

Service for Christmas Eve, 2020

Elim Lutheran Church

December 24, 2020

4:30 p.m.



Welcome

Welcome to our Christmas Eve service where we celebrate the birth of God's Son. He is the Savior of the world. In the quiet of the stable (or maybe it wasn't so quiet with the animals mooing, braying, and baaing) the King, the Savior of the world, was born.

Let us come to stable. Let us kneel before the tiny baby who comes to save the world.

Gathering Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Text: attributed to John Francis Wade; translated by verses 1,3,4 – Frederick Oakeley, verse 2 - unknown

Music: John Francis Wade

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Oh, come, all ye faithful,
 Joyful and triumphant!
 Oh, come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
 Come and behold him,
 Born the King of angels;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him,
 Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
 Sing in exultation;
 Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above
 Glory to God,

Glory in the highest;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him,
 Christ, the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
 Born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n.
 Son of the Father,
 Now in flesh appearing;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him;
 Oh, come, let us adore him,
 Christ, the Lord.

The Word

The Old Testament lesson for tonight is from the 9th Chapter of Isaiah.

²The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
 on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation,
 you have increased its joy;
 they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest.

⁶For 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.

⁷His 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. (Isaiah 9:2-3a,6-7)

This ends the Old Testament reading for Christmas Eve.

The Psalm for this day is Psalm 96.

¹Sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;

proclaim God's salvation from day to day.

³Declare God's glory among the nations

and God's wonders among all peoples.

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,

more to be feared than all gods.

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;

but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

⁶Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;

power and splendor are in your sanctuary.

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,

ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

⁸Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;

bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.

⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;

tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king!

The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;

let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness

and the peoples with your truth. (Psalm 96)

Here ends the reading of the Psalm.

The New Testament reading is from 2nd the Chapter of Titus.

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14)

This ends the New Testament reading.

Readers: Jack and Ben Davies

Children's Message



I heard a story the other day that I'd like to share with you. I think it's a good story for Christmas Eve...

One day a mom and her two sons were shopping, one son was about 15 years old and the other was about 4. The little boy was screaming while they were shopping. The longer they shopped, the more the 4-year-old cried. So the mom opened the package of glow sticks that were in the shopping cart and gave one to the little boy. His crying and screaming stopped right away.

Then the big brother took the glow stick away from the little boy and he instantly began screaming again. The big brother gave it back to the little brother and guess what happened? The screaming stopped.

So the big brother took it away once more. Guess what happened again? The little one started to scream again. This time the big brother bent the glow stick as if he was going to break it. And when it broke, it began to glow with a beautiful light. The crying stopped right away, and the big brother gave the glow stick to his little brother.

He was happy and there was no more crying or screaming. It's funny but for the glow stick to work, it has to be broken.

It's like that with Jesus, too. Sometimes we feel lonely or sad, and sometime sick or hurting. When we are broken (like the glow stick) Jesus makes everything right. He makes us glow with the light of Jesus and takes care of all that is bothering us. And that my dear friends, is why God sent God's dear son, Jesus - to fix the broken world and when people feel broken. Sometimes we need to feel broken, so we can then shine with the light of Jesus.

If we were really sitting together, I would give each of you a real glow stick. But since we can't be together, I want you to remember the story of the glow stick and the light of Jesus. Glow with the same light that Jesus shines. Merry Christmas.

Hymn

Love Has Come

Text: Ken Bible

Music: F. Seguin

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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.

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.

Love has come and never will leave us!
 Love is life ever lasting 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!

The Gospel

The Christmas Eve Gospel is from the 2nd Chapter of Luke.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

⁸In 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. (Luke 2:1-20)

This ends the Gospel reading for this night.

Christmas Homily

Angels. There are theories about what angels really are. Some say angels are God's messengers. Some say they're beings living on earth, disguised as humans, especially humans with ragged clothes, dirty hands, needs of many kinds – sent to us to test us to see if we are performing the acts of love and service we are called to do.

Maybe both are true, but there's a few angel stories in the Bible during our Advent and Christmas seasons. We've got the story of the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary, telling her she's been chosen to be the mother of God's only Son. Joseph, the fiancée of Mary, was extremely upset to find out Mary was pregnant. But an angel visited him and told him he was to marry her anyway, because she truly was carrying the Son of God.

On the night of the Holy Babe's birth, the skies over Bethlehem were filled with a multitude of heavenly hosts, angels, announcing to the shepherds "the Savior had been born. Glory to God in the highest and peace to all people on earth." I'm sure the shepherds were terrified – to see one angel, maybe, but a whole sky full. That would have to be terrifying.

The funny thing is though, terrified as they might have been, the shepherds did exactly as they were told. They hurried off to find the stable where, Mary, God's son, and Joseph were resting. These shepherds, probably as dirty as the stable full of animals, knelt before the newborn King and worshipped him and gave thanks to God for what had happened. The fact that Mary, a lowly girl, Joseph, a laborer, and the men and

boys who tended the sheep, living on the hillsides, were likely strong and rugged but also dirty and smelly - they were first to visit the Christ child. Think about it...just look at who God has chosen to carry out the plan God has for all of humankind.

Wouldn't you think the royal, the powerful, the mighty, would be the ones who would be the anointed, the ones called to do God's work? But no! God had used the work of the unexpected to carry out the will of the Creator. It's no wonder why people wondered and questioned who Jesus really was? How could he possibly be the Messiah?

In the darkness of the winter, snow or no snow, in the deepness of the night, Christ's light comes into a dark and needy world. In the Old Testament lesson, Isaiah pronounces the coming of the promised King. This King, not a warrior king but the Savior King, will bring eternal peace and justice. The light will shine in the world where darkness prevails. In the reading Paul has written to Titus, we are reminded that through Jesus, God's grace brings grace, mercy, and salvation to all people. And the angels pronounce joyful news for all. Each of us can shine with light of the One who was born in the dark of night in a cold and dirty stable. Then we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world. "May the Almighty God, who made the holy night shine with the brightness of the True Light, may the God of all grant that all here on earth may walk in the light of Jesus' presence, and on the last day, when all will be united, we shall walk forever in the brightness of God's glory. Almighty God has given us this holy night which shines with the brightness of the true Light." (paraphrased from Sundays and Seasons for 12-

Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth. Amen.



Message Hymn

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Text: Edmund H. Sears

Music: Richard S. Willis

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It came upon the midnight clear,
 that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth
 to touch their harps of gold:
 "Peace on the earth, good will to men,
 from heaven's all-gracious King."
 The world in solemn stillness lay,
 to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
 with peaceful wings unfurled,
 and still their heavenly music floats
 o'er all the weary world;
 above its sad and lowly plains,
 they bend on hovering wing,
 and ever o'er its Babel sounds
 the blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
 whose forms are bending low,
 who toil along the climbing way

with painful steps and slow,
 look now! for glad and golden hours
 come swiftly on the wing.
 O rest beside the weary road,
 and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,
 by prophet seen of old,
 when with the ever-circling years
 shall come the time foretold
 when peace shall over all the earth
 its ancient splendors fling,
 and the whole world send back the song
 which now the angels sing.

Poetry for Christmas Eve

A poem by Martin Luther, the founding father of the Lutheran Church.

Martin Luther on Angels

Good news from heaven the angels bring,
 Glad tidings to the earth they sing:
 To us this day a child is given,
 To crown us with the joy of heaven.

Glory to God in highest heaven,
 Who unto man His Son hath given.
 While angels sing with tender mirth
 A glad new year to all the earth.

Prayers

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

A brief silence.

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 all 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 especially those we name in our hearts before you. 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.

The Lord's Prayer

As the world is gathered as one tonight, let us pray together the prayer that Jesus teaches us.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by 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. Lead us not into temptation and

deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Special Music

Silent Night

Music: Dan Galbraith

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Guitarists – Kyle Strand and Scott Strand

Silent Night in Candlelight

Text: Joseph Mohr, translated by John F. Young

Music: Franz Grüber

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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
 Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
 Shepherds quake at the sight!
 Glories stream from heaven afar;
 Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia's
 Christ the Savior is born!
 Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night
 Son of God, oh, love's pure light
 Radiant beams from Thy holy face
 With the dawn of redeeming grace
 Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
 Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

Sending

Blessing

Almighty God,

who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary,
proclaimed joy through the angels,
sent the shepherds with good news,
and led the magi by a star,
bless you this day ✝ through the Word made flesh.
Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.
Thanks be to God.

Organist for tonight's service: Robyn Vinje



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