



AS WE GATHER

Can you imagine a person who has never heard of Christmas? How would you explain what we are hearing on Christmas night to such a person? To fully understand what Christmas is about, that person needs to know, first, that God who created everything, including the person you are explaining this to. Then that person needs to know that, from the beginning, all people have sinned against God, with the result that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Christmas is the discovery that God’s love is so deep that, even though we have sinned, from eternity He planned a way everyone could be forgiven, return to Him, and live forever in the way He originally intended for us. People in Old Testament times were saved by faith in the promised Christ. And people are saved by faith now in that same Christ who has come in the person of the Son of God, “conceived by the Holy Spirit” and “born of the virgin Mary.” He was born in our flesh so that He could satisfy those “wages of sin” before God for us and for the whole world by His sacrificial death. The proof that His payment was sufficient is His resurrection from the dead and return to the Father to live and reign over all forever. Paul said, “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” Then he asked our question, “But how are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? . . . So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:1, 14–17). It is not that difficult to imagine someone who has never heard of Christmas for one more reason. For even we who have heard still too often live as if we have never heard! Because sin continues to be our struggle until we are finally delivered from its power, we need to hear this story over and over again. Tonight we recall how Christmas and the entire Gospel of our salvation is beautiful news to hear and to believe over and over again.

CALL TO WORSHIP Silent Night LSB 363

- 1 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.
- 2 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!

- 3 Silent night, holy night!
 Son of God, love’s pure light
 Radiant beams from Thy holy face
 With the dawn of redeeming grace,
 Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
 Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.
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WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING HYMN Away in a Manger LSB 364

- 1 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.
- 2 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.

- 3 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.
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INVOCATION

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

People: **Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCES *Isaiah 9:2; 2 Samuel 22:29*

Pastor: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

People: **those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.**

Pastor: You are my lamp, O Lord,

People: **and my God lightens my darkness.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION *Romans 13:11–12*

Pastor: The apostle Paul reminds us, “You know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” In order to hear again the beautiful Good News of how the Savior of the world came to save us all, let us confess our need to hear, to repent of our sin and to believe.

People: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, I confess to You once again this night that I have walked in the darkness of sin, that I have sinned in the shadows of my conscience and in words and actions toward others; all of it in disobedience to Your commands. I pray You to send forth the light and truth of Your Son, my Savior. Have mercy on me, forgive me my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.**

Pastor: The Lord sends out His light and His truth to find you and to save you. Upon this, your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you. In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

HYMN OF PRAISE Angels from the Realms of Glory LSB 367

1 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. *Refrain*

ref Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

2 Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the Infant Light. *Refrain*

3 Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star. *Refrain*

4 Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear. *Refrain*

△ 5 All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One. *Refrain*

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SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray.

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true light, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 9:2–7* (From darkness to light)

² ^[a] The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon ^[b] his shoulder,
and his name shall be called ^[c]

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

EPISTLE *Titus 2:11–14* (*Changed lives by the grace of God*)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Luke 2:1–20 (The time came)*

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

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

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered
²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And 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, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, ^[b] who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And 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. ^[c] ⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ^[d] ¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And 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.**

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.

HYMN OF THE DAY It Came upon the Midnight Clear LSB 366

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| <p>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, goodwill to all,
From heav’n’s all-gracious king.”
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.</p> <p>2 Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats
O’er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.</p> | <p>3 All you, beneath your heavy load,
By care and guilt bent low,
Who toil along a dreary way
With painful steps and slow:
Look up, for golden is the hour,
Come swiftly on the wing,
The Prince was born to bring you peace;
Of Him the angels sing.</p> <p>4 For lo, the days have come to pass
By prophets seen of old,
When down into the circling years
Came Christ as was foretold.
His word of peace shall to the earth
God’s ancient promise bring,
And all who take this gift will hear
The song the angels sing. <i>Text: Public domain</i></p> |
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SERMON “Beneath Your Heavy Load” *Luke 2:1-14*

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

PREFACE *2 Timothy 4:22*

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

PROPER PREFACE

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; for in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory that, seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may know and love those things which are not seen. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

LORD'S PRAYER:

☩ Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. 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 370 What Child Is This

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!

2 Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary!

3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come, peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!

Text: Public domain

LSB 374 Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

- 1 Gentle Mary laid her child
Lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the Undefined,
To the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place,
Can He be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race
Who have found His favor.
- 2 Angels sang about His birth,
Wise Men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth
Glory all around Him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
Heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night,
All the hills were ringing.

- 3 Gentle Mary laid her child
Lowly in a manger;
He is still the Undefined
But no more a stranger.
Son of God of humble birth,
Beautiful the story;
Praise His name in all the earth;
Hail the King of glory!
Text: Public domain

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 HYMN Hark! The Herald Angels Sing *LSB 380*

- 1 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 host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!" *Refrain*

Ref Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

- 2 Christ, by highest heav'n 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 Immanuel! *Refrain*
- 3 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. *Refrain*