****

**NEW YEAR’S EVE**

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for the master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.”

*Luke 12:35-37a*

**AS WE GATHER**

In various communities throughout the world, New Year’s Eve is referred to as “Watch Night.” It is not uncommon to find followers of Jesus gather in homes and in churches on this night to “keep watch” and pray as one year ends and another year arrives. Some say that these traditions date back to December 31, 1862, when enslaved Christians trimmed their lamps and, with great anticipation, waited for the clock to strike midnight. At the stroke of midnight, the Emancipation Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln went into effect, and many slaves would celebrate their newfound freedom. As we gather with fellow believers tonight, we reflect on the year that is nearly over and the one that is soon to begin. Just as our gracious Savior was faithful in the past, He will remain with us in the coming year. Let us also keep watch and, with great anticipation, be ready for His appearing and the salvation He comes to bring.

**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 and PSALM 141**

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.**

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.**

**READING**Romans 8:31b–39

Lector: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**READING** Luke 12:35–40

Lector: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN** *“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”* (*LSB* 733)

**MESSAGE *“Watch”***

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

**OFFERING**

**PRAYER and COLLECT FOR PEACE**

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.**

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**

**CONFESSION, ABSOLUTION, and DISTRIBUTION**

 *Silence for self-examination*

Pastor: I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

**People: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. Amen.**

 **I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

Pastor: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. In the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I, a called and ordained servant of the Word, forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The peace of the Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

**DISTRIBUTION**

**POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING**

Pastor: Let us pray. Gracious Lord, we give You thanks for the year now past, especially for the good we were permitted to give and to receive. The year is now past, and we commit it to You. We entrust to You the new year and rest in Your peace, for You are our help, and You neither slumber nor sleep. Hear us for the sake of Your name.

**People: Amen.**

**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** *“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”* (*LSB* 922)