you to indicate that desire.*

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

**DISTRIBUTION**

 *“Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”* (*LSB* 386)

 *“Angels from the Realms of Glory”* (*LSB* 367)

**POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING**

Pastor: Let us pray. You give us hope, gracious God, through these signs of Your love and forgiveness that we have received today: Christ’s body and blood. Fill our hearts with such hope, that our joy in You overflows in love to those around us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

### BENEDICTION

**CAROL** *“Angels We Have Heard on High”* (*LSB* 368)