

\_\_\_\_Christmas Day\_\_\_\_

## What Child is This: God in the Flesh



December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN

— MINISTRIES —

CHURCH • SCHOOL • CHILDCARE

## What Child is This: God in the Flesh

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*The Lord had told Moses, "No one may see me and live." If sinners cannot even bear to look upon the glory of God, then they certainly could not hope to live with God in the glory of heaven. So, on that first Christmas, God chose to hide his glory under flesh. What child is this? It is God and man in one person, exactly what the human race needed to deliver it from its enemies of sin, death, and Satan. Christmas Day serves up the deep stuff of Christmas: the miracle and mystery of the incarnation.*

### AS WE GATHER

Today we celebrate the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, from whose manger shines forth God's grace in all its splendor.

### + PREPARATION +

#### INVOCATION

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**People: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.**

#### A CHRISTMAS BEGINNING

Pastor: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

**People: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together. Psalm 98:4, 7-8**

Pastor: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." The voice of your watchmen---they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.

**People: Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared His holy arm**

**before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. *Isaiah 52:7-10***

## HYMN

O Come, All Ye Faithful – **CW 354**

**Pastor:** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

**People:** **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. *Hebrews 1:1-3a***

**Pastor:** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

**People:** **Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. *Titus 3:4-7***

**Pastor:** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. *Galatians 4:4---5*

## HYMN *(Choir will sing v. 2 & 4)*

Let All Together Praise Our God – **CW 355**

## PRAYER FOR THE DAY

**Pastor:** Grant, we pray, Almighty God, that the new birth of Your only-begotten Son in human flesh may set us free, who through sin are held in bondage. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People:** **Amen.**

## CHOIR SINGS

Sing with Joy, Glad Voices Lift

*Sing with joy, glad voices lift, Honor God, the highest Gift, Who such wondrous deeds performs, Who sent His own beloved Son to save us, Everlasting life through*

*Him He gave us. Truly, truly! God was born of lowly maid. Out of His great love the Father willed it. On this day did He appear, Christ Jesus dear, Immanuel, Brings to us salvation, Saves from death and hell.*

*See how angels in the sky God in heaven glorify. Sing as they the glad refrain Of peace on earth, good will to men and blessing, Exultation in the song expressing, Truly, truly! So bless we the Christ Child then, Join their chorus, sing again with gladness: Glory be to God on high, On earth be peace, to men good will. Joy and wonder evermore each heart may fill.*

## + WORD +

### FIRST LESSON

Exodus 33:18-23

*To reveal himself to us, God hid himself in human flesh. To reveal himself to Moses, God hid Moses within the cleft of a mountain.*

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." <sup>19</sup> And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

<sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." <sup>21</sup> Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. <sup>22</sup> When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalms 98 (p. 98)

*(Choir will introduce the first refrain, congregation will repeat refrain and sing the psalm together)*

### GOSPEL

John 1:1-18

*In Jesus the God whose glory is impossible to see is seen. The God who cannot be known is known.*

Pastor: The Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter.

**People; Glory to You, O Lord.**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has 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 concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** (*Choir will sing v. 1-2*)

Joy Has Dawned – **CW 352**

## SERMON TEXT

Romans 8:31-32

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

## SERMON

Pastor Matthew Holtz

**COMMENTARY ON THE CREED:** Once in Royal David's City - **CW 343**  
*Sung by the congregation*

***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.***

Pastor: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God,

**People: begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man,  
born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.**

*Sung by the congregation:*

***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 mean and lowly Lived on earth our Savior holy.***

Pastor: He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature,

**People: purchased and won me from all sins from death, and from  
the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His  
holy, precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death.**

*Sung by the choir:*

*But our eyes at last shall see him Through his own redeeming love,  
For that child, so dear and gentle, Is our Lord in heav'n above,  
And he leads his children on To the place where he is gone.*

Pastor: All this He has done that I might be His own,

**People: and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in  
everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,**

*Sung by the congregation:*

***Not in that poor, lowly stable With the oxen standing by  
Shall we see him, but in heaven, Set at God's right hand on high.  
Then like stars his children crowned, All in white, his praise will  
sound.***

Pastor: Just as He is risen from the dead

**People: and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.**

**+ RESPONSE +**

**OFFERING**

**PRAYER** (*Historic Nativity Prayers from St. Augustine, Bernard of Clarvaux,  
and Robert Louis Stevenson*)

Pastor: Let the just rejoice, for their Justifier is born.

**People: Let the sick and infirm rejoice, For their Savior is born.**

Pastor: Let the captives rejoice, For their Redeemer is born.

**People: Let slaves rejoice, for their Master is born.**

Pastor: Let free men rejoice, For their Liberator is born.

**People: Let all Christians rejoice, For Jesus Christ is born. Amen.**

Pastor: You have come to us as a small child, but You have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love.

**People: Caress us with Your tiny hands, embrace us with Your tiny arms and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries. Amen.**

Pastor: Loving Father, help us to remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

**People: Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.**

Pastor: Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

**People: May the Christmas morning make us happy to be Your children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen!**

## **HYMN**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing – **CW 350**

## **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS:**

Pastor: Almighty God, we are people who have walked in darkness.

**People: We have failed to look to the light of Christ.**

Pastor: Although we call Him the Prince of Peace

**People: We have fought with each other and have no peace in our hearts.**

Pastor: We proclaim the wonders of His love

**People: But we fail to love You or our neighbor.**

Pastor: Although we show devotion and love for You at Christmas,

**People: At other times of the year we forget all about You.**

Pastor: We are indeed unworthy for Christ to come among us.

**People: Forgive our sins for the sake of Jesus.**

*(Silence for reflection)*

Pastor: To us a child is born; to us a Son is given. The angel said: "You shall call Him Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Because of Jesus, His birth, death, and resurrection, and by His command and in His stead, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Thanks be to God! Amen!**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

### **BENEDICTION**

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you as you keep Christmas.

The Lord make His face shine on you with the light of the Christ Child.

The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace on earth, goodwill to all, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

### **CLOSING HYMN** *(Choir will sing v. 3)*

Joy to the World – **CW 353**

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Presiding Minister: Matthew Holtz

Organist: Claire Rehberger

Service Team: B. Holz (Head Usher), J./M. Holz, G. Fredericks, M. Fay