

Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church Peachtree City, Georgia

The First Sunday of Christmas ☩ December 26, 2021 ☩ 11:00 A.M.
Fritz Wiese, Senior Pastor Miriam Beecher, Pastor David Beecher, Minister of Music
Delee Rehak, Soloist

P = Pastor **L** = Lector [reader] **C** Congregation *ELW=Evangelical Lutheran Worship (hymnal)*

Lessons and Carols

PRELUDES

Welcome to worship! Today's worship includes the sacrament of communion, so please prepare ahead of time wine/grape juice and bread appropriate to the number in your family. Our liturgy declares we celebrate with "the church on earth and the hosts of heaven." So in these days of required distancing, longing to share the Lord's Supper again soon physically together at one table of the Lord, we acknowledge communion always connects us "remotely" and powerfully with the Church through time and space. This will be another form of that connection. We understand no precedents are being set in these unique times.

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastor Miriam

GATHERING CAROL: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

ELW Hymn 289

1 Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? *Refrain*

3 Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

Text: French carol; tr. H. F. Hemy, The Crown of Jesus Music, 1864 Public Domain

OPENING PRAYER

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray. Gracious God of heaven and earth, you have thrown a lifeline to us in our darkness—a beam of light that shines through Jesus.

Though born in a manger, he is the firstborn of all creation.

Though crucified on a cross, he is the Lord of life.

Fill us with the wonder and joy of his presence in the world and in our hearts.

C Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1–5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

In the beginning is when the greatest story ever told begins. The story of Christmas begins in the very beginning—because Christmas is about Jesus and Jesus' love, which has been looking to hold you close since the very beginning of time. Jesus was before time began, his voice hovering over the depths of the darkness like a mother eagle hovers over her young. Jesus was there when the voice of God breathed wonder into the darkness: "Let there be light ..." And just the sound of God's voice made light dance into being, all brightness shattering the dark.

FIRST CAROL: *I Wonder As I Wander*

Delee Rehak

- 1 *I wonder as I wander out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die,
For poor ord'n'ry people like you and like I. I wonder as I wander out under the sky.*
- 2 *When Mary birthed Jesus, iall in a cow's stall, come wise men and farmers and shepherds and all,
And high from the heavens a star's light did fall; the promise of the ages it then did recall.*
- 3 *If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing, a star in the sky or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing, he surely could have had it, 'cause he was the king.*
- 4 [the same words as Stanza 1]

SECOND READING: Micah 5:2–5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;

⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

Once, in the truest story that you have ever heard, His-Story, which is really your very own story, there was this family—Jesse's family. A family that was like yours, like a tree with branches of these relatives and those brothers and those sisters—a family that loved each other and hurt each other and forgave each other and failed each other. A family that failed God.

And in failing God, they fell away from closeness with God. They failed and fell and were like a fallen tree. Their family tree was a fallen tree.

When their family tree crashed to the ground, it crushed all of their hearts. The stump—and all of their days—felt utterly hopeless. Like their hearts had been cut right out of them.

But it happened: the wondrous impossible. It came right out of that chopped-down stump—the miracle no one ever dreamed of. Except for God. God never stopped dreaming of the miracle, the one he'd dreamed right from the very beginning, because love never stops dreaming of a way to draw close again.

SECOND CAROL: *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

ELW Hymn 272

- 1 **Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright, amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night.**
- 2 **Isaiah had foretold it, the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior, when half-spent was the night.**

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851-1934, sts. 1-2 Public Domain

THIRD READING: Luke 1:26–30

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

Mary was so shocked that her knees sagged a bit, like limp noodles. "Mary, you have nothing to fear and everything to rejoice about," Gabriel assured. "God has a gift for you—a gift for the whole world. You're going to have a baby boy! You will name him Jesus, and he will be great—the greatest!" The very big plan of the Father, to rescue us all was unfolding—it was unwrapping!

And Mary? Mary opened her hands (which is what a willing yes always does). Mary said yes to becoming a space for God. Right there in the space beneath Mary's beating heart would come the beating love of God.

The Son, Jesus, who laid out the paths for all the stars, chose to fold himself up small and live in the space of Mary. When you make space in your words, in your wants, in your ways for Jesus, he comes and lives in the most miraculous way in your heart, too.

THIRD CAROL: *Once in Royal David's City*

- 1 **Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.**
- 2 **He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor and meek and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.**

Text: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818-1895 Public Domain

FOURTH READING: Matthew 1:18–25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'"

²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

God. With. Us. God with us! He is the God who is so for you that he can't stay away from you! The God who so loves you and likes you and isn't merely a little bit for you or halfway for you or kind-of for you but is always, fully, completely, totally, entirely, all-the-way 100 percent for you—this is the God who chooses to be right with you. So God threw open the door of this world and entered as a Baby.

Christmas isn't about getting something big and shiny. It's about God's doing whatever it takes to be with us—and our doing whatever it takes to be with him.

FOURTH CAROL: *Joseph Lieber, Joseph Mein*

Miriam and David Beecher

1. *"Joseph, dearest, Joseph mine, help me cradle the Child divine.
God reward thee and all that's thine, in paradise," so prays the mother Mary.*

Chorus: *He came among us at Christmas time, at Christmas time in Bethlehem.
Men shall bring him from far and wide, Love's diadem.
Jesus, Jesus; Lo, he comes and loves and saves and frees us.*

2. *"Gladly dear one, Lady mine, help I cradle this Child of thine.
"God's own light on us both shall shine, In paradise," as prays the mother Mary. Chorus*

German carol from the 14th or 15th century

FIFTH READING: Luke 2:8–20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"**

☐ ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This is the birth of God—who can find words? ... Jesus came for you, warring against the darkness to win you back to him.

His love had to rescue you and release you to love. All the other love stories don't compare to this one—because this is the truest, real-ist story that ever was. This night, our rescue has come. God has visited our planet, and we can breath free.

... We're just raggedy manger stragglers who feel the heaviness of our old raggedy clothes from fighting the long battle with evil and badness ... Jesus whispers, "The freedom you could never earn with your raggedy rags—that's what I came to give you. I came to win you back to me, to give you myself, to make you free. I did it for love, because I could never, no matter what, ever stop loving you."

And all the happy heaven and thankful earth echo ... with Jesus, the God-child who came for us: he did it for love.

FIFTH CAROL: *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night*

- 1** While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around, and glory shone around.
- 2** "Fear not," said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and humankind, to you and humankind."
- 3** "To you in David's town this day is born of David's line the Savior, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign, and this shall be the sign:
- 4** "The heav'nly babe you there shall find to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands, and in a manger laid, and in a manger laid."
- 6** "All glory be to God on high, and on the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven shall begin and never cease, begin and never cease."

SIXTH READING: Matthew 2:1–11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

SIXTH CAROL: *In the Bleak Midwinter*

ELW Hymn 294

- 1** In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.
- 3** What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man I would do my part; yet what I can I give him—
give my heart.

Text: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1830-1894

Public Domain



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Can you see it? This day, this night, the Light comes! Can you feel it? Your heart kindling, burning with a love for Jesus that's like a warming fire.

... How can you not scramble ... right into the world with a heart glowing like hot embers of love for Jesus, telling everyone about the love of Jesus? A heart that really loves Jesus could catch the world on fire with love and more love and more love.

It's true: Jesus came into the world for you! And it's really true: you came into the world for him, to let everyone know about him.

SEVENTH CAROL: *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*

ELW Hymn 288

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-1866 Public Domain

INVITATION TO OFFERING: *Link to give:* <https://coslutheran.org/give/>



THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name.

P In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

P Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

C Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.

C **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth. **C** **Come, Holy Spirit.**

P All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever. **C** **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

C **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**

SHARING COMMUNION WITH YOUR HOUSEHOLD

As the pastors and worship team commune, please join them and the whole Church in person or remotely. At home, commune each other/yourself with these ancient words of promise: "The body of Christ for you" and "The blood of Christ for you."

PASTORAL BLESSING

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

A It is you, loving God, who lights our path with truth.	C Your Word, Jesus, is truth.
A In his light, draw all to the manger	C to gather in wonder with the shepherds.
A In his light, draw all to the manger	C to kneel in reverence with the wise ones.
A In his light, draw all to the manger	C to sing for joy with the angels.
A In the brightness of his life	
C cast away the darkness of injustice, poverty, and hunger in the world.	
A It is you, loving God, who meets us on our way.	
C In the light of Jesus, show the world the way of life. Amen.	

BENEDICTION

P The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, ✠ now and forever. **C** **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: *Love Has Come*

ELW Hymn 292

1 Love has come—a light in the darkness! Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it; hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior! Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

2 Love is born! Come, share in the wonder. Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother; what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers; Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

3 Love has come and never will leave us! Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us. Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas; Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Text: Ken Bible, b. 1950 Text © 1996 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (ASCAP) c/o Integrity Media, Inc., 1000 Cody Road, Mobile, AL 36695 CCLI #1160091

DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. Invite all to join in connecting to Jesus' pathway of joy and life. **C** **Thanks be to God.**

Readings are from *Unwrapping the Greatest Gift* by Ann Voskamp. © Tyndale Press.