

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 1**  
*Such Good News*  
**December 2, 2018**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements and Offering**

***Good News!***

**Call to Worship:**

The book of Matthew does not begin the story of Jesus’ birth by saying, “Once upon a time.” That is the way fairy tales begin. “Once upon a time” signals that this probably didn’t happen or that we don’t know if it happened, but it is a beautiful story that teaches us so much. But that is not the kind of account Matthew gives us. He says, “This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ.” That means he is grounding what Jesus Christ is and does in history. Jesus is not a metaphor. He is real. This all happened.

The Biblical Christmas texts are accounts of what actually happened in history. Many people believe the Gospel to be just another moralizing story, but they could not be more mistaken. There is no “moral of the story” to the nativity. The shepherds, the parents of Jesus, the wise men—are not being held up primarily as examples for us. These Gospel narratives are telling you not what you should do but what God has done. The birth of the Son of God into the world is a gospel, good news, an announcement. You don’t save yourself. God has come to save you. That’s news!

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 21-23)

<b>SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus</b> (sing 2 verses together; no chorus)	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) HCD10-T14
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-407 – Regent Square	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#108 – Hark! the herald angels sing</b>	TB-270 – same	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)

<p><b>Song – Mighty God</b>  (Tune: “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”)  Words by Geron Davis, Dave Clark and Tony Wood  ©2016 Word Music, Woodspring Music, Tony Wood Songs</p> <p>1) God of glory, King of Heaven,  For this moment robed in flesh.  Prince of power, strength and honor,  Now contained in tenderness.</p> <p><i>CHORUS:</i>  <i>Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways,</i>  <i>Saints and angels all applaud.</i>  <i>Praise the Infant in the manger;</i>  <i>Glory to our mighty God.</i></p> <p>2) Here to break the bonds of evil,  Here to set the captives free.  He will triumph; He will conquer,  And deliver you and me.</p> <p>3) Let us live with hope and courage  Through the trials we face in life.  He will be our Strength in weakness,  Our Defender in each fight.</p>	<p>HC-189  TB-374 – Nettleton</p>	<p>HCD17-T19</p>
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### *The Candle of Hope*

#### **Lighting of Advent Candle**

**Reader 1:** Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means “coming,” and in this season we prepare for the coming of Christ. It is a time not only for remembering the coming of Christ in Bethlehem, but also for seeking to recognize him when he comes to us now. Jesus lives in our own times and in our own lives. Yet, too often he is a stranger to us, and we fail to recognize him; we are not prepared.

**Reader 2:** By lighting one candle each week of Advent, we help ourselves get ready for the birth of Jesus. The candles have different meanings, each based upon the Bible. These meanings help us understand how special the birth of Jesus is for us. Today we focus on the gift of hope.

**Reader 1:** “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.’”  
(Jeremiah 33:14-16, NIV)

[Light 1<sup>st</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 2:** Today, we light the candle of hope. Hope is our assurance that God will finish all He has started. Hope is our confidence that He will do all He has promised.

**Reader 1:** Christmas is not “Once upon a time, a story happened that shows us how we should live better lives.” No! He broke into the world to save us. Christ the Savior is born!

<b>SB#117 – O come, O come, Immanuel</b>	TB-444 – same	HTD11-T8 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#72 – Emmanuel</b>	HC-72	HCD6-T12
<b>HC#82 – Jesus, Name above All Names SB#82</b>	HC-82 TB-714 – same	HCD7-T12
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>HC#45 – While We Are Waiting, Come</b>	HC-45	HCD3-T15

### Pastoral Prayer

### Children’s Moment: Family Tree

#### *The Mothers of Jesus*

#### Responsive Reading:

**Leader:** Matthew’s Gospel account of the birth of Jesus starts not with the well-known events of the nativity itself—the star, shepherds, and manger. It begins in the mist of even more ancient times, providing a long, seemingly tedious genealogy. The purpose of a genealogical résumé was to impress onlookers with the high quality and respectability of one’s roots. But Matthew does the very opposite with Jesus. This genealogy is shockingly unlike other ancient genealogies. To begin with, there are five women listed in the genealogy, all mothers of Jesus. This will not strike modern readers as unusual, but in ancient patriarchal societies, a woman was virtually never named in such lists, let alone five of them.

**All:** <sup>1</sup>This is the family history, the genealogy, of Jesus the Anointed, *the coming King*. You will see in this history that Jesus is descended from King David, and that He is also descended from Abraham.

**Leader:** It begins with Abraham, whom God called into a special, chosen, covenanted relationship, and who was the founding father of the nation of Israel.

**All:** <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac; Isaac was the father of Jacob; Jacob was the father of Judah and of Judah's *eleven* brothers; <sup>3</sup> Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

**Leader:** Tamar was Judah's widowed daughter-in-law; she dressed up like a prostitute and seduced her father-in-law, all so she could keep this very family line alive.

**All:** Perez was the father of Hezron; Hezron was the father of Ram; <sup>4</sup> Ram was the father of Amminadab; Amminadab was the father of Nahshon; Nahshon was the father of Salmon; <sup>5</sup> Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).

**Leader:** Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who heroically hid Israelite spies from hostile authorities who wanted to kill them.

**All:** Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth, *a Moabite woman who converted to the Hebrew faith*); Obed was the father of Jesse; <sup>6</sup> and Jesse was the father of David, who was the king *of the nation of Israel*. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother *was Bathsheba, and she was married to a man named Uriah*).

**Leader:** Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a soldier in David's army. She was bathing in her courtyard one evening when David spied her and became interested in her. Later Bathsheba got pregnant during an adulterous liaison with David, so David had Uriah killed in battle and then married his widow. David and Bathsheba's first baby died, but later Bathsheba got pregnant again and gave birth to Solomon.

**All:** <sup>16</sup> Jacob was the father of Joseph, who married a woman named Mary. It was Mary who gave birth to Jesus, and it is Jesus who is *the Savior, the Anointed One*. <sup>17</sup> Abraham and David were linked with 14 generations, 14 generations link David to the Babylonian exile, and 14 more take us from the exile to the birth of the Anointed.

Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17 (*The Voice*)

### Drama – Shaking the Tree

**Leader:** Here you have moral outsiders—adulterers, incestuous relationships, prostitutes. You have cultural outsiders, racial outsiders, and gender outsiders. The Law of Moses excluded these people from the presence of God, and yet they are all publicly acknowledged as the ancestors of Jesus. In Jesus Christ, all sit down as equals: equally sinful and lost, equally accepted and loved.

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 20, 29, 31-33)

### Message – Such Good News

HC#120 – In the Manger

HC-120

HCD10-T20

<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#65 – God Will Make a Way SB#492</b>	HC-65 TB-639 – same	HCD5-T15
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)
<b>HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16

### **Benediction**

<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night SB#112</b>	HC-280 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 1**  
**Children’s Moment**  
**December 2, 2018**

***Family Tree***  
**by Martyn Scott Thomas**

*[The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit around his chair.]*

**Narrator:** Today is the first week of Advent – the four weeks before Christmas. For the next few weeks we’re going to talk about some of the parts of the Christmas story.

Today, we’re going to talk about family trees. Does anybody know what a family tree is? *[get responses from the children]* That’s right, a family tree is a list of our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Do any of you know the names of your grandparents? What about great-grandparents – that would be your mom or dad’s grandparents? *[allow for some discussion]* That’s great.

Well the Bible tells us about Jesus’s parents – do you know their names? And it also tells us about his grandfather and great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather all the way back to Abraham in the Old Testament. His family tree shows us that he was related to King David – which is very important because King David was promised that one of his relatives would be a very special King. So when Jesus was born, he made that promise come true.

So, it’s good to know our family tree. It’s good to know our grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It’s good to be part of a family and more important to be part of the family of God.

Let’s pray. Dear Jesus, we thank you today for our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents and all of our family. Bless them and us today. Amen.

I’ll see you back here next week. *[dismiss the children]*

<b>Advent 2018 Week #1</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>Shaking the Tree</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Topic:</b>	Family
<b>Scripture:</b>	Matthew 1:1-17
<b>Synopsis:</b>	A husband and wife discuss having a child in spite of some questions in the family tree.
<b>Characters:</b>	Phil Yates – cautious, but detail oriented, late 20's Lynne Yates – optimistic and understanding, late 20's
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Modern dress. A table with a computer. A pregnancy test strip.
<b>Setting:</b>	The Yates' dining room.
<b>Running time:</b>	5 minutes

[*Phil is seated working on the computer.*]

**Phil:** [*calling out*] Lynne, what was your paternal grandmother's maiden name?

**Lynne:** [*enters*] Smith.

**Phil:** [*not looking up, typing on computer*] Is that German?

**Lynne:** [*loud sigh*] Phil, what are you doing?

**Phil:** I'm tracing our family tree.

**Lynne:** What brought this on?

**Phil:** Well you know, we've been talking about having a baby . . .

**Lynne:** [*playfully*] Yes, I vaguely remember.

**Phil:** I'm just trying to figure out if there are any anomalies in our family tree that might be warning signs.

**Lynne:** [*puzzled*] Warning signs?

**Phil:** Yeah, you know, crazy people.

**Lynne:** Crazy people?

**Phil:** Yeah, you know, be careful shaking your family tree because you never know what nuts will fall out.

**Lynne:** What are you talking about?

**Phil:** Well, I don't know if we should go ahead with this baby thing if craziness runs in your family.

**Lynne:** [*upset*] My family? What about your family?

**Phil:** Oh, we both know my family is "cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs." Case in point: Uncle Fred.

**Lynne:** Is he the one that always wears that fez?

**Phil:** Except on weekends. Then he wears a foam trucker's hat from Howard Johnsons. And I'm not sure he's really my uncle.

**Lynne:** What do you mean?

**Phil:** Well, he just showed up one Thanksgiving at Aunt Betty's house.

**Lynne:** Then why did they let him stay?

**Phil:** [*matter-of-factly*] He brought yams.

**Lynne:** [*agreeing*] Your family is crazy.

**Phil:** That's why we need your family to be normal. If this baby is going to have any shot in life, he needs some good genes. That's why we have to plan carefully.

**Lynne:** Plan carefully? We're talking about the miracle of life. You can't really plan that.

**Phil:** Oh, yeah. [*points to computer*] Look at this.

**Lynne:** What is that? Why are September and December highlighted?

**Phil:** Those are our target months.

**Lynne:** Target months?

**Phil:** Yes, conception in those months would almost certainly guarantee a June or September baby.

**Lynne:** And that's important because...?

**Phil:** Well, June babies have the highest number of Nobel Prize winners and CEOs.

**Lynne:** And September babies?

**Phil:** Academic success. They're usually the oldest in their classes. That's good for sports, too.

**Lynne:** What if we conceive in any other month?

**Phil:** We won't.

**Lynne:** How can you be so sure?

**Phil:** I won't shave in those months.

**Lynne:** That's your plan? I can work with that.

**Phil:** [*continuing*] Or shower.

**Lynne:** Gross.

**Phil:** Exactly.

**Lynne:** So getting back to the family tree, what have you found?

**Phil:** [*pointing to computer*] Well, you have a distant relative on your great-grandfather's side that was associated with the royal family in Denmark.

**Lynne:** That sounds good.

**Phil:** And by associated with, I mean he attempted to assassinate the crown prince.

**Lynne:** Assassinate?

**Phil:** Don't worry, I said "attempted."

**Lynne:** Anything else?

**Phil:** Well, your paternal grandmother's third cousin twice removed stole a truck load of chickens.

**Lynne:** Chickens?

**Phil:** And sold them to some Colonel in Kentucky.

**Lynne:** Colonel Sanders?

**Phil:** No, I think his name was Burt. [*moving on*] And then, look at this. [*pointing to computer*]

**Lynne:** Six wives?

**Phil:** And this. [*pointing*]

**Lynne:** Breaking and entering.

**Phil:** One more. [*pointing*]

**Lynne:** His beard is a little scruffy, but otherwise he looks normal.

**Phil:** [*correcting*] She.

**Lynne:** She?

**Phil:** Notice the circus tent in the background.

**Lynne:** Oh my.

**Phil:** I'm sorry, but I don't think we can go forward with this baby thing.

**Lynne:** Come on, Phil. You can't really believe that a few distant relatives could really condemn our baby to a less than ideal life.

**Phil:** Again, I give you Uncle Fred.

**Lynne:** [*hopeful*] But you said he may not really be related.

**Phil:** [*pointing to computer*] And this lovely cast of characters.

**Lynne:** [*pleading*] But it's December.

**Phil:** I'm sorry, but I don't think it's worth the risk.

**Lynne:** Isn't there anything I can do to convince you? What about that nightie you got me for Valentine's Day?

**Phil:** [*shaking his head*] I'm just not in the mood anymore.

**Lynne:** Are you sure?

**Phil:** Positive. Face it, we just aren't meant to be parents.

**Lynne:** I'm sorry you feel that way. [*starts to exit, stops*] Oh, here. I thought you might like to see this. [*hands him pregnancy test strip*]

**Phil:** [*looks at it, confused*] What's this?

**Lynne:**        *[walks out of room]*

**Phil:**        *[still confused]* And what does this plus plus mean?

*[Blackout]*

*\*Optional segue*

In Jesus's family tree, you have cultural outsiders, racial outsiders, and gender outsiders. The Law of Moses excluded these people from the presence of God, and yet they are all publicly acknowledged as the ancestors of Jesus. In Jesus Christ, all sit down as equals: equally sinful and lost, equally accepted and loved.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 1**  
***Such Good News***  
**December 2, 2018**

**Title:**       **Such Good News** (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:**   **Matthew 1:1-17**

[*Referring to Drama*] That's quite a family tree, isn't it? Not necessarily one that a person would want to share with people who are not familiar with their family background.

Do you know what I love about Advent? This is what I love.... [*Personal illustration.*]

Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, Familysearch.org, etc. These are just a few of the many sites that you can go to if you are looking for your heritage or where you come from. Tracing where you are from is considered by many societies to be very important. Tracing family roots can actually bring quite a sense of identity for us.

In some more traditional societies, family histories and family trees are a vital part of who you are. In these places telling the story of your ancestry is just as important to your personal identity as writing a good résumé is in our more modern society.

[*Personal illustration about your own genealogy.*]

As we look into the beginning of Matthew's gospel, we see a long list of names. This list is equivalent to the modern way of looking into genealogy. The difference is that a first-century Jew would look at this particular family tree and find it very impressive. You see, in ancient cultures, names listed as a part of a family line were arranged in a way that the position of greatest honor was at the end.

In this case, **Matthew is saying that this birth is exactly what God's people have been waiting for, for many long years. He is showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of a promise of God and it is Such Good News!**

**From the beginning of chapter 1, Matthew highlights two very important people in the genealogy, David and Abraham.** These two names would have been considered two very honored names to have in your family line. Abraham was the father of all Jews, and David was the greatest king in Israelite memory.

Both of these men were recipients of extremely significant promises that gave the Jewish people their identity. Just to be in their family line was considered an honor in itself, let alone to be the promised one that the Jews were waiting for to save them.

**Today we are going to consider these two men and the importance of their part in this family tree. First, Abraham. He is called the father of the Jews because he was the first person called by God to be a part of the chosen nation Israel.** Genesis 12:1 says,

*The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”*

God called Abraham to pick up everything in his life and go off to the Promised Land to establish God’s people. Why did God do this? Well, **we know now that God had a plan.** Out of all the nations of the earth, he was going to choose one nation—the Jews—to be His people. That took faith on Abraham’s part, especially since He didn’t necessarily know the whole story.

Has God ever asked you to do something that took a great deal of faith? Has He ever asked you to do something that you couldn’t see the end of? When you listen and follow His direction it’s wonderful to see God working!

The Jews would be blessed by God and would live as an example of God’s power, holiness, majesty, and love. But most importantly, **it was from the Jews that the Savior of the world would come.**

**Next, we see David.** Why is it important that Matthew mention David in the family tree? Well, **David is recorded as being the greatest king that Israel had ever had.** David was a man after God’s own heart. It was during David’s reign that Israel was at its finest. Under David, Israel’s borders grew to its greatest area of influence. Even though David was human and made some mistakes, some very big ones that we know of, he loved God with all his heart and God loved David in return.

2 Samuel 7:16 reads, *“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”* **God had promised David that his descendants would rule forever over the people of Israel.** In other words, there would never be a time when the throne of David would be without a king.

This all sounds great and wonderful, “Such Good News,” right? But, as we read on we see that this plan comes upon a little bump in the road. Look at Matthew 1:12. Here we see indication of an exile to Babylon. Being in exile means that something happened to jeopardize that Kingdom. This could raise questions about the promises that God made to Abraham and David.

You see after David’s death, his “line” stirred some tension in the nation and by the time of his grandchildren, the nation of Israel had split. Eventually there were two nations, Israel and Judah. **Over time the two nations would be destroyed and carried off into exile.**

Their rebellion and sin against God had taken these two nations into exile. There was no king from David’s house on the throne...there wasn’t even a throne. At that time there seemed to be no way that Israel would ever be a blessing to all nations. They couldn’t even keep themselves in order.

Does this mean that God did not keep his promise? It says in Matthew 1:1 that Jesus Christ Himself comes from the line of David. *“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David.”* **We know that God keeps His promises; it’s just that they are in His own time.**

**Sometimes we need to be patient and have faith as we wait upon the Lord.** There are times in our lives that God asks us to be patient and wait on Him. Have there been times like this in your life recently? How do you react? Are you a patient waiter? Or, do you expect answers yesterday? What good news is God having you wait for today?

**We know that for generations God was silent with His people.** For 400 years He did not speak as His people waited for the fulfilment of prophecies told. **But God had not forgotten.** In God's time the answer to these promises would come.

As Galatians 4:4-5 says, *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* It was in perfect time that God sent his son. He sent Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. **After all those years of silent waiting, He sent the Savior of the World—and Matthew records this good news!**

It's amazing to consider, but this one verse here in Matthew shows how Jesus came to fulfill all of God's promises once and for all, not just for Israel, but for the whole world! **Through the person of Jesus Christ, the promises to Abraham and to David are fulfilled.**

Because Abraham was willing, God promised blessing to all the nations of the world. Through Jesus, God made a way to redeem every person on earth who would call upon his name. This son of Abraham was born in order to bless every nation on earth. That's one promise fulfilled.

Second, Jesus the son of David came to be a king. There is no king in Israel today as there were in Biblical times, and Jesus does not sit on an earthly throne. But, He is the King of kings who sits on a heavenly throne and who will rule for all eternity! As a descendant of King David, the promise to David that one of his descendants would rule forever is fulfilled. This son of David has been born, lived, died, and rose again! And Scripture tells us He will come again! Amen!

This is Such Good News for us today, is it not?! **Jesus, the son of Abraham, has come to bless all nations of the earth by being the perfect sacrifice to save us from our sins. Jesus, the son of David, has come to be the king of our lives.**

So what? What does this mean for us today? How do we fit into this story? We are a part of this promise when we accept Jesus as the King of our lives. Jesus, The son of David and the Son of Abraham came to be our King and Savior! Is He the King and Savior in your life today? Has He redeemed you? Perhaps you have been waiting on God to speak into your life.

Let's be reminded today that through God's promises to Abraham and David, God's Son came to love us, to save us, and to bring peace into our lives. The familiar verse from Isaiah 9:6 says, *"For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given...and He will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Let's thank God today for sending the Son of Abraham, the Son of David to be the King of Kings and the Savior of our lives.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 1** (abbreviated)  
***Such Good News***  
**December 2, 2018**

**Title:**       **Such Good News** (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:**   **Matthew 1:1-17**

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Today we are going to consider these two men and the importance of their part in this family tree:

**I. Abraham. He is called the father of the Jews because he was the first person called by God to be a part of the chosen nation Israel.**

**A. God had a plan.** Out of all the nations of the earth, he was going to choose one nation—the Jews—to be His people. That took faith on Abraham’s part, especially since He didn’t necessarily know the whole story.

Has God ever asked you to do something that took a great deal of faith? Has He ever asked you to do something that you couldn’t see the end of? When you listen and follow His direction it’s wonderful to see God working!

**B.** The Jews would be blessed by God and would live as an example of God’s power, holiness, majesty, and love. **It was from the Jews that the Savior of the world would come.**

**II. David. David is recorded as being the greatest king that Israel had ever had.** David was a man after God’s own heart. It was during David’s reign that Israel was at its finest. Under

David, Israel's borders grew to its greatest area of influence. Even though David was human and made some mistakes, some very big ones that we know of, he loved God with all his heart and God loved David in return.

**A.** 2 Samuel 7:16 reads, *"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."* **God had promised David that his descendants would rule forever over the people of Israel.**

**B.** It says in Matthew 1:1 that Jesus Christ Himself comes from the line of David. *"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David."* **God keeps His promises in His own time.**

**Sometimes we need to be patient and have faith as we wait upon the Lord.** There are times in our lives that God asks us to be patient and wait on Him. Have there been times like this in your life recently? How do you react? Are you a patient waiter? Or, do you expect answers yesterday? What good news is God having you wait for today?

**We know that for generations God was silent with His people.** For 400 years He did not speak as His people waited for the fulfilment of prophecies told. **But God had not forgotten.** In God's time the answer to these promises would come.

**III.** As Galatians 4:4-5 says, *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* In God's perfect timing, He sent His Son Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. **After all those years of silent waiting, He sent the Savior of the World—and Matthew records this good news!**

**A.** Matthew shows how Jesus came to fulfill all of God's promises once and for all, not just for Israel, but for the whole world! **Through the person of Jesus Christ, the promises to Abraham and to David are fulfilled.**

Because Abraham was willing, God promised blessing to all the nations of the world. Through Jesus, God made a way to redeem every person on earth who would call upon his name. This Son of Abraham was born in order to bless every nation on earth. That's one promise fulfilled.

**B.** Second, **Jesus the son of David came to be a king. He is the King of kings who sits on a heavenly throne and who will rule for all eternity!** As a descendant of King David, the promise to David that one of his descendants would rule forever is fulfilled. This Son of David has been born, lived, died, and rose again! And Scripture tells us He will come again!

This is Such Good News for us today, is it not?! **Jesus, the Son of Abraham, has come to bless all nations of the earth by being the perfect sacrifice to save us from our sins. Jesus, the Son of David, has come to be the King of our lives.**

What does this mean for us today? How do we fit into this story? We are a part of this promise when we accept Jesus as the King of our lives. Jesus, the Son of David and the Son of Abraham came to be our King and Savior! Is He the King and Savior in your life today? Has He redeemed you? Perhaps you have been waiting on God to speak into your life.

Let's be reminded today that through God's promises to Abraham and David, God's Son came to love us, to save us, and to bring peace into our lives. The familiar verse from Isaiah 9:6 says,

*“For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given...  
and He will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

Let's thank God today for sending the Son of Abraham, the Son of David to be the King of Kings and the Savior of our lives.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 2**  
***The Courage of Christmas***  
**December 9, 2018**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

<b>HC#146 – Here I Am to Worship SB#114</b>	HC-146 TB-653 – same	HCD13-T16
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-407 – Regent Square	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#103 – Christians awake</b>	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)

***The Courage of Christmas***

**Call to Worship:**

An intimate relationship with Jesus always requires courage. Consider what the announcement of the angel meant to Joseph and Mary. Mary is pregnant, and Joseph knows he is not the father. He decides to break off the engagement, but the angel shows up and says, “Marry her. She is pregnant through the Holy Spirit.” Joseph will see that having Jesus in his life means not just damage to his social standing but also danger to his very life. All this takes courage to face.

What is the application to us? If you want Jesus in your life, have the courage to take your hands off your life, give yourself to him and begin a lifetime of adventure.

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 56, 60)

***The Candle of Love***

**Lighting of Advent Candle**

**Reader 1:** Last Sunday we lit the first candle in our Advent wreath, the candle of hope. We light it again as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfill all of God’s promises to us.

[Light 1<sup>st</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 2:** The second candle of Advent is the candle of love. God's love is a perfect love. Jesus was the Son of God, wrapped in human flesh so the invisible was made visible, born in a stable so we might know that we are not alone.

[Light 2<sup>nd</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 1:** Isaiah calls him the *Wonderful* Counselor, which means he's beautiful. And perhaps now we get a glimpse of why he is. He had the infinite highness of being the Mighty God, yet he became one of us, enmeshed in our condition, in order to know our darkness. He saved us by going to the cross, and he did it all voluntarily, freely, out of sheer love.

**Reader 2:** Where did he get the courage? It is *love*. Why did Jesus have the courage to do what he did for us? Love! And how will you get your courage? The same way. Love him...have the courage to put him in the center of your life, and then he will be with you, and you with him.

(*Hidden Christmas*, pp. 15, 61-62)

<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19

### Pastoral Prayer

**Children's Moment: Courage**

**Announcements and Offering**

### *The Fathers of Jesus*

#### Responsive Reading:

**Leader:** When most people think of angels at Christmas, they remember that these messengers came to the shepherds and to Mary. They often forget that an angelic herald also came to Joseph, who learned some things no one else was told. Our scripture from Matthew 1 gives us this invaluable account, from which we learn that Jesus is God, that he is human, and that he is with us.

**All:** <sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

**Leader:** <sup>19</sup>Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

**All:** <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

**Leader:** The angel tells Joseph the human life growing inside Mary has come not from any human being but from the heavenly Father. So Joseph learns that he will be Jesus’ father only in a secondary sense. Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. God is the real father.

**All:** <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

**Leader:** Here Matthew quotes from Isaiah. For centuries Jewish religious leaders and scholars had known this prophecy, but they had not thought it should be taken literally. Matthew is saying this promise is greater than anyone imagined. Jesus Christ is “God with us” because the human life growing in the womb of Mary was a miracle performed by God himself. This child is literally God.

**All:** <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

(Matthew 1:18-25, NIV; Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 40-42 )

<b>Drama – Imagine That</b>
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**Message – The Courage of Christmas**

<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19

<b>HC#186 – When I Look into Your Holiness SB#402</b>	HC-186 TB-927 – same	HCD17-T16
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>SB#158 – Who is He in yonder stall</b>	TB-287 – Who is He?	HTD10-T19 (6 vs.)

### Benediction

<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night SB#112</b>	HC-180 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)

KELLER, TIMOTHY. *HIDDEN CHRISTMAS : the Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ*. PENGUIN BOOKS, 2018.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 2**  
**Children’s Moment**  
**December 9, 2018**

***Courage***  
**by Martyn Scott Thomas**

*[The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit around his chair.]*

**Narrator:** Today is the second week of Advent – the four weeks before Christmas. Last week, we talked about our family trees. This week we’re going to talk about courage.

Courage is another word for being brave. Who can tell me someone who is brave?  
*[allow children to answer]* Those are all good answers.

In the Christmas story, Mary was brave when the angel told her she would have a baby. Joseph showed courage when the angel spoke to him in a dream and told him about Mary’s baby. He knew he wasn’t the father and he had to decide whether or not he still wanted to marry her. It wasn’t an easy decision, but Joseph decided to marry her and become Jesus’s earthly father.

How many of you have had to make a hard decision? What was it? *[allow children to answer]* Those are all good answers.

Let’s pray and ask Jesus to help us be brave when we have hard decisions to make.

Dear Jesus, we thank you that you give us courage. Help us to be brave and make good choices. Amen.

I’ll see you back here next week. *[dismiss the children]*

**Advent 2018 Week #2**

**DRAMA**

**Imagine That**

**By Martyn Scott Thomas**

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<b>Topic:</b>	Jesus's birth
<b>Scripture:</b>	Luke 2:1-20
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Joseph pauses to reflect on the birth of Jesus.
<b>Characters:</b>	Joseph – the father of Jesus
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Biblical or modern dress.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage.
<b>Running time:</b>	3 minutes

*[Joseph enters slowly and silently, as if not to disturb his sleeping wife and child.]*

**Joseph:** This is not how I imagined it would be. But how could I have imagined this? Nine months ago, I was on top of the world. I had just moved into my own home, I was getting ready to open my own shop and I was engaged to a beautiful girl. I had it all planned out. The problem was, God had a different plan.

When Mary told me she was pregnant, my entire world crashed down around me. I knew there was no way the baby could be mine and I couldn't imagine Mary ever being unfaithful. Her story seemed impossible, so I headed home in a daze and pondered what to do.

I decided to divorce her quietly. I knew this man in the next town who could help. He assured me it would be very discreet. But, before I could carry out my plans, I had a visitor.

It was an angel of the Lord. He appeared to me in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Mary's story was true; still impossible, but true. What now? Of course I would obey the angel, but what would people say? Who would believe what we had to say when I myself was still having a hard time understanding it all?

I had to delay the opening of my own shop. Nobody would openly do business with a suspected adulterer. Luckily, Saul kept me on in his shop, as long as I agreed to do my work in the back room, out of sight. Fortunately I was too good a craftsman to let go. But, my work load and pay were substantially cut back.

It had been a really tough year, but as the time approached for the birth of our son, it all seemed so trivial. We would finally have a fresh start. Then we got word of the census.

How could we get to Bethlehem and back without putting Mary's life and the life of our son in danger? She was in no condition to travel, but we had no choice. So we kept our travel to a few hours at a time and only in the daylight. It was risky for anyone to travel at night, especially someone in her condition. By the time we reached Bethlehem, we were both exhausted. We needed to find a room so we could rest and put our travels behind us.

It sounded like a good plan, but as I have learned this past year, my best plans are never enough. We couldn't find a single room anywhere in town. All we were offered was this dark, smelly stable – and for twice the normal rate for any room. Caesar wasn't the only one making money off this census.

Well, at least we'd be able to rest; or so I thought. No sooner had we settled in among the cattle and sheep and Mary winced in pain. She was in labor. How could this be happening? I was beginning to think that God was punishing us with this child rather than blessing us. Can't anything happen normally?

Then, before I knew it, our son was born. We named him Jesus – at least that went according to plan. The rest of this night has been a blur of animals, shepherds and angels.

And now they're asleep – both of them. I should be sleeping, too, but I had to gather my thoughts before I lay down. I know our lives will never be normal. I know that this is just the beginning of an amazing journey – one that I can't even imagine. But why should the future be any different than this past year? This is not how I imagined it would be. But I wouldn't have it any other way.

*[Blackout]*

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 2**  
***The Courage of Christmas***  
**December 9, 2018**

**Title:**       **The Courage of Christmas** (by Captain Michael Sjogren)  
**Scripture:**   **Matthew 1:18-25**

The only two books in the Bible that give us a detailed narrative of the birth of our Savior are found in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Even though the central fact is the same in both accounts—essentially that God’s promise of a Redeemer for the world has come through the birth of the person of Jesus Christ—the two descriptions are given from different lenses.

In Luke’s account we find a beautiful story given through the perspective of Mary. We encounter an excited Galilean girl who has learned that she is about to give birth to God’s Messiah. Mary responds with an awesome song of rejoicing and proclaiming God’s greatness in her life.

Yet in the account that we are focusing on today in Matthew, we don’t necessarily find an exuberant character giving full praise to God through song and thanksgiving. Here we have a sobering setting as Joseph discovers that his wife-to-be is pregnant and he is very aware that this child is not his.

Now both of these portions do tell us that Mary and Joseph were each separately visited by an Angel. Both of these Messengers shared a similar exhortation: “Do not be afraid.” This phrase is critical in both cases and we are going to focus on what that meant to Joseph’s circumstance and how his response can be motivating to our lives as believers in Christ Jesus today.

*[Personal Illustration: As a kid in my early elementary school years, I was really drawn to the movie, “The Wizard of Oz.” Okay, I just made a big transition from the Gospel of Matthew to a 1939 American Musical Fantasy Film, but stick with me because there is a setup point.*

Now I don’t remember the last time I actually sat through the entire Wizard of Oz, but as a child the different characters in that film grabbed and kept my attention. I always enjoyed watching the storyline play out time after time even though I obviously knew how it would end.

Now other than those creepy monkey servants of the Wicked Witch who wore those blue and red vests (those creatures that provided a few nightmares for me!), by far the character that stood out most and which I enjoyed most was Lion.

I just love how in his first scene of the film he tries to make himself seem fierce and, well, lion-like. And it worked for a while on Scarecrow and Tin Man, but Dorothy—she saw right through him.

Very quickly we see who this Lion truly is and what he lacks, which would be...? *[wait for congregation]* Yes, courage! The one trait that every Lion has or should have, this particular one

missed out on. And so, of course, he desires to find it. He wanted to act like a normal lion should. And ultimately at the end of the movie Lion realizes that he had courage in him all along. He just needed to tap into that part of himself. He needed to have faith that he is Courageous, he is valiant.]

Today in our advent message we will discover three ways in which Joseph showed great Courage and how this response can be applied to our lives in Christ. We will discover that if we want Jesus in the center of our life, it is going to take some bravery, some courage.

Now courage isn't something we regularly discuss as a part of our faith journey. Courage is not part of the fruit of the Spirit given to us in Galatians chapter five.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are all gifts of the Holy Spirit that become more and more evident as we continually walk with Christ; as we mature in our faith. Yet in this list there is no mention of courage. In spite of this, I think we all could agree that many that followed Jesus showed great courage; people like Paul, Peter, Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist and so on and so on.

But what about Joseph? Well, we see his courage very clearly through his response to his circumstance.

In Matthew 1:18 we are quickly introduced to the dilemma: *“The birth of Jesus came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.”*

The process of engagement and marriage was quite different in Jesus' time than it is today. Parents arranged marriages for their children. In the bride's early teen years, a formal promise occurred a year or so before the marriage ceremony itself. The engagement involved a contract or a binding legal procedure.

This could only be broken by a legal reversal which would be considered a divorce. The engagement was really a pre-marriage marriage. In fact, if a death occurred to one of the partners during the engagement, the partner left would be labeled a widow or widower.

After the engagement time, a wedding ceremony would occur and the couple would then live together as husband and wife.

This is the situation that Joseph and Mary are in. Verse nineteen tells us something significant about Joseph's character. It says he was a “righteous man.” This term means that Joseph was law abiding and because of this he was in a terrible spot with what to do with his relationship to Mary, a young woman whom he obviously cares for and seems to love very much.

Sexual infidelity was considered adultery and subject to legal penalties of that society. Joseph had two choices according to the law, and both required divorce. He could do this publicly or privately. But both actions would subject Mary to public disgrace and change forever the trajectory in which their lives were headed.

The Angel that visited Joseph in a dream provided a third option that Joseph would have never considered on his own. Here's where we come across Joseph's first major action of courage. Verse twenty tells us that the Messenger told Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit."

Now here's where we see very clearly that faith and courage often go hand in hand. What choice did Joseph make? Obviously we are well aware that he followed through with the engagement and as verse twenty-four tells us, "He married her."

Joseph came to the conclusion that Mary did not commit infidelity but that the Holy Spirit of God was the agent of conception because this is what the Messenger of God told him had happened. And because of this courageous decision to marry her, Joseph would accept this child as his own. No wonder the Angel told Joseph and Mary to "Fear Not," because fear within these realities would have been quite normal.

Joseph had to believe that God is a God of miracles because this truth on its own merit is unbelievable. Here's the first application for us to make through this narrative; **We must have Courage to believe that God can do all things**, even when they don't make logical sense.

For centuries now many opponents of Christianity have used this story of a virgin birth to try and disprove our faith. Not only is the story ridiculous but it's not scientifically possible. But here's the harsher reality: many Christians have also viewed and currently view this story as embarrassing or unnecessary or even untrue. Many unbelievers can't accept that miracles happen but many Christians fall into that same line of thinking.

Maybe God can heal physically or set us right emotionally, some Christians think, but not babies being born without human fathers—that's bringing things way too far. So in this framework of thinking, if someone doesn't believe in one of the miracles within the Bible like the virgin birth, then any of the so-called Truths of the scriptures can be viewed simply as good metaphors or allegories.

They don't have to have really happened; they just represent a picture of God or who we are comfortable with God being. Because if God really engages in miracles on earth, why aren't things perfect? Many ask: Why do we have so much suffering? Why do things like genocide or the slave trade exist?

These are legitimate questions and cause for inquiring. I'm pretty sure that Joseph questioned as well, but he came to the conclusion and showed courage by believing that God can do this miracle and that this miracle was necessary for a true Savior of the world to come. And he named this child Jesus, or Immanuel, which means "God IS with us."

God is present, with his people; he doesn't intervene from a distance but is always active, even in the most inconceivable ways (well, inconceivable in our limited way of understanding).

By allowing Jesus in his life, Joseph most likely faced ridicule, and his reputation most likely suffered, yet he showed bravery throughout all of it. In a similar way, if we believe that God engages Himself just as the Bible states, our reputation can also suffer and we may find that there are those ridiculing us. It does take courage and certainly faith to believe.

From Joseph's response to this Messenger and in allowing Jesus into his existence, a second aspect of bravery emerges. It's the **Courage to give up our rights to self-determination**. Matthew 1:21 says, "*She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.*"

In the culture that Joseph lived, it was the father's absolute right to name his child. Naming a child was a sign of the father's control over the family. The Angel, however, takes away that patriarchal right that Joseph had. He had to come to terms with this reality and have the courage to proceed in spite of it.

Joseph didn't respond by saying, "I'll accept that God's Spirit miraculously conceived this child, but you need to allow me this right to name him as his Father."

When we come to Christ, we must show similar courage. We have to drop our conditions. I've had people share with me that they are interested in Christianity, but not if they have to do X or Y. Or, I would like to become of Soldier of the corps, but not with a particular promise or lifestyle I would have to accept.

As true followers of Christ we have to give up the right to say to God, "I will obey you *if*...or I will do this *if*" because that's not obedience at all. With that perspective we are theoretically saying to Jesus that He is our advisor but not our Lord. We are willing to take some recommendations but only the ones that sound good to us. The truth is if we want Jesus with us, we must also give up our rights to self-determination.

Self-denial is a foreign idea to our late modern culture's ambition of self-assertion. To be a Christian you are going to have to have the courage to do something that our culture thinks is absolutely crazy. What did Jesus say to the group that desired to follow him in Luke 9:23? "*If anyone wants to come with me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.*"

Living counter-culturally takes great courage and it's what we are called to do, just as Joseph discovered. Only if we give Christ our supreme allegiance will we get what we need most from him, which is to name us. He made us, he knows who we are and what we are made for. That means that we cannot know who we truly are until He comes into our lives and then through obedience to him, we learn our true identity.

Finally, through Joseph's response and the Angel's declaration we see that we need **Courage to put Christ at the center of everything**. And the most fundamental way in which to do this is to have the courage to admit that we are a sinner and that we need a Savior.

What is Jesus' entire mission in coming to us?

The answer is found in verse twenty-one that we have been focusing on, “He will save His people from their sins.” *Wait, you might say, I thought Jesus came to empower us and love us.* Well, yes, but notably he came to forgive us, because everything else in our lives comes from that reality.

We cannot be in a right relationship with God without the courage to admit we are a sinner and to seek forgiveness. And Christ desires to do that work in us. Once we are forgiven, then and only then can we place Christ at the center.

How do we see Joseph respond by placing Christ at the center of his life? Look at verses 24-25: *“When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.”*

Joseph did everything that was asked of him. He showed great courage and absolute faith throughout all of it. And because of this Joseph was blessed to raise the Savior of the world, Immanuel, God with us. The Angel’s message was effective and Joseph’s obedience was complete; courageous obedience, courageous faith.

So where does this bring us this morning? How will you get the strength to be courageous in the ways we have discussed? Yes, we can look at Joseph as an example—and he’s a good example—but ultimately it is by looking to Jesus himself.

If we think it takes great courage to be with him, consider that it took infinitely more courage for him to be with you. No other religion has a God who needed courage. Jesus could save us only by facing an agonizing death. He became mortal and vulnerable so that he could suffer, be betrayed and killed. He faced all these things for you so that all things can ultimately be made right.

Jesus did all these things voluntarily, freely, and generously. Why did Jesus have the courage to do what he did for us? Love! And how will you get your courage? The same way. See him doing all that he did for you, and that will draw out your love for him – and then you will have the courage to put him into the center of your life, and then he will be with you and you with him. This is the Courage of Christmas! Let’s pray.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 2** (abbreviated)  
***The Courage of Christmas***  
**December 9, 2018**

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**I.**       Joseph had to believe that God is a God of miracles because this truth on its own merit is unbelievable. **We must have Courage to believe that God can do all things**, even when they don't make logical sense.

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When we come to Christ, we must show similar courage. We have to drop our conditions. As true followers of Christ we have to give up the right to say to God, "I will obey You *if*...or I will do this *if*," because that's not obedience at all. With that perspective we are theoretically saying to Jesus that He is our advisor but not our Lord.

Self-denial is a foreign idea to our late modern culture's ambition of self-assertion. To be a Christian you are going to have to have the courage to do something that our culture thinks is absolutely crazy. What did Jesus say those that desired to follow him in Luke 9:23? *"If anyone wants to come with me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Living counter-culturally takes great courage and it's what we are called to do, just as Joseph discovered. Only if we give Christ our supreme allegiance will we get what we need most from Him, which is to name us. He made us, He knows who we are and what we are made for. That means that we cannot know who we truly are until He comes into our lives and then through obedience to Him, we learn our true identity.

**III.** Finally, through Joseph's response and the Angel's declaration we see that we need **Courage to put Christ at the center of everything.** And the most fundamental way in which to do this is to have the courage to admit that we are a sinner and that we need a Savior.

What is Jesus' entire mission in coming to us? Verse 21: *"He will save His people from their sins."*

We cannot be in a right relationship with God without the courage to admit we are a sinner and to seek forgiveness. And Christ desires to do that work in us. Once we are forgiven, then and only then can we place Christ at the center.

How do we see Joseph respond by placing Christ at the center of his life? Look at verses 24-25: *"When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus."*

Joseph did everything that was asked of him. He showed great courage and absolute faith throughout all of it. And because of this Joseph was blessed to raise the Savior of the world, Immanuel, God with us. Joseph's obedience was complete; courageous obedience and faith.

How will you get the strength to be courageous in the ways we have discussed? It is by looking to Jesus himself.

If we think it takes great courage to be with Him, consider that it took infinitely more courage for Him to be with you. Jesus could save us only by facing an agonizing death. He became mortal and vulnerable so that he could suffer, be betrayed and killed. He faced all these things for you so that all things can ultimately be made right.

Jesus did all these things voluntarily, freely, and generously. Why did Jesus have the courage to do what He did for us? Love! And how will you get your courage? The same way. See Him doing all He did for you, and that will draw out your love for Him – and then you will have the courage to put Him into the center of your life, and then He will be with you and you with Him. This is the Courage of Christmas!

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 3**  
***Mary Responds***  
**December 16, 2018**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements and Offering**

***Mary’s Faith***

**Call to Worship:**

Up to this point in our Advent worship series, we have been looking at what Christmas means. It means God taking on a human nature; it means reconciliation and peace with God by grace. In short, we have been discussing the great things God gives us in Christmas. Now we should consider how to respond to what He gives, and how we can receive it. It is also time to turn from the Matthew passages that tell us about Joseph’s role and to look at Mary, the mother of Jesus. Why does Luke tell us so much about how Mary responded to the incarnation? It is largely to hold her up as a model of what responsive Christian faith looks like. Let’s see what we can learn from her.

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 80-81)

***The Candle of Joy***

**Lighting of Advent Candle**

**Reader 1:** The first Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of hope. We light it again today as we remember Jesus, who was born Christ and King. And we remember that He will come again to fulfill all of God’s promises to us.

*[Light 1<sup>st</sup> (purple) candle]*

**Reader 2:** Last Sunday we lit the candle of love. We light it again today as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, has come as Savior and Redeemer. The babe of Bethlehem has come out of love to bring redemption.

*[Light 2<sup>nd</sup> (purple) candle]*

**Reader 1:** Today we light the third candle of Advent; the candle of joy...

[Light 3<sup>rd</sup> (pink) candle]

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her, Mary was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words:

**Reader 2:** <sup>47</sup>My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
<sup>48</sup>For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
<sup>49</sup>For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy *is* His name.  
<sup>50</sup>And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.

(Luke 1:39-50)

**Reader 1:** Joy is a choice we make when we look at our present circumstances through the eyes of faith, trusting that God is at work and that he will never leave us nor abandon us. And it is often found with the help of another who reassures us that God is with us.

<b>SB#108 – Hark! the herald angels sing</b>	TB-270 – same	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#103 – Christians awake</b>	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful</b> <b>SB#39</b>	HC-121 TB-367 – Europe	HCD11-T11 HTD3-T11 (4 vs.)

**Children’s Moment: Mary**

### *Mary Responds*

**Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** Mary’s faith happens in stages. Christian faith requires the commitment of our whole life. Yet few go from being uncommitted to being fully committed in a single stroke. By looking at Mary’s process, we can learn much for our own journeys.

**Men:** <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

- Women:** <sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”
- Leader:** Mary’s first response was *measured skepticism*. “How will this be?” was a polite way of saying, “This is totally impossible!” Mary finds it hard to believe. Nevertheless, her reaction is measured. She doesn’t stop the conversation. She asks for more information.
- Men:** <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.
- Leader:** <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”
- Women:** <sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”
- Leader:** Mary’s second stage is *simple acceptance*. She is not saying, “It’s so clear now! I get it!” She is saying, “It doesn’t all make sense to me, but I will pursue, I will follow.” Sometimes you can only do what Mary does—just submit and trust despite the fears and reservations. That gives you a foothold for moving forward. This is a statement of obedience with much to teach us.
- Women:** <sup>39</sup> At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Men:** <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!
- All:** <sup>44</sup> “As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”
- Leader:** Finally, we see Mary eventually comes to *exercising faith from the heart*. The knowledge and insight of Elizabeth confirms what the angel said, and this gives Mary deeper assurance of faith. Now she bursts into praise:
- All:** <sup>46</sup> “My soul glorifies the Lord  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...
- Leader:** Now she is not merely submitting her will but giving her heart joyfully. In the end faith always moves beyond mental assent and duty and will involve the whole self—mind, will, and emotions.

(Luke 1:30-47, NIV; Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 83-86)

<b>SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem</b>	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#146 – Here I Am to Worship SB#114</b>	HC-146 TB-653 – same	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#186 – When I Look into Your Holiness SB#402</b>	HC-186 TB-927 – same	HCD17-T16
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16

### Pastoral Prayer

<b>Drama – Daddy’s Girl</b>
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### Message – Mary Responds

<b>HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127 TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)

### Benediction

<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night SB#112</b>	HC-280 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)

KELLER, TIMOTHY. *HIDDEN CHRISTMAS : the Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ*. PENGUIN BOOKS, 2018.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 3**  
**Children’s Moment**  
**December 16, 2018**

***Mary***  
**by Martyn Scott Thomas**

*[The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit around his chair.]*

**Narrator:** Today is the third week of Advent – the four weeks before Christmas. Last week, we talked about courage. This week we’re going to talk about Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Who knows what it means to be obedient? Who are some of the people we should obey? Are there any times that we shouldn’t obey? *[allow children to answer]*  
Those are all good answers.

In the Christmas story, Mary was visited by an angel and told that she would be the mother of Jesus. Now since she was not yet married, many people might not like that she was going to have a baby. Her parents might make her move out of the house. Joseph might decide that he didn’t want to be her husband. She might even have to move to a new town.

But, Mary listened to all that the angel had to say and believed God had a good plan. She trusted that even though it seemed like it could be hard, she would obey what he had to say. And we all know that she became the mother of baby Jesus.

So do you think that you can obey your parents this week, even if it seems hard? I know you can.

Let’s pray: Dear Jesus, please help us to be obedient. Help us to trust you and our parents and to always try to do the right things. Amen.

I’ll see you back here next week. *[dismiss the children]*

**Advent 2018 Week #3**

**DRAMA**

**Daddy's Girl**

By Martyn Scott Thomas

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<b>Topic:</b>	Jesus's birth
<b>Scripture:</b>	Luke 1:26-47
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Mary's parents discuss what to do about her pregnancy.
<b>Characters:</b>	Saul – Mary's father Martha – Mary's mother
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Biblical or modern dress. Two chairs.
<b>Setting:</b>	Saul and Martha's home.
<b>Running time:</b>	3 minutes

[*Martha is seated. Saul is pacing.*]

**Martha:** [*exasperated*] Enough with the pacing. You're going to wear a rut into the floor.

**Saul:** I do my best thinking when I'm pacing.

**Martha:** Well, it's been over an hour, how's that working out for you?

**Saul:** [*stops and turns to Martha*] I just can't figure out what she was thinking.

**Martha:** She's not a little girl anymore.

**Saul:** It would be so much easier if she was.

**Martha:** Face it, our daughter is all grown up.

**Saul:** [*thinking back*] Remember when she first learned to walk. I'd put my arms out and she would stumble her way across the room to me.

**Martha:** She always was Daddy's girl.

**Saul:** When she was five, we'd walk to the park and she would hold my hand all the way.

**Martha:** [*correcting*] Except for the times you would carry her.

**Saul:** Her legs would get tired. Besides, she liked the view from on top of my shoulders.

**Martha:** And she liked to pull your hair.

**Saul:** I didn't mind one bit. [*pausing, then pacing again*] I'd give anything to have those days back.

**Martha:** Well, she's a young lady now. And soon to be married.

**Saul:** [*interjecting*] And pregnant!

**Martha:** But, that's hardly public knowledge.

**Saul:** But, it will be soon!

**Martha:** But, she's engaged to a wonderful man.

**Saul:** [*correcting*] Engaged, not married! And how wonderful is he if he gets her pregnant before they're married?

**Martha:** Mary told you what happened.

**Saul:** Oh yeah, the angel. Pretty convenient if you ask me.

**Martha:** Don't you trust your daughter to be honest with you?

**Saul:** Trust her? Yes. Trust him? That's a different story.

**Martha:** We've known Joseph and his family for years. He's always proven himself to be honorable.

**Saul:** Until he gets alone with my baby girl.

**Martha:** [*interjecting*] His fiancée.

**Saul:** All the more reason to keep his hands off!

**Martha:** According to her, he did.

**Saul:** I don't believe that for a second.

**Martha:** Whether or not you believe her story, the fact remains that Mary is pregnant.

**Saul:** [*sits, shaking his head*] What are we going to do?

**Martha:** I think the better question is, what are they going to do?

**Saul:** What do you mean?

**Martha:** Like it or not, Joseph and Mary are in this together.

**Saul:** But she's our daughter!

**Martha:** And his fiancée – legally bound. For good or bad, Mary’s fate lies with Joseph.

**Saul:** What if he divorces her? What then? She’ll be devastated.

**Martha:** If that happens – and only if – we’ll step in and see what we can do.

**Saul:** By then it could be too late.

**Martha:** Do you really think Joseph would divorce her? He loves her.

**Saul:** But she’s pregnant. And if she’s telling the truth, the baby isn’t his.

**Martha:** [*sits in silence*]

**Saul:** [*stands, starts pacing*] I don’t like this. I don’t see any good way out of this.

**Martha:** So, maybe we do nothing.

**Saul:** But she’s my little girl; our little girl.

**Martha:** And, according to her, God has given her an incredible gift.

**Saul:** I wish I could believe that.

**Martha:** What other choice do we have?

**Saul:** [*sits and places head in hands*] None.

**Martha:** [*places arm around Saul*] Let’s hope Joseph does the right thing.

[*Blackout*]

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 3**  
***Mary Responds***  
**December 16, 2018**

**Title:** Mary Responds (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:** Luke 1:26-55

Nothing sells in the news like a good scandal. I bet if we asked any newspaper or TV editor what sorts of stories sell, most would say that there are a few topics that sell the best: infidelity and royalty. Imagine how they would sell if those two things are combined!

Currently, we are plagued with a lot of scandalous news aren't we? It's not surprising then that when people read the annunciation of Jesus' birth, their minds may go straight to the way modern "news" has conditioned us to think.

People may read into this story with all kinds of theories that aren't written and fail to see the important message that is in this story. Here's the clincher, I think that even Christians sometimes miss the true miracle because of the potential scandal that would have surrounded Mary. BUT... there's so much more to this story.

**Today we are going to look at the message given to Mary, how she reacted, and her response.**

Then we're going to see how this applies to us. As Mary responded to the call on her life, we can learn how to best respond to God's call in our own lives.

Turn to Luke 1:26-30. Imagine you're at home minding your own business. Maybe you're sleeping, working, raking leaves, reading a book, who knows. Then, bam! A heavenly being breaks into your life! Would you be a little scared? A lot scared? Maybe even curious? I sure would. Then this angel decides to speak and bring you a message that was sure to make headline news. I can imagine Mary's emotions were all over the place during this encounter!

Not only would Mary have been frightened just by the appearance of an angel, but the message he brought to her would have frightened and maybe even confused her even more. We learned last week that there were certain boundaries that were taken seriously as an engaged person during these days. One of them being, when you are with the person you are engaged to, you are to be chaperoned to assure that you "behave" yourselves until you are actually married.

In our current culture, people engage in adultery like it's a normal part of life. As a woman in Mary's day, to have relations with another person during your engagement meant you were subject to be put to death for committing adultery!

Then, vs. 30, Mary is told that she's in favor with God. How can she be in favor when she will conceive a child out of wedlock? Can you imagine the thoughts that may have been racing through her head? Maybe she didn't even have time to think about how she was going to tell

Joseph and the rest of her family. We don't know how long this encounter took, but we do know that she accepted the message that was brought to her.

Talk about scandalous... Here's another amazing thing about this story. Did you know that Mary could have been as young as the age of 13? Can you imagine being given this type of message at such a young age? Mary has been told that she is going to carry the son of the Most High!

*[Personal Illustration: When I was teenager there were a lot of important things to think about, and getting a message from God was not one of them. I do remember God speaking to me about the possibility of full-time ministry in the future and I all but ignored that prompting.*

Growing up in The Salvation Army and understanding what that might look like for me, I was afraid to accept that prompting. It scared me to think about the type of commitment that would take in my life.]

Imagine how Mary felt to receive the message she did. And she accepted it!

How about you? Have you ever received a message or a calling from God before? Has He ever gently—or not so gently—nudged you to do something for the Kingdom? Were you afraid? How did you respond? I believe that Mary was scared. In fact verse 29 says she was “greatly troubled.” But, it's her response in verse 38 that is so important: “*May it be to me as you have said.*”

Now, go back to verses 31-33 when the angel is describing this child she will carry and raise. Again, **we see how amazing this story is and how Mary's reaction is a good example for us.** It's especially good for me to see Mary's initial response in vs. 34, “*How will this be?*”

She would have every reason to question the validity of this message. But her question seems to be more about understanding the process, like how this would physiologically happen, than of accepting the truth of it.

In our lives, we may believe and accept a message from God, but when we look at the circumstances around us as Mary did, the plan and promise of God may seem impossible.

**Mary was faced with a colossal task, but God understood that and offered her some reassurance that this was not going to be done on her own. Vs. 37, “Nothing is impossible with God.”**

You see, God did not simply deliver this message to Mary and then expect for her to do it on her own. That would have been impossible. There was no way she could conceive this child alone, much less the Son of God! She would need God to make happen what she could not make happen on her own.

Has God ever called you to do something that you knew you could not do without Him?

**Now, let's look at Mary's response. Vs. 38. If you really think about it, her response is pretty remarkable.** Knowing the potential for personal embarrassment and disgrace, she said, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."*

She didn't say, "It's so clear now! I get it!" or "I love this plan and I'm excited to be part of it." I think she's saying, "This doesn't make sense to me, but I will follow."

Moving on to vv. 41-45. As **Mary exercises faith from the heart**, it is when she visits her cousin Elizabeth that I believe it really comes together for her. Elizabeth's response was immediate and the knowledge, insight, and quick reaction of Elizabeth confirming what the angel said, gives Mary deeper assurance of faith and she responds with what has become known in the greater Church to be called *Magnificat* (vv.46-55).

This portion connects all that is happening to her, to the promises of the Bible over the centuries. Here she is now giving her heart joyfully. **Her reaction to this news has now involved her whole self – mind, will, and emotions.**

Her song is full of rejoicing in God and the great things He has done, in His holiness, mercy, mighty deeds, and in His help to Israel. God fills the hungry, He lifts up the humble, and He remembers to be merciful.

Mary, a girl who was no more than a young teen, near the bottom of the social ladder, knew that if she surrendered to God with the message He brought, she would probably go even lower. Yet... she did it willingly. She even asked, "How can this be so?" The angel answered, "With God nothing is impossible."

In other words, **No word from God will ever fail.** History is evidence of just how right God was. And Mary responded with a declaration that God is to be praised for what He has done and is going to do!

It's interesting that in older translations Mary's response (v. 38) translates, "Be it unto me according to thy word." Those words are almost the same exact words used when Jesus said, *"Not as I will, but as you will"* (Matthew 26:39).

How do we respond when we see God at work in us? Do we give Him the praise due Him, or do we sometimes find ways to make it about us?

Let's recognize this, that **if we commit ourselves to God, we can be assured that He is committed to us.**

**Don't underestimate what He can do in and through us when we put ourselves in His hands.** Considering Mary's response, here are a few things I would like for us to keep in mind as we close today:

1. Has God spoken to me? Has He given me a message?
2. How have I reacted to that message? Am I surprised when He speaks, or am I afraid that He may ask me to do something that I'm not comfortable with?

3. How have I responded to that message? Do I ignore it? Do I question Him? Do I thank Him in the process?

READ:

***MARY'S SONG – I AM YOUR SERVANT***

Father God, I lay before you  
My life, my heart, my being  
All that I am

**SPEND ME FOR YOUR GLORY**

My Lord, I want to bring honor  
To your name

Make me your servant  
Your willing servant  
Longing just to be with you  
To sit at your feet  
Spending my life on loving you

Make me your servant  
I am your servant  
Your willing servant  
Longing just to be with you  
To sit at your feet  
Spending my life on loving you  
I am your servant

*--Cindy Rethmeier*

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 3** (Abbreviated)  
***Mary Responds***  
**December 16, 2018**

**Title:** Mary Responds (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:** Luke 1:26-55

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Not only would Mary have been frightened just by the appearance of an angel, but the message he brought to her would have frightened and maybe even confused her even more. As a woman in Mary's day, to have relations with another person during your engagement meant you were subject to be put to death for committing adultery!

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**Now, let's look at Mary's response. Vs. 38. If you really think about it, her response is pretty remarkable.** Knowing the potential for personal embarrassment and disgrace, she said, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."* She's saying, "This doesn't make sense to me, but I will follow."

In vv. 41-45, **Mary exercises faith from the heart.** She visits her cousin Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's response was immediate. The knowledge, insight, and quick reaction of Elizabeth confirms what the angel said, giving Mary deeper assurance of faith. She responds with what has become known in the greater Church to be called *Magnificat* (vv.46-55).

This portion connects all that is happening to her to the promises of the Bible over the centuries. Here she is now giving her heart joyfully. **Her reaction to this news involves her whole self – mind, will, and emotions.** Her song is full of rejoicing in God and the great things He has done, in His holiness, mercy, mighty deeds, and in His help to Israel. God fills the hungry, He lifts up the humble, and He remembers to be merciful.

**No word from God will ever fail.** History is evidence of just how right God was. And Mary responded with a declaration that God is to be praised for what He has done and is going to do!

How do we respond when we see God at work in us? Do we give Him the praise due Him, or do we sometimes find ways to make it about us?

Let's recognize this, that **if we commit ourselves to God, we can be assured that He is committed to us.**

**Don't underestimate what He can do in and through us when we put ourselves in His hands.** Considering Mary's response, keep these things in mind:

1. Has God spoken to me? Has He given me a message?
2. How have I reacted to that message? Am I surprised when He speaks, or am I afraid that He may ask me to do something that I'm not comfortable with?
3. How have I responded to that message? Do I ignore it? Do I question Him? Do I thank Him in the process?

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 4**  
*Behold*  
**December 23, 2018**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Call to Worship:**

At Christmas pageants each year thousands of children put on bathrobes to act the part of shepherds. We are accustomed to associating shepherds with the birth of Christ, but what are they doing there? What role do they play? Why did Luke select this event out of the many others that he could have given us about the birth of Christ? He was trying to teach us something. The shepherds, like Mary, were given an angelic message. In response they listened well, overcame their fears, and went out into the world carrying the joyful news to others.

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, p. 101)

<b>SB#103 – Christians awake</b>	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-407 – Regent Square	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#108 – Hark! the herald angels sing</b>	TB-270 – same	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night</b> <b>SB#112</b>	HC-180 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#146 – Here I Am to Worship</b> <b>SB#114</b>	HC-146 TB-653 – same	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain</b> <b>SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#126 – The first Noel the angel did say</b>	TB-857 – The first Nowell	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
<b>CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high</b>	CF-17	No CD

**Children’s Moment: Good News**

**Announcements and Offering**

## *The Candle of Peace*

### **Lighting of Advent Candle**

**Reader 1:** The first Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of hope. We light it again today as we remember Jesus, who was born Christ and King and we remember that He will come again to fulfill all of God's promises to us.

[Light 1<sup>st</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 2:** The second Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of love. We light it again today as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, has come as Savior and Redeemer. The babe of Bethlehem has come out of love to bring redemption.

[Light 2<sup>nd</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 1:** Last Sunday we lit the candle of joy. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her, she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior*" (Luke 1:46-47, NKJV).

[Light 3<sup>rd</sup> (pink) candle.]

**Reader 2:** The fourth candle of Advent is the candle of peace, represented by the angel, who proclaimed peace to the shepherds. *Peace* is a word that we hear a lot. It is one of the things that we hope for. Christ brought peace when He first came to us, and He will bring everlasting peace when He comes again.

**Reader 1:** As Christians we should be fanning out into the world being peacemakers, agents of reconciliation among the races and classes, among the members of families, and between neighbor and neighbor.

**Reader 2:** Christmas means that, through the grace of God and the incarnation, peace with God is available; and if you make peace with God, then you can go out and make peace with everyone else. The more people who embrace the Gospel and do that, the better off the world will be. Christmas, therefore, means the increase of peace—both with God and between people—across the face of the world.

[Light 4<sup>th</sup> (purple) candle]

**Reader 1:** Today we light the candle of peace and we join the chorus of angels as they sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14, NIV).

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 110-111)

<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-407 – Regent Square	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#108 – Hark! the herald angels sing</b>	TB-270 – same	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night</b> <b>SB#112</b>	HC-280 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20
<b>HC#146 – Here I Am to Worship</b> <b>SB#114</b>	HC-146 TB-653 – same	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain</b> <b>SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)
<b>SB#126 – The first Noel the angel did say</b>	TB-857 – The first Nowell	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
<b>CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high</b>	CF-17	No CD
<b>SB#111 – It came upon the midnight clear</b>	TB-133 – same	HTD9-T7 (3 vs.)

### ***Behold!***

#### **Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** The Gospel of Luke overflows with the worship of God. Today we read Luke 2, the story of the shepherds and how they respond to the birth of the Savior.

**All:** <sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

**Leader:** The shepherds experienced terror before the angels, but the angel has an astonishing message: “You won’t have to be afraid anymore if you *look* at what I am showing you.” The fear that inhabits the deep place in our souls can be dispelled for good. How? The angels say, fear not—but look!

**All:** <sup>10</sup> ...“Do not be afraid. Behold, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

**Leader:** The angel literally says, “Do not be fearing. *Be perceiving.* For I am telling you the Gospel.” If you take time to comprehend what is in the Gospel message, it will remove the fear that has dominated and darkened your life.

**All:** <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

**Leader:** What is this Gospel, this good news, at which we must gaze? *A Savior is born.* The answer is that the little baby in the manger is the mighty *Christ the Lord.*

**All:** <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**Leader:** In the Bible, peace does not mean a general peacefulness with prosperity, and a trouble-free life. “Peace” means the end of hostility and warfare but the most fundamental and important peace is *peace with God.* There is no peace on earth because there is no peace with God.

**All:** <sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

**Leader:** <sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

**All:** <sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

**Leader:** The shepherds heard about Jesus from the angels and went to see him for themselves. Then the shepherds “spread the word.” They conveyed to others what the angels had told them and added their own eyewitness testimony to the message. The text gives us guidance about how to spiritually hear well. It shows us something to beware of and something to do.

**All:** <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

**Leader:** Mary not only pondered but also “treasured” what she heard. Mary doesn’t just try to understand the Word of God, she takes it all the way inside to relish and experience it. If you don’t do both of these things—ponder and treasure the Word of God—you will not truly hear the message. Your ears will hear it but not your mind and heart. It won’t sink in, comfort, convict, or change you.

**All:** <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

**Leader:** *Behold!* Look! Won’t you trust somebody who did all that for you? Look at Christmas. Look at what he did.

(Luke 2:8-20, NIV;  
adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 101-102, 107-109, 113-115)

<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#10 – The Light Has Come SB#133</b>	HC-10 TB-859 – same	HCD1A-T20
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave Thy throne</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#158 – Who is He in yonder stall</b>	TB-287 – Who is He?	HTD10-T19 (6 vs.)
<b>SB#122 – See, amid the winter’s snow</b>	TB-259 – same	HTD10-T12 (4 vs.)

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Message – Behold**

<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone SB#861</b>	HC-149 TB-132 – same	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave Thy throne</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10-T6 (4 vs.)

**Benediction**

<b>Drama – Telling the News</b>
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<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell It on the Mountain</b> <b>SB#106</b>	HC-260 TB-631 – same	HCD24-T20 HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus</b> <b>SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#180 – A Starry Night</b> <b>SB#112</b>	HC-280 TB-535 – same	HCD16-T20

KELLER, TIMOTHY. *HIDDEN CHRISTMAS : the Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ*. PENGUIN BOOKS, 2018.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 4**  
**Children’s Moment**  
**December 23, 2018**

***Good News***  
**By Martyn Scott Thomas**

*[The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit around his chair.]*

**Narrator:** Today is the fourth week of Advent – the four weeks before Christmas. Last week, we talked about Mary and obedience. This week we’re going to talk about good news.

Who has ever gotten some good news? What was it? Did you tell other people about it? *[allow children to answer]* Those are all good answers.

In the Christmas story, the shepherds were the first to hear the good news about Jesus’s birth. The angels appeared to them while they were watching their sheep and told them that baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that he would be the Savior of the world.

The shepherds then went to the manger and found baby Jesus. Everything was just as the angels had told them. But that’s not the end of the story. Do you know what the shepherds did next? *[allow children to answer]* That’s right. They ran off and they told everybody the good news about Jesus.

And that’s still not the end of the story because for the last 2,000 years, people that knew about Jesus told people that didn’t know Jesus the good news about him. And because of that, now you’ve heard about Jesus. So what do you think should happen now? *[allow children to answer]* Now, you need to tell someone else the good news of Jesus. Do you think you can do that? I know you can.

Let’s pray. Dear Jesus, thank you for the good news about Jesus’s birth. Thank you that he is the Savior of the world. Help us to share that good news with everybody we know. Amen.

This is our last week together for this Christmas season. I hope we can do this again soon. *[dismiss the children]*

<b>Advent 2018 Week #4</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>Telling the News</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Topic:</b>	Christmas
<b>Scripture:</b>	Luke 2:8-20
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Two shepherds tell of their visit to the stable.
<b>Characters:</b>	Simeon – a shepherd Jesse – a shepherd
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Biblical or modern dress. Shepherd’s crooks ( <i>optional</i> ).
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage. A manger can be placed center stage.
<b>Running time:</b>	2 minutes

[*Simeon and Jesse enter running around the room.*]

**Simeon and Jesse:** The Messiah has been born! A Savior for us all! A baby in a manger! You have to see this! [*etc.*]

**Simeon:** [*to center stage, excited*] We have good news for everyone. We didn’t believe it at first, but we’ve seen it with our own eyes.

**Jesse:** [*to center stage, excited*] A Savior has been born for us all – God’s only son! Angels came to us out in the fields and they told us all about him. They told us we would find a baby lying in a manger – and we did!

**Simeon:** And the best part is that it’s for everyone. God sent his son for all of us. And I’ve seen him with my own eyes. [*emphasizing*] I’ve seen him with my own eyes.

**Jesse:** I can’t wait to tell my family. I can’t wait to tell my friends. I can’t wait to tell everybody. But don’t just believe me. Come see for yourselves. [*screaming*] Our Savior has come!

**Simeon:** We need to tell everyone.

**Simeon and Jesse:** [*running off*] The Messiah has been born! A Savior for us all! A baby in a manger! You have to see this! [*etc.*]

[*Blackout*]

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 4**  
***Behold***  
**December 23, 2018**

**Title:**       **Prophecy & Peace Fulfilled** (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:**   **Luke 2:21-35**

Imagine a craftsperson working on a beautiful stained glass window. First, they carefully set the lead into the window to be the framework for the beautiful glass they are staining. Then, where there used to be a plain window, now there is a splash of color and shape, telling a story and making the window sparkle.

Similarly, in our text today, Luke has been sketching the outline of a picture. He has placed the lead around the window and is ready to use color to fill it in. He is going to tell the story of Christ. **The picture is that of Jesus Christ as the true ruler of the world, the Messiah, the Savior, the real King.**

But instead of painting a picture of world dominion, power and majesty like the rulers of his day, Luke chooses colors that are different. The picture he paints is different than what people would have been expecting. It is certainly what God had promised, but it looks different. It is essentially a story told of man waiting for God to comfort Israel and to bring peace into the world, and that will ultimately happen through the suffering of the Messiah.

As we look at the end of Luke 2 today I want us to consider a few things:

- **First, do we hear the Holy Spirit when He speaks to us and what is our response to that?**
- **Second, as we understand the work of Christ in our lives, His redemption and peace, how can we live out the peace that Christ offers to everyone around us?**

Luke 2 is the announcement of the birth of Jesus and the presentation of a Savior to the world. The creator of the universe, God Himself, has stepped out of eternity and entered humanity. The Lamb who was promised has now been provided.

The text also takes us to Jerusalem for an event that happened 8 days after the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Verse 21. Jesus is named. The custom of the day was to name children after significant circumstances surrounding their birth, or for anticipated things they would accomplish through their lives. We know that God already chose the name Jesus. This name was a promise of the contribution Jesus would make through His life, death, and resurrection. Jesus, Savior, would take away the sins of the world.

Verse 22. It was also customary, according to Exodus 13, that all firstborn males be presented to God for consecration as a reminder of the deliverance He provided Israel from Egyptian bondage. It is in this same Spirit that today we still bring our children in Dedication before the Lord. In the presentation of our children to the Lord we declare that they belong to God and that

we are stewards of their lives. In this, we seek the assistance of God and His people as we raise our children up in the Lord.

Moving on to Luke 2:25, we are introduced to “*Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*” **Simeon is waiting for God to comfort Israel. Here, waiting suggests patient anticipation and faithful longing.** Simeon felt the pain of the people and longed for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1-2). Simeon longs for that comfort and atonement for the sins of his nation.

**It also says that Simeon was “moved by the Spirit” (Luke 2:27) as he was given a special insight by the Spirit** so that he would recognize the “Christ.” **Simeon’s relationship with God was such that he was aware of the Holy Spirit speaking to him.** The desire of our hearts should be to have that kind of intimacy with God. Is our relationship with God intimate enough that we can hear and understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us?

In Simeon’s case, it was important for the Dedication of the Savior of the world back to God the Father. What might God be preparing us for? There may be something incredibly important that He wants us to be ready to do. Are we listening?

Verses 29-32 are referred to as Simeon’s “song” and is the last of four nativity songs (joining Mary, Zechariah, and the angels). Here we see that **Simeon’s first words were to declare the faithfulness and sovereignty of God.** The Holy Spirit promised that Zechariah would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ (v. 26). Having seen and blessed Him now, Simeon’s hope is satisfied. In those days, some would only hope that they would experience the coming of the Messiah. Simeon had the promise from God that he would see Him in his lifetime. God always fulfills His promises. Amen!

Then, in verses 31-32, Simeon recognizes the accessibility of ALL people to God’s salvation when he says that Jesus would be a “*light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*” **You see, contrary to what many Jews believed, Jesus came to provide atonement for all people, Jews and Gentiles.** This is another way that Luke’s painting might look different than expected. He makes sure to add this variety in order to display the colors most effectively in His story.

As followers of Christ, we understand that He brings us salvation and peace, but do we always live like He has promised that to all people? Even those who we don’t think He can save? Simeon is making a very bold statement when he says this. Are we bold in sharing the Savior of the world to those around us?

Verse 33 says that Mary and Joseph “*marveled at what was said about Jesus.*” What they may not have understood about their Son is now revealed in verse 34: “*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.*” Similar to Peter’s words in 1 Peter 2:7-8, “A

*stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.*” A person’s eternal destiny will be determined by their acceptance or rejection of Jesus.

Then there is a prophetic word to Mary (verse 35): “*A sword will pierce your own soul too.*” Think back to the annunciation from the angel to Mary. There was nothing said about Jesus having to die to be the Savior. Now she’s receiving this news? Mary, Joseph and Simeon, and as we see further down with Anna, have all been living in a world of patient hope where suffering has become a way of life. Now it is shared that God’s appointed Redeemer will deal with this suffering by sharing it Himself.

This is what happens when the Kingdom of God collides with the kingdom of the world. Here, in Luke, we are invited to watch these prophecies come true as he continues to paint the picture of a Messiah who has come to be the Savior of the world. Mary will live to look on in dismay as her Son is rejected by the same place He promises the way of peace to and by the very people He had come to save.

Now we see that the picture takes on a different color as **we learn about the suffering that Christ will endure in order to accomplish the peace He came to bring.** Praise God that this picture is complete and can be lived out in our lives! Do you know the Savior who has brought peace to the entire world? If you do, are you in tune with His Spirit so that you are able to listen to His direction in your life? He may have something important to tell you. How about sharing that peace with others? Do we really believe that knowing Jesus is for everyone, or just those who are “good enough” to accept His love in their lives?

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 4** (Abbreviated)  
***Behold***  
**December 23, 2018**

**Title:**       **Prophecy & Peace Fulfilled** (by Captain Kristina Sjogren)  
**Scripture:**   **Luke 2:21-35**

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He brings us salvation and peace, but do we always live like He has promised that to all people? Even those who we don’t think He can save? Simeon is making a very bold statement when he says this. Are we bold in sharing the Savior of the world to those around us?

Mary and Joseph “*marveled at what was said about Jesus*” (v. 33). What they may not have understood about their Son is now revealed in verse 34: “*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.*” Similar to Peter’s words in 1 Peter 2:7-8, “*A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.*” A person’s eternal destiny will be determined by their acceptance or rejection of Jesus.

Then a prophetic word to Mary (v. 35): “*A sword will pierce your own soul too.*” Think back to the annunciation from the angel to Mary. There was nothing said about Jesus having to die to be the Savior. Now she’s receiving this news? Mary, Joseph and Simeon, and as we see further down with Anna, have all been living in a world of patient hope where suffering has become a way of life. Now it is shared that God’s appointed Redeemer will deal with this suffering by sharing it Himself.

This is what happens when the Kingdom of God collides with the kingdom of the world. Here, in Luke, we are invited to watch these prophecies come true as he continues to paint the picture of a Messiah who has come to be the Savior of the world. Mary will live to look on in dismay as her Son is rejected by the same place He promises the way of peace to and by the very people He had come to save.

Now we see that the picture takes on a different color as **we learn about the suffering that Christ will endure in order to accomplish the peace He came to bring.** Praise God that this picture is complete and can be lived out in our lives! Do you know the Savior who has brought peace to the entire world? If you do, are you in tune with His Spirit so that you are able to listen to His direction in your life? He may have something important to tell you. How about sharing that peace with others? Do we really believe that knowing Jesus is for everyone, or just those who are “good enough” to accept His love in their lives?

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Week 5**  
***The Doctrine of Christmas***  
**December 30, 2018**

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

*[One of the goals of this service is to invite kettle workers and social service volunteers to a Sunday morning service at The Salvation Army. During the service there are many opportunities for them to take part. The use of the word ‘volunteer’ below is used to refer to one of these individuals, not a volunteer from the congregation.]*

***Because Christmas Really Happened***

**Call to Worship:**

Over the years, people have said: “I don’t know what I believe about Jesus. I don’t know if I believe in the incarnation or all these doctrines. All that matters is that you live a good life.” This is called the doctrine of salvation by your works rather than by grace. It assumes that you are not so bad that you need a Savior; that you are not so weak that you can’t pull yourself together and live as you should. Therefore, the message of Christmas is all wrong.

There is another possibility, however. You can believe in the truth of Christmas...that you are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. If we are saved through *our* efforts, then stories about Jesus have just one function: to inspire us to imitate Him and follow His example. It doesn’t matter if the stories are fiction or not. What’s important is that they give us examples to live by. But if we are saved by grace, not by what *we* do but by what *Christ* has done, then it is crucial that the great events of the Gospels—the incarnation, the atonement on the cross, and the resurrection from the dead—actually occurred in time and space... Christmas really happened!

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 130-132)

<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b> <b>SB#861</b>	HC-149 TB-132 – same	HCD13-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful</b> <b>SB#39</b>	HC-121 TB-367 – Europe	HCD11-T11 HTD3-T11 (4 vs.)
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b> <b>SB#73</b>	HC-141 TB-306 – Coronation	HCD13-T11 HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)

**Announcements and Offering**

## Recognition of Volunteers

[Invite kettle workers, social service volunteers to stand.]

### *Salvation Is by Grace*

**Leader:** When we think about Christmas, we generally turn to passages in the Bible that give us accounts of Jesus' birth. We want to hear about the angels, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men. In the beginning of the book of John there is no recounting of these events, but he gives us a wonderfully concise explanation of what the nativity means.

**All:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1, NIV)

**Leader:** Christmas means that *salvation is by grace*. Of course we have seen this before, but notice how John explains it here. In chapter 1 of the Gospel of John Jesus is called "the Word." In 1 John 1:1 he is called "the Word of life," and then Jesus is called "eternal life" in verse 2.

**All:** *<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. (1 John 1:1-2, NIV)*

**Leader:** When John says, "Eternal life...was with the Father and has appeared to us," he is referring to Jesus Christ himself. This is a startling statement, but the point is clear. We are not being told merely that Jesus Christ has eternal life or even that he gives it. This verse says he *is* eternal life, salvation itself. Then in verses 3 and 4 he moves on to describe the goal of that proclamation.

**All:** *<sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete. (1 John 1:3-4, NIV)*

**Leader:** John is saying, "This is not just a set of nice stories. Many others and I were eyewitnesses. We testify to it. We really saw him. He really lived; he really died; he really rose from the dead." If Christmas is just a nice legend, in a sense you are on your own. But if Christmas is true—and John says that it absolutely is true—then you can be saved by grace.

(Adapted from *Hidden Christmas*, pp. 129-133)

HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		

<b>HC#5 – There Is a Redeemer SB#204</b>	HC-5 TB-881 – same	HCD1A-T15
<b>HC#10 – The Light Has Come SB#133</b>	HC-10 TB-859 – same	HCD1A-T20
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#247 – Still, My Soul, Be Still</b>	HC-247	HCD23-T17

**Reading:**

*[Ask a volunteer to read the following prayer.]*

We praise You, O God, that You sent Your Son Jesus to save us. You do not deliver us into the hands of the enemy when we sin; rather, You make a way to restore us into relationship with Yourself. You do not abandon us even though we stray from you; instead, You rescue us, redeem us, forgive us and guide our feet into the path of peace. Amen.

*(The NIV Worship Bible, p. 1373)*

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Moment of Sharing:**

*[Invite a Christmas Volunteer to share their Christmas stories.]*

***So We Can Have Joy***

**Testimony:**

*[Have someone from the congregation share their story of faith starting with the following reading below...]*

Christmas means joy—“glad tidings of great joy.” In verse 4 of our scripture today, John is saying, “My joy will not be complete until you have the same joy in fellowship with God that we do.”

*[...continue testimony on this theme...]*

<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19

<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16

### Intercessory Prayers

[Give volunteers an opportunity for prayer requests. Congregation then prays for their requests.]

### Message – Christmas Is...

<b>HC#139 – There Is a Message SB#439</b>	HC-139 TB-879 – same	HCD12-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#89 – Knowing You SB#565</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for Us SB#32</b>	HC-127  TB-663 – same	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>HC#179 – Come to Jesus</b>	HC-179	HCD16-T19
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16

### Benediction

<b>HC#161 – My Great Redeemer’s Praise SB#89</b>	HC-161 TB-75 – Grimsby	HCD15-T11
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus SB#77</b>	HC-151 TB-206 – Ascalon	HCD14-T11 HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns SB#358</b>	HC-241 TB-162 – Diademata	HCD23-T11 HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 5**  
***The Doctrine of Christmas***  
**December 30, 2018**

**Title:** Christmas Is... (by Captain Michael Sjogren)  
**Scripture:** 1 John 1:1-4

Christmas is about Life, Fellowship and Joy. How do we know this? Because Jesus is Life, Fellowship and Joy. And how do we know this? I pray it's each of our testimonies today in that we have personally experienced this reality. But we also find these certainties in the portion of scripture that we will be focusing on this morning.

Turn with me to 1 John 1:1-4. Now I am aware that this portion is not the usual “go to” as a Christmas text. We have been searching through the traditional advent scriptures over these past few weeks found in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. And we've been challenged and blessed through them.

Even though this beautiful portion of scripture given to us by the Apostle John may not give us a description of Jesus' birth; it does however give an amazing and wonderfully concise enlightenment of what the nativity means for all of us. [*Read 1 John 1:1-4 with pauses*]

*<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete.*

What a rich and powerful portion of scripture! **One of the first things we see clearly is that Jesus is life.** In fact, John refers to Jesus as “the Word of life” in verse one. This is a very similar reference of Jesus that John makes at the beginning of his Gospel writing. “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*” (John 1:1).

This awareness of Jesus as the Word even goes back to the creation portion found in Genesis, where God spoke things into existence. So we can connect that the Word of the Creator is Jesus Himself. This fits right in with verse 2 when John says that Jesus is eternal life.

Jesus has always been and always will be. We are not being told merely that Jesus Christ has eternal life or even that He gives eternal life. This verse says Jesus is eternal life; salvation itself.

And this is the message that is concealed in every Christmas scripture passage. It's interesting to note that with every other religion on earth the founder points to eternal life, but because Jesus is God who has come in the flesh, He is eternal life—period.

N.T. Wright says, “Life itself had come to life, had taken the form of a human being, coming into the present from God’s future, coming to display God’s coming age.”

You see Christmas is a message, a Word of life, not death; it is a Word of hope, not despair; it is a Word of anticipation, not regret; it is a Word that keeps us up and going, not down and out.

God has given the world His Word, and His Word is holy and trustworthy. The Word is a boundless Word, because the Word is Christ Jesus, and Christ is life and He offers each of us life; He offers us Himself. It is by faith that we receive the Word and we truly live.

So have you received the gift of Life? I pray you have. I pray this morning that you have the peace and assurance of life because Christ is your Savior. You have heard the “Good News” of Christmas and have received the gift of God’s Son, our Messiah. Amen and Amen!

Let me now jump back to the beginning of verse one. John tells us as the reader that this eternal Word, this eternal Life which was from the beginning has been heard, seen, and touched. This is very personal, John tells us. We knew this man; we were his friends.

We ate with him, we learned from his teachings, we saw his miracles. This eternal life became personal; we fellowshiped with Him. This is the second aspect of what Christmas is about that I want to look at with you this morning. **Christmas is Life and Christmas is Fellowship. Fellowship with God.**

We are all familiar with the words in Charles Wesley’s Christmas hymn (SASB#108, v.2):

*Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;  
Hail the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel.*

Let’s consider this, remember in the Old Testament (in the book of Exodus) when Moses asked God to show his glory so that Moses could see God? God responded to Moses saying it was not possible. Exodus 33:20 – “*You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.*”

Yet in the Gospel of John 1:14 we are told that “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only.*”

Charles Wesley didn’t write “Veiled in flesh the Godhead hidden”—no!—“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see.” It is through the person of Jesus Christ that we see the glory of God and it is through Jesus Christ that we know God personally; we have fellowship with Him.

Things changed considerably from the time of Moses to John. We can know the glories of God from the Old Testament but in Jesus Christ these glories come near and become personal. Christmas and the incarnation mean that God went to infinite lengths to make himself known; to be in fellowship with us. Life brings fellowship, yes! Salvation brings fellowship with God and with one another in the faith.

*“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).*

Jesus is clearly the life-in-person of our eternal God. Jesus is both the life of God himself and the gift of life from God to the world. The earliest Christians quickly took up the terms “Father” and “Son” as the simplest and clearest way of stating this reality. With God as Father and Jesus as Son there is a common life, a profound sharing of inner reality and true, deep Fellowship.

But here’s the extended beauty, this fellowship doesn’t stop with Father and Son. It has been extended to us all and John is proclaiming this new reality to us. This fellowship extends to all who came to know, love and trust Jesus while he walked the earth in humanity.

And now, John continues to tell us, this fellowship is open to *all of us* as well. Those who are alive after Christ’s death and resurrection. We didn’t have the chance to meet Jesus during his time on “public display” but this fellowship is extended to anyone and everyone who hears the announcement about Jesus, the story of Christmas.

We also can come into fellowship with those who did see, hear and touch Jesus. And, in turn, we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son and it’s in the fellowship of Father and Son that we see the perfect model of what true fellowship is.

God has spoken through Jesus and God now speaks through the words which Jesus’ friends heard and wrote down. Now today we also hear from God through fellowship with one another. Those who share the same hope and intention as we do; those who have life in Christ.

It’s in Christian fellowship, in Christian community that we demonstrate our faith and love for Christ. It’s in this community that our Christian character is built and developed.

**Which brings us to the third aspect of what Christmas is, because it’s from fellowship with God through Jesus Christ and with one another that we experience true joy. Christmas is Joy.**

*[Personal Illustration:* To expound on this last point, I want to share with you a testimony that one of our bell ringers communicated to me recently. Her name is Pattie and I was really encouraged by her story. Pattie started ringing bells a few weeks into the kettle season. She has been going through a very difficult season in her life that brought a lot of anger and disappointment.

Pattie is Catholic and goes to Mass every day to pray and seek the Lord. A few weeks ago she prayed specifically that God would show her a sign that would lead her to a fresh perspective and bring joy back into her life.

After she made this prayer, she left the church which is down the block from us and passed our building. In our front yard is a sign that says “Part Time Seasonal Positions Available,” so she entered the building to find out what that meant. In discovering it was for bell ringing, she politely said thank you and left, not considering that this would be a job she would like to do.

The next morning, she went to Mass to pray again and asked God for a sign. Well, in her heart she felt God saying, “I already did.” Pattie thought, no it couldn’t be the literal sign in The Salvation Army’s front lawn, could it?

In an act of faith, she ended up coming back to the corps and filled out an application—hesitantly, I may add—and out to the kettles she went.

Now one thing I need to share is that Pattie is fairly well-off with her resources. She’s been successful in her career and found it “odd” to be working at a kettle site. But she really sensed that God was leading her to it. I will note that we did find a check in the kettle for the same amount she would have been paid for that night on one occasion or two, and the check did have her name on it.

Well long testimony short, Pattie has had a fresh change of perspective in her life and in her faith. Her time ringing at the kettle has allowed her to focus elsewhere, on others, and to gain a positive view of life again. Her time with the other bell ringers, drivers, and corps people has made an impact on her. Yes, she has experienced Joy in her life once again! Did anyone ever think that kettles could do that? Praise the Lord!]

John says in 1 John 1:4, “*We write this to make our joy complete.*” Christmas means Joy—“Glad tidings of great joy!” The idea of Joy for believers is important to John. In chapter 16 of his Gospel he tells us that Jesus promised his followers joy; joy that would be unshakable because the full measure of Christ’s own joy will be reproduced in us. How amazing is that?!

Joy is the result of our life in Christ and our fellowship with Him and with one another. Joy is a reward of right relationships.

When we have this joy we do experience happiness, but this joy is not in response to our circumstances; it’s in response to our relationship in Christ. It’s what keeps us upright when we experience the negative, even cruel, circumstances the world can present. This joy is kind of like the ballast that keeps a ship at sea stable and upright through all conditions.

In considering this joy, I was reminded of a scene in the final “Lord of the Rings” where there is a moment when the future looks completely bleak. At this moment the wizard Gandalf seems to be crushed under the weight of the world. Then suddenly, out of nowhere he laughs, and it is revealed that despite all the “care and sorrow” he is experiencing, underneath it all there is “a great joy, a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.”

The joy that Christmas brings, the assurance of God’s love and care, is like an underground river of joy, a fountain of mirth, that can and will always revive and strengthen you, no matter the circumstance.

We find life in the one who is life—eternal life. Then fellowship and joy grow in us over the years through common practices and experiences, even though not every day is a mountaintop experience in our faith, right?

Our lives will grow and be enriched by daily spiritual disciplines and practices—like daily obedience, reading, prayer, worship, serving our brothers and sisters and our neighbors in Christ’s name, and by depending on Jesus through times of suffering. Bit by bit our faith will grow, and the foundation of our lives will come closer to that deep river of joy.

*How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

(Phillips Brooks, SASB#118, v. 3)

Is this your personal Christmas reality this morning? Have you received the gift of life? Are you experiencing the fellowship that can only be found in Christ? Have you found true and deep joy in knowing Him?

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 5** (Abbreviated)  
***The Doctrine of Christmas***  
**December 30, 2018**

**Title:** Christmas Is... (by Captain Michael Sjogren)  
**Scripture:** 1 John 1:1-4

Christmas is about Life, Fellowship and Joy. How do we know this? Because Jesus is Life, Fellowship and Joy. We can find these certainties in the portion of scripture that we will be focusing on this morning. Turn to 1 John 1:1-4.

*<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete.*

**I. One of the first things we see clearly is that Jesus is life.** John refers to Jesus as “the Word of life” (v. 1). This is a very similar reference of Jesus that John makes at the beginning of his Gospel writing. “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*” (John 1:1).

This awareness of Jesus as the Word even goes back to the creation portion found in Genesis, where God spoke things into existence. We can connect that the Word of the Creator is Jesus Himself. This fits right in with verse 2 when John says that Jesus is eternal life.

You see Christmas is a message, a Word of life, not death; it is a Word of hope, not despair; it is a Word of anticipation, not regret; it is a Word that keeps us up and going, not down and out.

God has given the world His Word, and His Word is holy and trustworthy. The Word is a boundless Word, because the Word is Christ Jesus, and Christ is life and He offers each of us life; He offers us Himself. It is by faith that we receive the Word and we truly live.

So have you received the gift of Life? I pray you have. I pray this morning that you have the peace and assurance of life because Christ is your Savior. You have heard the “Good News” of Christmas and have received the gift of God’s Son, our Messiah.

**II.** John tells us that this eternal Word, this eternal Life which was from the beginning has been heard, seen, and touched. We ate with him, we learned from his teachings, we saw his miracles. This eternal life became personal; we fellowshiped with Him. This is the second aspect of what Christmas is about. **Christmas is Life and Christmas is Fellowship. Fellowship with God.**

In the Gospel of John 1:14 we are told that *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only.”* It is through the person of Jesus Christ that we see the glory of God and it is through Jesus Christ that we know God personally; we have fellowship with Him.

Things changed considerably from the time of Moses to John. We can know the glories of God from the Old Testament but in Jesus Christ these glories come near and become personal. Christmas and the incarnation mean that God went to infinite lengths to make himself known; to be in fellowship with us. Life brings fellowship, yes! Salvation brings fellowship with God and with one another in the faith.

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But here’s the extended beauty, this fellowship doesn’t stop with Father and Son. It has been extended to us all and John is proclaiming this new reality to us. This fellowship extends to all who came to know, love and trust Jesus while he walked the earth in humanity.

And now, John continues to tell us, this fellowship is open to *all of us* as well. Those who are alive after Christ’s death and resurrection. We didn’t have the chance to meet Jesus during his time on “public display” but this fellowship is extended to anyone and everyone who hears the announcement about Jesus, the story of Christmas.

It’s in Christian fellowship, in Christian community that we demonstrate our faith and love for Christ. It’s in this community that our Christian character is built and developed.

**III.** Which brings us to the third aspect of what Christmas is, because **it’s from fellowship with God through Jesus Christ and with one another that we experience true joy. Christmas is Joy.**

John says in 1 John 1:4, *“We write this to make our joy complete.”* Christmas means Joy—“Glad tidings of great joy!” In chapter 16 of his Gospel, John tells us that Jesus promised his followers joy; joy that would be unshakable because the full measure of Christ’s own joy will be reproduced in us.

Joy is the result of our life in Christ and our fellowship with Him and with one another. Joy is a reward of right relationships.

When we have this joy we do experience happiness, but this joy is not in response to our circumstances; it’s in response to our relationship in Christ. It’s what keeps us upright when we experience the negative, even cruel, circumstances the world can present.

We find life in the one who is life—eternal life. Then fellowship and joy grow in us over the years through common practices and experiences, even though not every day is a mountaintop experience in our faith.

Our lives will grow and be enriched by daily spiritual disciplines and practices—like daily obedience, reading, prayer, worship, serving our brothers and sisters and our neighbors in Christ’s name, and by depending on Jesus through times of suffering. Bit by bit our faith will grow, and the foundation of our lives will come closer to that deep river of joy.

Is this your personal Christmas reality this morning? Have you received the gift of life? Are you experiencing the fellowship that can only be found in Christ? Have you found true and deep joy in knowing Him?

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Christmas Eve**  
***A Light Has Dawned***  
**December 24, 2018**

[Pass out candles to congregation as they enter for worship.]

**Call to Worship**

Rejoice, for God is with us—Immanuel. In the darkness of our world shines God's holy light. Now there is reason to hope, to love, to laugh, to live. God is truly with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
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**Prayer**

Gracious God,  
With joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people.  
We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth.  
In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts  
that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time.  
Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world.  
Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts,  
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors.”  
This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

[All lights are dimmed — DARKNESS except for Christmas tree and/or a few candles around the room.]

***The Prophecy of the Messiah***

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; John 1:1-2, 4-5

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.  
<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne

and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, NIV)

<sup>1</sup>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>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. (John 1:1-2, 4-5, NIV)

### ***The Procession of Light***

[*The Christ candle (white) is carried slowly from the back to the front of the platform during the song, "O Come, O come Immanuel." At the end of the song it may be placed in the advent wreath or prominent location.*]

SB#117 – O come, Immanuel	TB-444 – same	HTD11-T8 (3 vs.)
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### ***The Coming of Jesus Is Announced to Mary and Joseph***

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25

**Reader 1:** <sup>26</sup>In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

<sup>29</sup>Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

<sup>34</sup>“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

<sup>35</sup>The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For no word from God will ever fail.”

<sup>38</sup>“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38, NIV)

**Reader 2:** <sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to

be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25, NIV)

<b>HC#45 – While We Are Waiting, Come</b>	HC-45	HCD3-T15
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### *The Preparations for the Birth of Jesus*

Luke 2:1-5

**Reader 1:** <sup>1</sup>In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (Luke 2:1-5, NIV)

<b>SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem</b>	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.)
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### *Jesus Is Born*

Luke 2:6-7

**Reader 1:** <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:6-7, NIV)

<b>SB#102 – Away in a manger</b>	TB-497 – same	HTD6-T3 (3 vs.)
	TB-511 – The manger scene	HTD6-T14 (3 vs.)

Additional Optional Songs		
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19

### *Jesus' Birth Is Announced to the Shepherds*

Luke 2:8-14

**Leader:** <sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to 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. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:8-14, NIV)

### *The Shepherds Find the Baby Jesus*

Luke 2:15-18

**Reader 2:** <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. (Luke 2:15-18, NIV)

SB#126 – The first Noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The first Nowell	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#111 – It came upon the midnight clear	TB-133 – same	HTD9-T7 (3 vs.)

### *The Wise Men Bring Their Gifts to Jesus*

Matthew 2:1-11

**Reader 1:** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.  
<sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
 are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
 for out of you will come a ruler  
 who will shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1-11, NIV)

***We Offer Our Gifts to God***  
**Offering**

<b>Offertory – Sing:</b> <b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b> <b>SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
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**Devotional – The Dawning of the Light**

***Pass the Light of Christ***

*[Ushers light their candles from the Christ Candle and proceed into the congregation. As the usher lights the candles at the end of the aisles, he says "Behold the light of the world!" Members of the congregation then say to each other as they pass the light down each row, "Behold the light of the world!"]*

*[When all the candles have been lit, begin reading below.]*

**Leader:** Jesus spoke, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12, NASB)

<b>SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!</b>	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
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*[Reading below should be on the screen as well as the bulletin.]*

**Leader:** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**People:** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Leader:** Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined.

**People:** We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

**Leader:** For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

**People:** In him was life, and the life was the light of man.

*[Lights in the sanctuary are lit, and the congregation extinguishes their candles.]*

**Prayer:**

Merciful God, we confess that often we find darkness more comfortable than light.

Forgive us...break us...bend us...remake us.

Give us the courage to lay ourselves open to the wonder and healing of your coming.

Be born again into our world; be born again into our hearts and lives.

Hear now our silent and personal confessions as we prepare ourselves for your nativity.

*[Pause]*

The true light that enlightens all has come into the world.

That light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out.

This is the good news: God has heard our confession. God has forgiven our sin.

Thanks be to God!

<b>HC#99 – Shine, Jesus, shine SB#261</b>	HC-99 TB-822 – same	HCD8-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13

**Benediction**

**Leader:** May the light of this child light your way forever. May the blessings which broke through the darkness on this night be yours always. May you always have cause to sing praises, give thanks, and celebrate the true light of the world, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Go in Joy! Fear the darkness no more!

**People:** Thanks be to God!

## Vocal Benediction

<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b> (vs. 1 only)	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
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***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Devotional – Christmas Eve**  
***A Light Has Dawned***  
**December 24, 2018**

***The Dawning of the Light***  
by Timothy Keller  
“Hidden Christmas,” Chapter 1 (pp. 12-15)

**Text: Isaiah 9:2-7 (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian’s defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup>Every warrior’s boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,

will be fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his  
shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and  
peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

God alone has the life, truth, and joy that we lack and cannot generate ourselves. How can this divine light “dawn” or, as Isaiah 9 says, literally “*flash*” upon us? Verses 6 and 7, the most well-known verses of the chapter, answer with stunning directness. The text tells us the light has come “*for to us a child is born.*” This child brings it, because he is “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” It is remarkable that the four titles applied to this child belong to God alone. He is the Mighty God. He is the Everlasting Father, which means he is the Creator, and yet he is *born*. There’s nothing like this claim in any of the other major religions. He is a human being. However, he is not just some king of avatar of the divine principle. He is God!

It’s almost too limiting to say that we “celebrate” this at Christmas. We stare dumbstruck, lost in wonder, love, and praise. But what are the implications of God being born into our world? Here are just a couple.

First of all, if Jesus Christ is really Mighty God and Everlasting Father, you can’t just *like* him.

In the Bible the people who actually saw and heard Jesus never reacted indifferently or even mildly. Once they realized what he was claiming about himself, either they were scared of him or furious with him or they knelt down before him and worshipped him. But nobody simply liked him. Nobody said, “He is so inspiring. He makes me want to live a better life.” If the baby born at Christmas is the Mighty God, then you must serve him completely.

Second, if Jesus is Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace, you should *want* to serve him. Why is he called a “counselor”? When you are going through something very difficult, it’s good to talk to someone who has walked the same path, who knows personally what you have been going through. If God has really been born in a manger, then we have something that no other religion even claims to have. It’s a God who truly understands you, from the inside of your experience. There’s no other religion that says God has suffered, that God had to be courageous, that he knows what it is like to be abandoned by friends, to be crushed by injustice, to be tortured and die. Christmas shows he knows what you’re going through. When you talk to him, he understands.

Dorothy Sayers, a British essayist and novelist, said this years ago:

The incarnation means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall...to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death—he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine.... He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death.... He was born in poverty and...suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.

Isaiah calls him the *Wonderful* Counselor, which means he’s beautiful. And perhaps now we get a glimpse of why he is. He had the infinite highness of being the Mighty God, yet he became one of us, enmeshed in our condition, in order to know our darkness. He saved us by going to the cross, and he did it all voluntarily, freely, out of sheer love. That is beautiful. When we find something to be beautiful, not just a duty, we dwell on it and stand before it because it is satisfying in itself. And so the reason we should obey him, not simply because we have to but also because we want to, is that, in light of all he is and has done for us, he is wonderful.

In short, Jesus is the divine Light of the world, because he brings a new life to replace our spiritual deadness, because he shows us the truth that heals our spiritual blindness, and because he is the beauty that breaks our addictions to money, sex, and power. As Wonderful Counselor he walks with us even into and through the shadow of death (Matthew 4:16), where no other companion can go. He is a Light for us when all other lights go out.

***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Worship Series – Christmas Eve (Shorter Version)**  
***A Light Has Dawned***  
**December 24, 2018**

*[Pass out candles to congregation as they enter for worship. The Corps is only dimly lit as the congregation gathers. After people are seated all lights are dimmed — DARKNESS except for Christmas tree and/or a few candles around the room.]*

**Call to Worship**

Rejoice, for God is with us — Emmanuel. In the darkness of our world shines God's holy light. Now there is reason to hope, to love, to laugh, to live. God is truly with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

<b>HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#116</b>	HC-140 TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
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**Prayer**

Gracious God,  
With joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people.  
We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth.  
In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts  
that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time.  
Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world.  
Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts,  
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors.”  
This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

***The Prophecy of the Messiah***  
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

**Reader 1:**

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.  
<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

(Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, NIV)

SB#117 – O come, O come, Immanuel	TB-444 – same	TD11-T8 (3 vs.)
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### *The Procession of Light*

*[The Christ candle is carried slowly from the back to the front of the corps during the readings below. At the end of the reading it may be placed in the advent wreath or prominent location.]*

**Reader 1:** <sup>9</sup> So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. (Isaiah 59:9, NIV)

**Reader 2:** <sup>1</sup> 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. (John 1:1-5, NIV)

*[Pause – letting the candle be carried in silence]*

**Reader 1:** <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. (John 1:6-9)

*[Pause]*

**Reader 2:** <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. (John 1:10-14)

*[The Advent candles are lit from the Christ candle.]*

**Leader:** “Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

<sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth  
 and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
 but the LORD rises upon you  
 and his glory appears over you.  
<sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light,  
 and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” (Isaiah 60:1-3)

**All:** Arise, shine; for your light has come.

***The Preparations for the Birth of Jesus***

Luke 2:1-5

**Reader 1:** <sup>1</sup> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (Luke 2:1-5, NIV)

<b>SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem</b>	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.)
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***Jesus is Born***

Luke 2:6-7

**Reader 1:** <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:6-7, NIV)

<b>SB#102 – Away in a manger</b>	TB-497 – same TB-511 – The manger scene	HTD6-T3 (3 vs.) HTD6-T14 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19

***We Offer Our Gifts to God***  
**Offering**

<b>Offertory – Sing:</b> <b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b> <b>SB#376</b>	HC-219 TB-722 – same	HCD20-T19
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**Devotional – The Dawning of the Light**

## *Pass the Light of Christ*

*[Ushers light their candles from the Christ Candle and proceed into the congregation. As the usher lights the candles at the end of the aisles, he says "Behold the light of the world!" Members of the congregation then say to each other as they pass the light down each row, "Behold the light of the world!"]*

*[When all the candles have been lit, begin reading below.]*

**Leader:** Jesus spoke saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12, NASB)

<b>SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!</b>	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
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*[Reading below should be on the screen as well as the bulletin.]*

**Leader:** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**People:** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Leader:** Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined.

**People:** We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

**Leader:** For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

**People:** In him was life, and the life was the light of man.

*[Lights in the sanctuary are lit, and the congregation extinguishes their candles.]*

### **Prayer:**

Merciful God, we confess that often we find darkness more comfortable than light.

Forgive us, break us, bend us, remake us.

Give us the courage to lay ourselves open to the wonder and healing of your coming.

Be born again into our world; be born again into our hearts and lives.

Hear now our silent and personal confessions as we prepare ourselves for your nativity.

*[Pause]*

The true light that enlightens all has come into the world.

That light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out.

This is the good news: God has heard our confession. God has forgiven our sin.

Thanks be to God!

<b>HC#99 – Shine, Jesus, shine SB#261</b>	HC-99 TB-822 – same	HCD8-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#123 – Shine on us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13

**Benediction:**

**Leader:** May the light of this child light your way forever. May the blessings which broke through the darkness on this night be yours always. May you always have cause to sing praises, give thanks, and celebrate the true light of the world, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Go in Joy! Fear the darkness no more!

**People:** Thanks be to God!

**Vocal Benediction**

<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b> (vs. 1 only)	TB-87 – same	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
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***HIDDEN CHRISTMAS***  
**Advent Devotional – Christmas Eve**  
***A Light Has Dawned***  
**December 24, 2018**

***The Dawning of the Light***  
by Timothy Keller  
“Hidden Christmas,” Chapter 1 (pp. 12-15)

**Text: Isaiah 9:2-7 (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian’s defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup>Every warrior’s boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,

will be fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his  
shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and  
peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

God alone has the life, truth, and joy that we lack and cannot generate ourselves. How can this divine light “dawn” or, as Isaiah 9 says, literally “*flash*” upon us? Verses 6 and 7, the most well-known verses of the chapter, answer with stunning directness. The text tells us the light has come “*for to us a child is born.*” This child brings it, because he is “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” It is remarkable that the four titles applied to this child belong to God alone. He is the Mighty God. He is the Everlasting Father, which means he is the Creator, and yet he is *born*. There’s nothing like this claim in any of the other major religions. He is a human being. However, he is not just some king of avatar of the divine principle. He is God!

It’s almost too limiting to say that we “celebrate” this at Christmas. We stare dumbstruck, lost in wonder, love, and praise. But what are the implications of God being born into our world? Here are just a couple.

First of all, if Jesus Christ is really Mighty God and Everlasting Father, you can’t just *like* him.

In the Bible the people who actually saw and heard Jesus never reacted indifferently or even mildly. Once they realized what he was claiming about himself, either they were scared of him or furious with him or they knelt down before him and worshipped him. But nobody simply liked him. Nobody said, “He is so inspiring. He makes me want to live a better life.” If the baby born at Christmas is the Mighty God, then you must serve him completely.

Second, if Jesus is Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace, you should *want* to serve him. Why is he called a “counselor”? When you are going through something very difficult, it’s good to talk to someone who has walked the same path, who knows personally what you have been going through. If God has really been born in a manger, then we have something that no other religion even claims to have. It’s a God who truly understands you, from the inside of your experience. There’s no other religion that says God has suffered, that God had to be courageous, that he knows what it is like to be abandoned by friends, to be crushed by injustice, to be tortured and die. Christmas shows he knows what you’re going through. When you talk to him, he understands.

Dorothy Sayers, a British essayist and novelist, said this years ago:

The incarnation means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall...to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death—he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine.... He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death.... He was born in poverty and...suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.

Isaiah calls him the *Wonderful* Counselor, which means he’s beautiful. And perhaps now we get a glimpse of why he is. He had the infinite highness of being the Mighty God, yet he became one of us, enmeshed in our condition, in order to know our darkness. He saved us by going to the cross, and he did it all voluntarily, freely, out of sheer love. That is beautiful. When we find something to be beautiful, not just a duty, we dwell on it and stand before it because it is satisfying in itself. And so the reason we should obey him, not simply because we have to but also because we want to, is that, in light of all he is and has done for us, he is wonderful.

In short, Jesus is the divine Light of the world, because he brings a new life to replace our spiritual deadness, because he shows us the truth that heals our spiritual blindness, and because he is the beauty that breaks our addictions to money, sex, and power. As Wonderful Counselor he walks with us even into and through the shadow of death (Matthew 4:16), where no other companion can go. He is a Light for us when all other lights go out.