

# *Christmas Eve*

*A Service of Lessons and Carols  
On the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord*



December 24, 2023

10:00 pm

*Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church*

The presiding minister will read the sections in plain text. **You are invited to read the bold portions.**

*God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

## PRELUDE

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

## HYMN

## #292 "Love Has Come"

- 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!

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## FIRST LESSON

## Genesis 3:8-15

<sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." <sup>11</sup>He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit

*God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed.*

*This hymn expresses and acknowledges a particular tension we ought to be aware of during the Christmas season. Just as, in the prophecies from Isaiah, a "rose," or stem, shoots up from the stump, so too do we celebrate Christ's birth in the knowledge that He brings life out of death.*

*Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah.*

from the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that <sup>3</sup> you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." <sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup>I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

## SECOND LESSON

Genesis 22:15-18

<sup>15</sup> The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, <sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

## HYMN

#272 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

- 1      Lo, how a rose e'er blooming  
         from tender stem hath sprung,  
         of Jesse's lineage coming,  
         by faithful prophets sung.  
         It came, a floweret bright,  
         amid the cold of winter,  
         when half spent was the night.
- 3      This flower, whose fragrance tender  
         with sweetness fills the air,  
         dispels with glorious splendor  
         the darkness everywhere.  
         Enfleshed, yet very God,  
         from sin and death he saves us  
         and lightens every load.

## THIRD LESSON

Isaiah 9:2,6-7

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. <sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

*The peace that  
Christ will bring  
is foreshown.*

*This Christmas  
hymn was origi-  
nally written to  
explain this part  
of the Apostles'  
Creed: "Who was  
conceived by the  
Holy Spirit, born  
of the virgin  
Mary." Each  
stanza explores  
part of the con-  
trast between  
Jesus' divinity  
and humanity.*

*The angel Gabri-  
el salutes the  
virgin Mary.*

## FOURTH LESSON

Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. <sup>2</sup>The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understand- ing, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. <sup>3</sup>His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. <sup>6</sup>The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. <sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

## HYMN

#269 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.

## FIFTH LESSON

Luke 1:26-38

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, fa- vored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his king- dom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a

virgin?"<sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

*Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus.*

## SIXTH LESSON

**Matthew 1:18-23**

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But 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. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

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

*From its Roman Catholic origins, this 18th-century hymn has spread to world-wide use by many denominations in both Latin and vernacular versions. It invites us to sing with the angels, sing with our families, sing with our fellow believers, and with every fiber of our being, worship Christ the Lord.*

## HYMN

### #265 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

- 1 The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
With wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame.  
"All hail," said he, "O lowly maiden Mary,  
Most highly favored lady." Gloria!
- 4 Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn.  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:  
"Most highly favored lady." Gloria!

## SEVENTH LESSON

**Luke 2:8-16**

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,

*The shepherds go to the manger*

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup> When 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." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

## HYMN

## #270 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*A curious mixture of exclamation, exhortation, and theological reflection. The hymn's teaching surely produces in us a childlike response of faith; we too can sing 'Glory to the newborn King!'*

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn king;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all you nations, rise;  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

### Refrain

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

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 we no more may die,  
born to raise each child of earth,  
born to give us second birth. *Refrain*

## EIGHTH LESSON

## Matthew 2:1-11

*The wise people are led by the star to Jesus.*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "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." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> '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.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then 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." <sup>9</sup> When 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

*John unfolds the  
great mystery of the  
incarnation.*

over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On 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. <sup>7</sup>

## HYMN

## #283 O Come, All Ye Faithful

- 1 O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him,  
born the king of angels:

### *Refrain*

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

- 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing: *Refrain*

## NINTH LESSON

## John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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

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

<sup>14</sup> And 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.

## HOMILY

*In this beautiful hymn, Isaac Watts makes the connection between the coming of Christ into this world and the beginning of that restoration. Christ brings "joy to the world," a light where there is darkness, growth where there is decay.*

**Apostles' Creed:** *The Apostles' Creed is the earliest formal summary of the Christian faith produced by the church based on the contents of Scripture and the teachings of the apostles. It is not simply a checklist of things we're supposed to believe, but a synopsis of the entire sweep of redemptive history that narrates a sequence including God, creation, redemption, and consummation.*

## HYMN

# 267 Joy to the World 8

- 1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her king;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
- 1 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 4 He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

*Please stand as you are comfortable in body or spirit*

## APOSTLES CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

The shepherds sing, "Jesus Christ is born!" Let your church throughout the world proclaim this good news, over the hills and everywhere. Unite the voices of all your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Heaven and nature sing, "Joy to the world!" Give respite to flocks, fields, and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at your creation rouse our care for



all the earth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The angels sing, “Peace on earth!” Come quickly to still the strife of this world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest. Inspire leaders of nations to seek lasting peace and sustainable provision for all in their care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this night. Shelter travelers and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain or anxiety. Heal those who are sick or hurting. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Love sings through the sound of a new baby’s cry. Bless new parents and expectant parents. Comfort those who long for children, especially those running out of hope or options. Surround families of every shape and size with your love and care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The heavenly chorus sings, “Glory to God in the highest!” We give you thanks for all the saints who have proclaimed your glory in word and deed. Let us join them this night in joyful praise around your eternal throne. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

## PEACE

The Peace of the newborn Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

*Please be seated*

## ANTHEM

“Love Came Down at Christmas”

*Messiah’s Senior Choir*

*Please stand as you are comfortable in body or spirit*

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be a blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts.

*Offering: Thank you for your support of Messiah. We seek to be a welcoming community and to support ministries that share the love of Christ with our neighbors.*

**We lift them to you, Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to praise you, Lord.**

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Emmanuel, God with us

**We want to sing like Mary sang,**

until all who are looking for you have found their way to the gift of Christ.

**Help us live like the shepherds**

—who weren't afraid to go and tell the good news.

**Help us take the words of the angels to heart**

—to not be afraid.

**Help us to be as trusting as Joseph**

—who chose to believe the impossible.

But more than anything, give us the courage and conviction to share this story  
with a hurting world so desperate for hope.

So pour out your Spirit in this meal.

Strengthen us from the inside out.

Give us your grace and send us out into the world.

Emmanuel, God with us

**Help us to proclaim: Your light has come into the world  
and the darkness shall not overcome it. Amen.**

### **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.**

*Please be seated*

*All are welcome to the Lord's Table. Communion will be served by intinction where you may dip the bread into the wine or ask for gluten free/ grape juice. Children are also welcome to the Table. If you would prefer to receive a blessing instead of communion please cross your arms over your chest.*

**COMMUNION HYMNS** *All hymns can be found in the cranberry hymnal in your pew*

**#279 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

**#294 "In the Bleak Midwinter"**

**#300 "The First Noel"**

## **POST COMMUNION PRAYER AND BLESSING**

### **LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

**#281 Silent Night, Holy Night!**

- 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. *(sung twice)*
- 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! *(sung twice)*
- 3 Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from your holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth. *(sung twice)*

*In the small, quiet town of Oberndorf, Austria, on a snowy Christmas Eve, a priest and an organist wrote what is now the most beloved Christmas carol world-wide. With its prominence, it is important to not simply listen to what we might consider a quaint, nostalgia-evoking carol, but to sing out the depth of these words. For the "dawn of redeeming grace" is something far greater and grander than any song we could ever write.*

**Benediction:** *God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

**Sending:** *We are sent back into the world to participate in Christ's mission.*

### **THE BENEDICTION**

Grace from God's own heart,  
peace from the Child in the manger,  
and strength from the Spirit of life  
be blessings for you today and forever.  
**Amen.**

### **SENDING**

Go in peace, Christ is born!  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **POSTLUDE**

Preacher: Pr. Andrew Plocher  
 Liturgist: Pr. Molly Hunter  
 Ushers: Linda Berry, Mary Lou Blomquist  
 Communion Assistants: Diane Adams, Dave Blomquist, Terry Langenberg  
 Choir Director: Sara Parks  
 Organist: Kathy Strazzinski

Acknowledgements:

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**venmo**

**Worship with us again!**

- ◆ Saturdays at 5:00 pm in-person in the atrium
- ◆ Sundays 8:30 am in-person, on the radio at 101.9 FM, and live-streamed on Facebook, Vimeo, and YouTube
- ◆ Sundays at 10:30 am in-person and live-streamed.

***An open & affirming congregation.  
 All are welcome. No exceptions.***



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