



Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols

5 PM – Rite III
December 24, 2021
Rebroadcast
December 26, 10:15 AM

Christmas Prelude

Welcoming Prayer

Holy God,
We've heard this story a million times—
Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds.
We've heard it a million times,
but we want to hear it like it's the first.
So move among us. Circle back. Draw close.
Crack open our hearts and fill them with your goodness.
Help us to hear what it is you might be saying to us
with curiosity, joy, and hope.
This is an invitation.
Come be here with us.
Gratefully we pray, amen.

The Gathering

Once in royal David's city

Liturgical Greeting

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
And blessed by God's kingdom now and forever. Amen.

Call to Worship

An unmarried teenage girl was invited—
to carry Christ into this world.
An ordinary carpenter was invited—
to be a father to a child unlike any other.
The shepherds were invited—
outcast and isolated, included at the manger.
The Magi were invited—
foreigners and seekers, included at the manger.
And if she was invited, and he was invited, and they were invited—
then we can trust that we too are invited.
This story is for us.
This love is for us.
Family of faith, this is our invitation. Welcome home. **Amen.**

Candle Lighting Liturgy

In God's house, there is hope—

For God loves us too much to leave us just as we are.

Light the candle of hope.

In God's house, there is peace—

For all that separates us from God falls away.

Light the candle of peace.

In God's house, there is joy—

Because God created music, and coffee, and dance floors, and laughter that is contagious, and endless rounds of peek-a-boos with babies; and if those things have God's fingerprints, then God's house surely exudes joy.

Light the candle of joy.

In God's house, there is love—

Because God is love, from start to finish, and that love exists for us all.

Light the candle of love.

And in the center of our hope,

In the center of our peace,

In the center of our joy,

In the center of our love, is God—who came to this earth to dwell among us.

So tonight we light the Christ candle, for God's love just could not stay away.

Welcome home. Amen.

Song of Praise Hymn 96, v. 1, 4

Angels we have heard on high

Angels we have heard on high,
singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply
echoing their brave delight.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

See him in a manger laid
whom the angels praise above;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while we raise our hearts in love.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Collect for the Day

Let us pray together.

**God of shepherds and angels,
God of starlight and seekers,
God of mangers and weary travelers:
It is almost Christmas. It's almost here.
We are close to home.**

**Fill us with your presence in the quiet, calm and
stillness of this hour as we await the birth of Your son,
our Savior. Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word

First Lesson

John's Prologue

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

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Hymn 83, v. 1, 3*O come, all ye faithful*

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;

Sing, choirs of angels,
 sing in exultation,
 sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
 glory to God,
 all glory in the highest;

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

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

Second Lesson*John the Baptist*

“I am the voice of one shouting in the desert:
 Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!
 Every valley must be filled up, every hill and mountain leveled off.
 The winding roads must be made straight, and the rough paths made smooth.
 All mankind will see God’s salvation!

“I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Hymn 100, v. 1, 2, 4*Joy to the world!*

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
 let earth receive her King;
 let every heart prepare him room,
 and heaven and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
 and makes the nations prove
 the glories of his righteousness,
 and wonders of his love.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;
 let us our songs employ,
 while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
 repeat the sounding joy.

Third Lesson*Jesus is born*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Hymn 78, v. 1-3*O little town of Bethlehem*

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.

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.

For Christ is born of Mary;
 and gathered all above,
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep
 their watch of wondering love.
 O morning stars, together
 proclaim the holy birth!
 and praises sing to God the King,
 and peace to men on earth.

Fourth Lesson*The Shepherds*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you; you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

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

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Hymn 87, v. 1, 3*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

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!

Mild he lays his glory by,
 born that we no more may die,
 born to raise us from the earth,
 born to give us second birth.
 Risen with healing in his wings,
 light and life to all he brings,
 hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
 hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hark! the herald angels sing
 glory to the newborn King!

Hark! the herald angels sing
 glory to the newborn King!

Fifth Lesson

The Wise Men

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 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." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea: for so it has been written by the prophet." Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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." 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 over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Hymn 109, v. 1-3

The first Nowell

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as
they lay;
in fields as they lay, keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.

Refrain

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far,
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

Sixth Lesson

And then...

When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Then, the shepherds went back to their fields, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen.

The wise men returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave." So, Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Response Gather Hymn 377 v. 1-2

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Infant holy, Infant lowly,
For his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, Little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging Angels singing
Noels ringing, Tidings bringing;
Christ the babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping; Shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new.
Saw the glory, Heard the story,
Tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, Free from sorrow,
Praises voicing Greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you.

Seventh Lesson

John's Prologue

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

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God!

~adapted from Family Friendly Christmas Eve Service by Carolyn Brown

The Peace

Liturgy of the Table

The Offertory

The Doxology Hymn 105, v. 4

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place,
and with true love and charity each other now embrace;
this holy tide of Christmas doth bring redeeming grace.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy!

The Great Thanksgiving

Priest

As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, Breath of peace, Giver of all life, Source of love that knows no boundaries. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began; throughout the ages, your song of liberation has impregnated us with your hope for a world where: those considered last and least are first and most; violence is overcome by the power of your ancient love; and, all siblings work together for peace. You bring our longings to birth, and send prophets to awaken us.

We thank you for those who, like Mary, have the strength and courage to give birth to your love in the world; for those who, like the shepherds, dare to seek out the Child of Bethlehem; for those who, like the wise ones, actively challenge violent and oppressive powers.

We praise you that your everlasting light is shown to us in womb and tomb, in cradle and cross, in tenderness and compassion. And, as we give thanks for your coming among us, we proclaim your goodness by singing:

Sequence Hymn 83, v. 1 with refrain

O come, all ye faithful

*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;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.*

At this time, we also remember all with whom you would have us share your feast. We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain... all who are ill or alone... all who are close to our hearts... all our sisters and brothers who live with fear, oppression, or hunger... all whose lives have been blighted by violence, racism, or poverty... for all whom the world counts as last and least.

We pray for the church and its many ministries, for nations as they strive for peace and justice, for an end to violence against all God's children. God of hope, make this bread the means of our rebuilding, this wine the medium of our transformation, this table the foundation of our renewal, and this community the place of our rebirth.

At this time, we remember Jesus, who on the night before he died, took a loaf of bread, gave you thanks, broke it, and said, "Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me." Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This is the new covenant; remember me."

Gracious God, Breath of peace, Source of love, we pray for your Spirit.

Make us, while many, one.

Make us, though broken, whole.

Make us, despite death, alive.

And so we pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, come. AMEN.

And so we join with our siblings around the world in the prayer of Jesus:

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the Body of Christ.

We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.

Invitation to Communion

The Table is set. Come you seekers and you holy ones. Come you lost and you lonely ones. Come you faithful and you doubtful ones. Come take your place and receive God's hospitality. Come receive the goodness of our Lord, then share it with your family, friends, neighbors, and strangers.

We come to the Table to share in God's gifts for us.

Communion

Join us, you who are near and you who are far away, in this communion of thanksgiving in your home - or receive contactless communion in the circle drive immediately following the service (for 30 minutes).
A clergy person will greet you and share in communion with you.

Communion Anthem

Silent Night, Holy Night

by F. Gruber / Arr. G. Lanier

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Give Thanks to God

by Peter Trow

Give thanks to God for the light has come:

**a light in a dark stable,
a light for darkened lives,
a light which shines in every place,
the light of eternal truth.**

Give thanks to God for the truth has come:

**truth that challenges the proud,
truth that lifts up the lowly,
truth that brings justice and hope,
the truth of eternal life.**

Give thanks to God for the life has come:

**the life of God in a new-born child,
life vulnerable and precious,
life which conquers death's powers,
the new life of the Kingdom of God.**

Give thanks to God that the King has come:

**a King who brings peace,
a King who brings healing,
a King who shares our weakness,
a gentle King whose name is love.**

Blessing

Go now, and join your voices with the song of joy in all creation. Announce peace. Herald salvation. Let the earth know that God reigns.

And may God sustain you and those you love. May Christ Jesus be born as Savior within you.
And may the Spirit reveal to you the glory of the Christ Child, full of grace and truth. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn 99, v. 1-3

Go tell it on the mountain

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
go tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born!

The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth.

While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light.

Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.

Dismissal

Tonight we invited a familiar story home -- Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds.
We heard this tale of miracle and promise for the first time -- again. And so we go out our doors into God's beloved world. Let us take this story and the hope, peace, joy and love we feel here in this home into the world. Alleluia! Alleluia!

We will with God's Help. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Christmas Postlude