

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 28 December 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Hymn: 319 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Confession of Sin

O eternal God and merciful Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, against which we have frequently and grievously sinned. We acknowledge that we deserve nothing less than eternal death, that we are unclean before you and children of wrath. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes heavenward to you in prayer. Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Forgive all our sins for Christ's sake. Cover us with his innocence and righteousness, for the glory of your name. Deliver our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all willfulness and rebellion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen*

Assurance of Pardon: Romans 10:10-13

Hymn of Preparation: 305 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 34:1-9

New Covenant Reading: John 1:14-18

Sermon Title: *Immanuel*

Hymn of Response: 318 Angels We Have Heard on High

Confession of Faith: 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 293 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

PM Worship

292 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

317 What Child Is This

320 As with Gladness Men of Old

Old Covenant Reading: Micah 5:1-4

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon Title: O Worship the King

Adult Sunday School – Extended Time of Fellowship – No Sunday School

Suggested Preparations

Monday (12/22) Read and discuss John 1:14–18

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the

law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (ESV)

F.F. Bruce writes:

This is the event to which preceding statements of the prologue have been leading up: 'the Word became flesh.' It is evident from the first two epistles of John that a form of Docetism was widespread in the area in which the Johannine literature appeared – a teaching which denied that Jesus Christ had 'come in the flesh' and disunited the earthly Jesus from the heavenly Christ. Here and there the Gospel of John betrays awareness of this teaching and uses a form of words which excludes it. The Evangelist might have declared in the present text that the eternal Word took manhood or assumed a bodily form, but no such declaration would have been so uncompromisingly anti-docetic as the declaration that 'the Word became flesh.' The humanity, the 'flesh,' which was taken by the divine Word at that point in time was as perfect as His divine nature; yet it is our human nature (apart from sin) that He took, and not some 'heavenly humanity' of a different order. To expand the implications of the incarnation of the Word in terms of historical or systematic theology would carry us beyond the Evangelist's intention. What he is concerned to emphasize here is that God, who had revealed or expressed Himself – 'sent His word' – in a variety of ways from the beginning, made Himself known at last in a real historical human person: when 'the Word became flesh,' God became man.

Read or sing Hymn 319 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Tuesday (12/23) Read and discuss Isaiah 9:1–7

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

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.
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.
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.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult

and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
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. (ESV)

After Jesus is baptized and tempted in the wilderness, Matthew says he went to live in Capernaum. Where is Capernaum? In the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. The very places Isaiah mentioned. And Matthew writes: "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, **on them** a light has dawned."

Just as the darkness of apostasy and the destruction and gloom from the invading armies would move north to south so would the true light of Jesus Christ who first manifested Himself in Galilee of the Gentiles and then travelled South to overcome the darkness through His teaching and through His life-giving death and resurrection.

The light **is Jesus**. The light is not a philosophy. It is not a self-help program. It is not positive thinking. The light is a person, Immanuel ... God with us!

Please make sure that you receive this gift in your own life. Jesus is not only sufficient to lift the gloom and darkness of war. He is sufficient to lift all of the gloom and darkness that crash into your life.

The Apostle Paul puts it like this in Second Corinthians 4, verse 6: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This does not mean that you will not experience darkness and depression in your life. They are still very much a part of life in a fallen world. But what it does mean is that Jesus is enough.

The same God who spoke light into existence at creation has spoken light into your darkness through Christ. And this light is sufficient. He is enough. Christ Himself is the light of the world, and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Read or sing Hymn 305 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Wednesday (12/24) Read and discuss Exodus 34:1–9

The LORD said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.” So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.” (ESV)

Commenting on verses 6 and 7, R. Reed Lessing writes:

Israel’s neighbors in Canaan, Mesopotamia, and Egypt didn’t understand their gods and goddesses this way. Not even close! Their mythologies describe deities who are violent, inaccessible, dominating, and capricious. Mercy and forgiveness are unique to Yahweh, the God of Israel, the Maker of heaven and earth.

The words in Exodus 34:6-7 are so profound that they appear again, with slight variations, in fifteen other passages. Yahweh’s grace-filled qualities are mentioned first because they are from eternity and last into eternity. His judgment upon sin follows. It appears in time and will end on the Last Day. There exists in Yahweh a tension between tender mercy and stern moral retribution. Out of the two, though, He’s inclined towards showing steadfast love. Exodus 34:6-7 employs five statements to make this assertion. [We are going to look at the first three].

Compassionate is the attribute stated. This word denotes a deep-seated pity for people in need. It’s a characteristic that can be compared with the concern of a father for his child (Ps 103:13) or a mother for her son (Isaiah 49:15). The word is also closely related to a Hebrew word for a mother’s womb. Understood this way, divine compassion expresses the emotional connection a mother has for a child in her womb. *This is how God feels about you.*

Next is the word *gracious*. It means favor, benevolence, and kindness. Yahweh forgives Israel's sin and renews covenant promises because He is – in His heart – gracious. In the Old Testament, this adjective only modifies Yahweh, making Him the fountain and source of all grace. Here is a telling illustration: "If ever you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because the cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious" (Exodus 22:26-27). Yahweh hears the cry of someone who is cold because his only coat has been taken from him as a pledge against his debt. God is moved by simple human need.

Third, Yahweh is also "slow to anger." That's so not me – especially when I'm in a hurry at the grocery store. "My!" I gasp when I see long lines at checkout counters. "There are people to see and places to go. I don't have time to stand in a *grocery* line."

Taking a closer look, I see that all the lines are long – except one. I dart over there, only to find someone with what appears to be hundreds of items and – oh, no – a cartload of coupons! Coupons that need to be cross-checked by the cashier-in-training. I begin humming a hymn, "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted." Then, looking up, I see that the cash register has gone haywire. An assistant manager rushes to the rescue. "Come on!" I mutter as ten people turn their heads toward me. I quickly realize that what I thought was a whisper was more like a shout. Twenty minutes later, I finally get to buy my measly milk and cottage cheese – both of which, by this time, have gone sour.

"Slow to anger?" Not even close!

Unless you're Yahweh. If He was quick to anger, His grace wouldn't last a second in my life. If God shot rockets of wrath every time I sinned, I would have been blown to smithereens a bazillion times. But God shouts from Sinai, "I am *slow* to anger!"

Read or sing Hymn 318 Angels We Have Heard on High

Thursday (12/25) Read and discuss Micah 5:1–4

Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops;
 siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel
 on the cheek.
But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,

from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth. (ESV)

Tremper Longman writes:

At this point ... the mood of the oracle changes. Israel moves from the low point of humiliation to the high point of deliverance. That the deliverance will come from Bethlehem Ephrathah is a surprise! God uses the small and the weak of the world to accomplish His mighty purposes. Indeed, the choice of Bethlehem has further significance in that David came from this small village. The connection with David is explicit in the passage when Micah refers to the ancient pedigree of the coming ruler. That pedigree is Davidic and the roots of the fulfillment predicted in verse 2 may be found in the Davidic covenant.

However, a delay is anticipated in the fulfillment of this great hope. This is expressed in the metaphor of verse 3: the one in labor (a symbol of the distress of the siege) must give birth first (the distress must first end). At that point the promised deliverer from Bethlehem will come and establish a kingdom of peace. He will shepherd His people. Kings were frequently titled “shepherd” in the ancient Near East. This metaphor points to the king, the one who guides and protects his people. The King predicted in these verses will excel at His job. In fact, He will be their peace.

Friday (12/26) Read and discuss Matthew 2:1–12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently

for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (ESV)

During the Babylonian captivity of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar had placed Daniel over all the Magi in his kingdom. This means that Daniel and his friends would have been counted among the Magi. While we are not told why these men were even interested in the birth of a Jewish King, one fascinating possibility is that they were familiar with the book of Daniel. **Since** Daniel was one of the most famous Magi of all time, and **since** their job was to obtain and preserve knowledge, this is not much of a stretch. And Daniel specifically talks about the coming of the Great King who will be given universal dominion and who will be worshipped. Furthermore, Daniel dates the coming of that King to the days of the Roman Empire. How the LORD made clear to these particular wise men that the time of Daniel’s prophesy being fulfilled was at hand – we simply don’t know. I should add that all the attempts to explain the star which guided them in terms of supernovas or comets simply won’t work. Yes, the LORD *could* have used such a phenomenon to guide them generally from Persia to Israel, but it is inexplicable how any such phenomenon could guide them from Jerusalem to nearby Bethlehem. All we can say for sure about the star ... is that it was from God.

The wise men first make their way to Jerusalem. That isn’t surprising. The natural place to expect a future King to be born is in the present Ruler’s palace – but that was far from the plan of God.

The Magi were not on a diplomatic mission. They were on a far more important journey than that. Why had the Magi traveled to Israel? Please notice what the wise men came to do. They came **to worship** the child! We will say more about this later in the sermon, but for now please let God’s word press this truth into your thinking:

The LORD is **not** working to gather a vast multitude of people who will consult with Jesus. The LORD is **not** gathering a vast multitude of people who will merely admire Jesus. The LORD is gathering a vast multitude of people who will bow the knee and **worship** Jesus. Because the child in the manger is Immanuel – God with us – the only right response is for us to fall on our knees ... and to worship Him.

Read or sing Hymn 293 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Saturday (12/27) Read and discuss Read and discuss John 1:14–18

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because

he was before me.”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (ESV)

F.F. Bruce writes:

Grace and truth were not absent from God’s ways which He made known to Moses; on the contrary, as we have seen, He revealed Himself to Moses as ‘abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness’ (Ex. 34:6), and the same language is repeatedly used throughout the OT as a summary of His character (cf. Ps. 86:15). But our Evangelist likes to set the old order and the new in antithetical terms. Even in the law which was given through Moses, intimations of grace and truth were not lacking, but all that was manifested of these qualities in OT times was disclosed in concentrated fulness in the incarnate Word. Here, then, as in Paul’s writings, Christ displaces the law of Moses as the focus of divine revelation and the way to life. This Gospel emphasizes in a series of presentations that the new order fulfils, surpasses, and replaces the old: the wine of the new creation is better than the water which was used in Jewish religion (John 2:10), the new temple supersedes the old (2:19), the new birth is the gateway into a sphere of life which cannot be entered by natural birth, even natural birth into membership of the chosen people, the living water of the Spirit which Jesus imparts is superior both to the water in Jacob’s well and to the water which was ritually poured out in the temple court at the feast of Tabernacles (4:13f.; 7:37f.), the bread of heaven is the reality of which the manna in the wilderness was but an adumbration (6:32f.). Moses was the mediator of the law; Jesus Christ is not only the mediator but the embodiment of grace and truth.

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow’s morning and evening worship services.