



## **AS WE GATHER**

Are you feeling the joy? At this point in the month of December, studies show that many people are not feeling joy. Many people are feeling overwhelmed as they approach Christmas, feeling stressors that include not having enough money, missing loved ones, and anticipating family conflict. No matter how we come to our time of worship today, even if stressed, distracted, and frazzled, what great timing to hear what God speaks to us in this season and each day. From all our Readings today, we hear of joy! It is a joy not based on our own momentary perspectives of how things should go, but rather a joy from God's eternal perspective for our sake and what has freely been done for us. As our Advent season continues, may our true joy be found in the one for whom we prepare—Christ, who was born for us and who is with us and for us and is today in our midst as He comes to us in the means of grace.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP** "Advent Jubilate"

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## **WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **OPENING SONG** Midnight Clear (Love Song)

(Verse 1)

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old  
From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold  
Peace on the earth good will to men, from heaven's all gracious King  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing

**(Chorus)**

**Glory to God in the highest, glory to God evermore**

**Good news great joy for all**

**Melody breaks through the silence, Christ the Savior is born**

**Jesus the love song of God**

(Verse 2)

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled  
And still their heavenly music floats, through all the weary world  
And man at war with man hears not, the love song which they bring  
O hush the noise and cease the strife, and hear the angels sing

**(Sing Chorus Again)>(Sing Chorus Again)**

(Ending)

**Jesus the love song of God**

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## **INVOCATION**

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

**People:** Amen.

## **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**    *John 1:5, 9; 15:10–11; Psalm 100:1–5*

- Pastor: We light our third Advent candle as we prepare for the arrival of the Savior, who would come to His people in human flesh and who promises to come again. In a world of darkness, a light shines. Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- People: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**
- Pastor: The third, pink Advent candle has been known as the shepherd candle or the candle of joy. The third Sunday of Advent is known also as Gaudete Sunday. *Gaudete* in Latin means “rejoice,” as found in Philippians 4:4. We find our joy in Christ this season and always as we prepare to celebrate His birth. Jesus affirms the joy found only in Him as we remain connected to Him: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”
- People: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**
- Pastor: Guided by the light of joy, we respond with the psalmist: “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!
- People: Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.**
- Pastor: Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise!
- People: Give thanks to Him; bless His name!**
- Pastor: For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever,
- People: and His faithfulness to all generations.”**
- Three Advent candles are lit.*

## **CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**    *Philippians 4:4–7*

- Pastor: As we gather today to hear God’s Word and call upon Him in prayer and praise, we come before Him as people who are broken by an imperfect world, burdened by sin, and bearing guilt for the things we have done and the things we have left undone. In the midst of our condition, the Word of God speaks to us. In today’s Epistle, we hear, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”
- People: We confess we do not rejoice in everything; instead, we let the weight of this world bring us down. Instead of seeing all good things from Your hand, at times we focus on that which does not give You glory nor bring lasting joy to our lives.**
- Pastor: “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.”
- People: We confess we have at times been unreasonable in our relationships with others and in our relationship with You. Our witness to Your grace has faltered.**
- Pastor: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”    *(continues)*
- People: We confess we have been anxious about our sin and our circumstances of life. Create in us a clean heart and renew in us a right spirit that we may abide in Your love and that Your joy may be in us, and our joy may be full.**
- Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the X Son and of the Holy Spirit. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- People: Amen.**

## SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

## OLD TESTAMENT READING *Zephaniah 3:14–20 (The joy and restoration of God’s people)*

<sup>14</sup>Sing, Daughter Zion;  
shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,  
Daughter Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup>The Lord has taken away your punishment,  
he has turned back your enemy.

The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you;  
never again will you fear any harm.

<sup>16</sup>On that day  
they will say to Jerusalem,

“Do not fear, Zion;  
do not let your hands hang limp.

<sup>17</sup>The Lord your God is with you,  
the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you;  
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

<sup>18</sup>“I will remove from you

all who mourn over the loss of your  
appointed festivals,

which is a burden and reproach for you.

<sup>19</sup>At that time I will deal  
with all who oppressed you.

I will rescue the lame;

I will gather the exiles.

I will give them praise and honor  
in every land where they have suffered  
shame.

<sup>20</sup>At that time I will gather you;  
at that time I will bring you home.

I will give you honor and praise  
among all the peoples of the earth  
when I restore your fortunes<sup>[a]</sup>

before your very eyes,” says the Lord.

## EPISTLE *Philippians 4:4–7*

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**HOLY GOSPEL**     *Luke 7:18–28 (29–35)*     *(Messengers from John the Baptist)*

**Pastor:**     **The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the seventh chapter.**

**People:**     **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>18</sup> John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, <sup>19</sup> he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" <sup>20</sup> When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" <sup>21</sup> At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. <sup>22</sup> So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy<sup>[a]</sup> are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. <sup>23</sup> Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." <sup>24</sup> After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>25</sup> If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. <sup>26</sup> But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>27</sup> This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>28</sup> I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

**Pastor:**     This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

**SERMON SONG**     King of Kings

(Verse 1)

In the darkness we were waiting, without hope, without light  
Till from Heaven You came running, there was mercy in Your eyes  
To fulfil the law and prophets, to a virgin came the Word  
From a throne of endless glory, to a cradle in the dirt

**(Chorus)**

**Praise the Father, Praise the Son, Praise the Spirit three in one  
God of Glory, Majesty, Praise forever to the King of kings**

(Verse 2)

To reveal the kingdom coming, and to reconcile the lost  
To redeem the whole creation, you did not despise the cross  
For even in Your suffering, You saw to the other side  
Knowing this was our salvation, Jesus for our sake You died

**(Sing the Chorus)**

(Verse 3)

And the morning that You rose, all of heaven held its breath  
Till that stone was moved for good, for the Lamb had conquered death  
And the dead rose from their tombs, and the angels stood in awe  
For the souls of all who'd come, to the Father are restored

(Verse 4)

And the Church of Christ was born, then the Spirit lit the flame  
Now this Gospel truth of old, shall not kneel shall not faint  
By His blood and in His Name, in His freedom I am free  
For the love of Jesus Christ, who has resurrected me

**(Sing the Chorus)**

Praise forever to the King of Kings

**SERMON** "Signs of the Kingdom" (Luke 7:18-35)

**CREED** *Nicene Creed*

**☩ I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life ☩ of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY SONG** O Little Town Of Bethlehem (LSB 361)

(Verse 1) 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

(Verse 3) 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

(Verse 4) 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  
O come to us abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**Pastor:** Blessed are You, Lord of heaven and earth, for You have had mercy on those whom You created and out of perfect love sent Your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior who we look to, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Instill in us the joy of receiving Your healing grace through Christ's body and blood given and shed for us.

**People:** Amen.

## THE WORDS OF OUR LORD *Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25*

**Pastor:** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My  $\times$  body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My  $\times$  blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

## PAX DOMINI

**Pastor:** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**People:** Amen.

## DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

### LSB 849 "Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

- 1** Praise the One who breaks the darkness  
With a liberating light;  
Praise the One who frees the pris'ners,  
Turning blindness into sight.  
Praise the One who preached the Gospel,  
Healing ev'ry dread disease,  
Calming storms, and feeding thousands  
With the very Bread of peace.
- 2** Praise the One who blessed the children  
With a strong, yet gentle, word;  
Praise the One who drove out demons  
With the piercing, two-edged sword.  
Praise the One who brings cool water  
To the desert's burning sand;  
From this Well comes living water,  
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

- 3** Let us praise the Word Incarnate,  
Christ, who suffered in our place.  
Jesus died and rose victorious  
That we may know God by grace.  
Let us sing for joy and gladness,  
Seeing what our God has done;  
Let us praise the true Redeemer,  
Praise the One who makes us one.

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## LSB 340 "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

- 1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!  
Behold, the King of glory waits.  
The King of kings is drawing near;  
The Savior of the world is here.  
Life and salvation He doth bring;  
Therefore rejoice and gladly sing.  
To God the Father raise  
Your joyful songs of praise.
- 2 A righteous Helper comes to thee;  
His chariot is humility,  
His kingly crown is holiness,  
His scepter, pity in distress.  
The end of all our woe He brings;  
Therefore the earth is glad and sings.  
To Christ the Savior raise  
Your grateful hymns of praise.
- 3 How blest the land, the city blest,  
Where Christ the ruler is confessed!  
O peaceful hearts and happy homes  
To whom this King in triumph comes!  
*(Continues)*

- To whom this King in triumph comes!  
The cloudless sun of joy is He  
Who comes to set His people free.  
To God the Spirit raise  
Your happy shouts of praise.
- 4 Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
Make it a temple set apart  
From earthly use for heav'n's employ,  
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.  
So shall your Sov'reign enter in  
And new and nobler life begin.  
To God alone be praise  
For word and deed and grace!
  - 5 Redeemer, come and open wide  
My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide!  
O enter with Thy grace divine;  
Thy face of mercy on me shine.  
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on  
Until our glorious goal is won.  
Eternal praise and fame  
We offer to Thy name.

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## POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING

**Pastor:** Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People:** Amen.

## CLOSING SENTENCES *John 1:5, 9*

**Pastor:** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**People:** **The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

## BENEDICTION *Numbers 6:24–26*

**Pastor:** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**People:** Amen.

## **CLOSING SONG**      Love Comes Down

(Verse 1)

I'm searching for a king and kingdom, here among the beggars and the weak  
The broken and redeemed

(Verse 2)

I'm finding grace beyond all measure  
In flesh and blood He hides His majesty, inside of you and me  
Why would a king do such a thing?

**(Chorus 1)**

**Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it marvelous? The God of the universe, He became one of us  
We cry out and then, love comes down again. Faith is found in Him, hallelujah!**

(Verse 3)

Oh glorious beyond all measure, bending low to wash His traitor's feet  
People just like me

(Verse 4)

A long awaited friend and Savior, hidden in such tiny treasure for all  
Hope within a stall  
Why would a king do such a thing?

**Chorus 2**

Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it marvelous? The God of the universe, He became one of us  
We cry out and then, love comes down again. Hope is found in Him, hallelujah!

(Interlude): Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

(Bridge)

So sing, sing for faith, sing for hope; sing for what great love has done  
What was lost He has found, sing it out oh

**Chorus 3**

**Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it marvelous? The God of the universe, He became one of us  
We cry out and then, love comes down again. Glory's found in Him, hallelujah!**

Ending: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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