



## **Worship in the Home**

### **Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020**

*In this time of world-wide pandemic, we are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ in our usual patterns. While we cannot be together in person in our sanctuary, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home.*

*Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray and incorporate other symbols of Christmas. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.*

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

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

**Amen.**

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Then the readings for this day may be read, as follows:*

**First Reading:** Isaiah 9:2-7

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

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For 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.

<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne and dominion of David,  
to 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.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The Psalm may be sung or read in response to the First Reading.*

**Psalm 96**

<sup>1</sup>Sing to the LORD | a new song;  
sing to the LORD, | all the earth.

<sup>2</sup>Sing to the LORD, bless the name | of the LORD;  
proclaim God's salvation from | day to day.

<sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory a- | mong the nations  
and God's wonders a- | mong all peoples.

<sup>4</sup>For great is the LORD and greatly | to be praised,  
more to be feared | than all gods.

<sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they | are but idols;

but you, O LORD, have<sup>1</sup> made the heavens.

<sup>6</sup>Majesty and magnificence are<sup>1</sup> in your presence;  
power and splendor are in your<sup>1</sup> sanctuary.

<sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you families<sup>1</sup> of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD hon-<sup>1</sup>or and power.

<sup>8</sup>Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the<sup>1</sup> holy name;  
bring offerings and enter the courts<sup>1</sup> of the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in the beau-<sup>1</sup>ty of holiness;  
tremble before the Lord,<sup>1</sup> all the earth.

<sup>10</sup>Tell it out among the nations: “The<sup>1</sup> LORD is king!

The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved  
will judge the peo-<sup>1</sup>ples with equity.”

<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the<sup>1</sup> earth be glad;  
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that<sup>1</sup> is therein.

<sup>12</sup>Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your com-<sup>1</sup>ing, O LORD,  
for you come to<sup>1</sup> judge the earth.

<sup>13</sup>You will judge the<sup>1</sup> world with righteousness  
and the peoples<sup>1</sup> with your truth.

### **Second Reading:** Titus 2:11-14

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

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel:** Luke 2:1-20

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

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

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,  
<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom God favors!”

<sup>15</sup>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.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Reflection

*Having read these readings, think on this:*

The Christmas story reminds us that we are all dreamers. Like those gathered around the manger, we come to this night each year with awe, wonder, and holy imagination for what is possible. Like Mary, we treasure God’s dream in our hearts. And commit to keeping it alive. Like the holy family, we believe and trust in God who comes to us in the vulnerability of a child.

Jesus Christ is the Light that shines in our darkness, the grace of God that has appeared among us, the Prince of Peace in a warring world. This night we celebrate all these things, knowing our own need for them. Our liturgy uses an old Israelite text from Isaiah, probably originally spoken at the enthronement of a local king. But no king ever fulfilled what was spoken in that text. Rather, it is in Jesus Christ that there is a promise of the end of burdens placed on oppressed people and the end of garments rolled in blood. The Gospel tells of the reign of the Roman Emperor, evidencing how he violently pushed people around. But the child whose birth is told in this story has his bed among the poor in their need, sharing their weakness. In contrast with Augustus, a far more profound authority for “all the world” belongs to him. In the end this Jesus Christ reigns from the cross and brings peace in his resurrection. The story says there was no room for him in the inn. With Mary, we rightly welcome him and this story into our hearts.

What dreams – both hopeful and broken – do we carry with us to the manger this night?

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 270), “I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 271), “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 272). Texts for many carols are available online if you do not have a hymnal.*

*Then pray these intercessions:*

As we celebrate Christmas, let us praise God for the birth of our Savior and pray for all in need, responding to each petition with the words "Your mercy is great."

*A brief silence.*

Mighty and merciful God, we praise you for bringing your Word to birth among us. Strengthen with your Spirit all the baptized, so that even where the faithful cannot assemble for worship, the whole church can together honor the birth of Jesus.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Redeemer.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for your created earth, the stars in the sky, the animals in stables, the flocks in the fields. Show us your majesty in the brightness of day and the darkness of night. Rouse our care for your magnificent creation.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Creator.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for each day that knows peace and welcomes justice. Inspire leaders of nations to seek concord where there is war and violence. Guard ambassadors, relief workers, and military personnel the world over. Visit both the Palestinians and the Israelis, and protect the many peoples who live under military rule. Make our own streets avenues of peace.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Sovereign.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for the benefits of light available in our homes and shining on our trees. Accompany those who enjoy no such light, and protect all who labor in the darkness on behalf of others.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Light.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for new parents with their newborns and for the joys of families of every shape and size. Visit the homes where there is sickness or sorrow. Abide with people who live isolated from others. Bless the children who this year receive no gifts.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Treasure.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for every sign of your loving presence, and we pray for all who suffer. Heal the sick. Feed the hungry. Shelter the homeless and the refugee. Visit those in prison. Comfort mourners. We pray especially for *name people you know who are in need of prayer* . . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Savior.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for the development of coronavirus vaccines. We pray for the millions who are afflicted with Covid-19. Uphold physicians, nurses, and all health care workers, and provide medical facilities for everyone.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God our Healer.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you, the almighty God born on the earth; and so you transformed the cosmos. Come to each of us, and receive our silent prayers.

*A longer period of silence.*

Hear us, O God our Beloved.

**Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for all the saints who have proclaimed your glory in word and deed, especially those we remember in our hearts. With them, let us sing your praise, now and forever.

*A brief silence.*

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

To you, Mighty God, Prince of peace, wonderful Counselor, we offer our praises for your grace upon grace. Receive our prayers in the name of the one who was born to live and die and rise again for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Silent Night, Holy Night" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 281), "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 276).*

*Then conclude with these prayers:*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Holy God,

everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, wonderful Counselor,  
at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world,

and throughout the ages, you proclaim newness of life.  
For your wondrous Word, we thank you, O God.

**We thank you, O God.**

In the fullness of time, your Word became flesh,  
to shine in our world's darkness,  
to speak peace to all peoples,  
and to welcome us as members of your family.  
For your loving Word, we adore you, O God.

**We adore you, O God.**

Grant us now the gift of your Spirit,  
that held, nourished, and protected by your Word,  
we may live as your children,  
bearing your goodness throughout the world.  
For your powerful Word, we praise you, O God.

**We praise you, O God.**

All glory to you, holy God,  
now and forever. Amen.

**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever.  
Amen.**

*Then speak the 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 us this day + through the Word made flesh.  
**Amen.**

*If there are other Christmas carols and hymns you want to sing, do!*

*Here is a brief prayer to use at meals during the twelve days of Christmas:*

With joy and gladness we feast upon your love, O God.  
You have come among us in Jesus, your Son,  
And your presence now graces this table.  
May Christ dwell in us that we might bear his love to all the world,  
For he is Lord forever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**Devotional Music Links:** For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming](#);" "[He Is Born: Il est né](#);" "[The Newborn King of Ages](#)."

Reflection texts: Gordon Lathrop; A Sanctified Art. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

Portions from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, sundaysandseasons.com, and Families Celebrate Advent & Christmas 2020-21 © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress.

Readings from *Readings for the Assembly* © 1995, 1996, 1997 Augsburg Fortress. Citations from the Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Scripture quotations from NRSV Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, adapted and edited with permission by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw.