

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Grace Lutheran Church

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5:00 PM – December 24, 2025

The Gospel of Saint Luke, chapter two takes us to the threshold of a new era. It is the center of the world's history, the great divide. All events in the history of mankind are dated either before or after this chapter. All the streams of ancient history flow to this place; all the rivers of modern history flow from it. But more than this, it is the threshold of the New Testament, the dividing line between two covenants. We stand on the spot on which the straining eyes of patriarchs and prophets and kings were focused, looking forward, and to which the eyes of all generations and races of God's people look back; Bethlehem. We see the most amazing miracle of all times: the incarnation of the Son of God. Let us hear the evangelist's simple account of this supreme revelation of God.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

- P** The first Advent is fulfilled; Christmas has come. The Christ Candle reminds us that Jesus said,
C “I am the light of the world; whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- P** Christ's arrival brings a reminder of God's Advent promises of hope... peace... joy... and love. Simeon called the Christ Child “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” The illuminated chancel symbolizes the presence of God in His church, and just as the aisle candles bring the candlelight into our midst, the light of Christ does not remain separate from us.
- C** With the Lord's presence brightly shining among us, we worship Him who is our newborn King.
- P** Jesus is born!
- C** Merry Christmas!

 **OPENING HYMN: “O Come, All Ye Faithful”**

LSB 379

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.
- P** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
C Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.
- P** For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder.
C And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- P** Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, upon 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.
- C** The Lord of hosts will do this.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

I. IN THE BEGINNING (John 1)

- P** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
C **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**
P The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory,
C **Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

II. THE WORD BECOMES FLESH (Luke 1 and Matthew 1)

- L** The angel Gabriel came to a virgin named Mary, and he said: "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! You will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. This child will be called the Holy Son of God." And Mary responded:
C **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."**
L Joseph was troubled when he learned Mary was pregnant, but an angel came to him in a dream, saying:
C **"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**

CHOIR: "The Message" Words: Percy Dearmer; Music: Richard Heschke. Pastor Bahr, organist

*A message came to a maiden young;
The angel stood beside her
In shining robes and with golden tongue,
He told what should betide her.
The maid was lost in wonder;
Her world was rent asunder;
Ah! How could she Christ's mother be
By God's most high decree!*

*No greater news could a messenger bring:
For 'twas from that young mother
He came, who walked on the earth as a King,
And yet was all men's brother:
His truth has spread like leaven,
'Twill marry earth to heaven,
'Till all agree in charity
To dwell from sea to sea.*

*He came, God's Word to earth below
And round Him there did gather
A band who found that him to know
Was e'en to know the Father.
He healed the sick who sought him,
Forgave the foes who fought him;
Beside the sea of Galilee
He set the nations free.*

*And sometimes trumpets from Sion ring out,
And tramping comes, and drumming
"Thy kingdom come," So we cry; and they shout,
"It comes!" and still 'tis coming.
Far, far ahead, to win us,
Yet with us, nay within us;
Till all shall see that King is He,
The Love from Galilee!*

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III. JESUS IS BORN (Luke 2)

- L** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And 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, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Mary 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. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

C “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”

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!”

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*)

ref 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 man no more may die,
 Born to raise the sons of earth,
 Born to give them second birth. (*refrain*)



P When 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.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

HYMN: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

LSB 361

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.

2 For Christ is born of Mary,
 And, gathered all above
 While mortals sleep, the angels keep
 Their watch of wond’ring love.
 O morning stars, together
 Proclaim the holy birth,
 And praises sing to God the king
 And peace to all the earth!

3 How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

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 Immanuel!

CONFESSION OF FAITH IN THE CHRIST CHILD: (*stand*)

C I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver or gold, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

IV. FOR THIS PURPOSE (John 1, 3, and 18)

P Jesus said, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." But Pilate asked, "What is truth?"

C From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

P Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

C "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

P "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

HYMN: "Angels from the Realms of Glory"

LSB 367

1 Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
You 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,
You 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

Stand

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

REFLECTIONS OF CHRIST

GIFTS TO THE CHRIST CHILD

GIFT OF THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO THE WORLD

- P** Arise, shine, for your Light has come, and the Glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. “You are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

(The Individual Candles are lit from the Christ Candle, symbolizing Christ coming to dwell with us.

*IMPORTANT: **Unlit candles should be tilted; burning candles should ALWAYS STAY UPRIGHT.**)*

CANDLE LIGHTING HYMN: “Angels We have Heard on High” LSB 368

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|---|---|
| 1 Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.
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? Gloria in excelsis Deo! |
| 3 Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo! | |

Text: tr. The Crown of Jesus, 1862, Part 2, London, alt.; French.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

- P** O Wonderful Counselor,
C hear our prayer and grant us Your peace.
- P** O Mighty God,
C open our eyes to see Your mighty works. Open our minds to Your Word that Your truth may rest in us.
- P** O Everlasting Father,
C use the witness of our words and deeds to proclaim Your seeking and saving love to those around us. Open our eyes to the needs of those around us and inspire us to be agents of comfort to the distressed and instruments of healing and relief to the sick and suffering.
- P** O Prince of Peace,

- C** give us the peace that passes all understanding, that we may trust that You have come into our imperfect world and brought the perfect gift of salvation and have freely given it to us.
- P** O Immanuel,
- C** receive our worship and adoration, our time and talents, and the firstfruits of our treasure that we bring in grateful praise to the mystery of the Word made flesh.
- P** Into Your hands, O gracious Lord, we commend ourselves and our loved ones, trusting in Your mercy and having confidence in Your love, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God forever.
- C** Amen.

CHRISTMAS CAROL: "Silent Night"

(Stanza 1 may be sung in either English or German.)

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|---|---|
| <p>1. <i>(English)</i> 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.</p> | <p>1. <i>(German)</i> Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh.</p> |
| <p>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!</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | |

PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHT

- P** O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. 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, the Word made flesh.

C **The fleeting lights of earth soon fade, but this light we've received never dims. Its radiance beams ever brighter through the Christ whose birth we proclaim.**

BENEDICTION

P May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of the Christ child. The almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN: "Joy to the World"

LSB 387

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing...

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy...

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found...

4 He rules the world with truth and grace

And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love...

P May Christ, the true light of the world, shine through us to bring the light of His love into the darkness around us, as we go in peace to serve the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

(The candles are extinguished.)



Christmas Morning Service

10:30 AM

“Christ Mass” with Holy Communion

And the adoration of the Christ continues every Sunday:

9:00 AM: Christian Education for all ages

10:30 AM: Divine Service



Welcome to God's Grace.

You're always welcome here.

Bring your hurts and sorrows.

Bring your confusion and questions.

Bring your joy, your hope, your love.

Come as you are, and come often.

Jesus forgives and heals!