

WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, December 24, 2023

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

ENTERING INTO WORSHIP

Greeting and Blessing*

Responsive Reading*

Psalm 86 (p. 814 in the *Trinity Hymnal*)

Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Guard my life, for I am devoted to you.

You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you.

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I call to you all day long.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.

Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.

In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me.

Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.

**All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord;
they will bring glory to your name.**

For you are great and do marvelous deeds;

you alone are God.

Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth;

give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.

For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.

The arrogant are attacking me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life—
men without regard for you.

**But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.**

Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant
and save the son of your maidservant.

**Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame,
for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**

* *Congregation is requested to stand, if able.*

The pastor will read the plain text; the congregation will read the bold text.

Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns: let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love. Amen.

Congregational Confession of Sin

Leader: Almighty God, we are reminded this morning of your divine purpose for the incarnation: that in the fullness of time, you sent forth your Son, born of woman, born under the law, to save us from our sins.

All: We confess that though you have blessed us with eternal riches in Christ, we have preferred the ways of this world. We have rebelled against your wisdom and sought after foolishness. We have rejected your fatherly commands and have done what is right in our own eyes.

Leader: Forgive us, we pray, and cleanse us from our sins. Work in us by your Word and Spirit, and give us both the desire and the power to do what pleases you.

All: We ask all this through the merit and mediation of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Private Confession of Our Sins

Assurance of Forgiveness

Micah 7:18-19

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

ADORATION AND PRAISE

First Reading*

Luke 2:22-38

Congregational Response

(music is printed on p. 12)

Song of Simeon

Now may your servant, Lord,
According to your Word,
Depart in exaltation.
My peace shall be serene,
For now my eyes have seen
Your wonderful salvation.

O Lord, you did prepare
For people ev'rywhere
A Light for revelation,
And radiant glory shall
The gloom of death dispel
For Israel, your nation. Amen.

Confession of Faith

The Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 35. *What is sanctification?*

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, by which we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness.

Q. 36. *What are the benefits that in this life accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?*

A. The benefits that in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification are: assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance to the end.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Stewardship ❖

Gloria Patri*

Hymn 735

Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, amen.

Lord's Prayer*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

❖ *Tithes and offerings may be placed in the box at the entrance to the sanctuary or given online through our church's website.*

THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

Second Reading*

Matthew 2:1-15

Congregational Response

Hymn 203

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King." Amen.

Profession of Faith

Pastoral Prayer

Sermon

Pastor Ben Muresan

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”
Luke 2:1-7

GOD’S BLESSING ON HIS PEOPLE

Hymn of Thanksgiving*

Hymn 201

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. Amen.

Benediction*

Congregational Benediction Response*

Hymn 218

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

Shepherds in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light:
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen his natal star:
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear:
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising
To th'eternal Three in One:
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King. Amen.*

HOME WORSHIP GUIDE

The daily reading schedule follows the One Year Bible Reading Plan.

Monday, December 25

Scripture: Zechariah 8:1-23; Revelation 16:1-21; Psalm 144:1-15; Proverbs 30:29-31

Catechism: The Westminster Confession of Faith: Chapter 26

Pray for: Our federal, state, and local government leaders.

Tuesday, December 26

Scripture: Zechariah 9:1-17; Revelation 17:1-18; Psalm 145:1-21; Proverbs 30:32

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 54

Pray for: Our military, police, fire, and medical personnel.

Wednesday, December 27

Scripture: Zechariah 10:1 - 11:17; Revelation 18:1-24; Psalm 146:1-10; Proverbs 30:33

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 55

Pray for: Our covenant children, and Christian military chaplains.

The churches in North Korea and persecuted Christians.

Thursday, December 28

Scripture: Zechariah 12:1 - 13:9; Revelation 19:1-21; Psalm 147:1-20; Proverbs 31:1-7

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 56

Pray for: Our Elders, Deacons, Women's Ministry, & the PCA.

Friday, December 29

Scripture: Zechariah 14:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15; Psalm 148:1-14; Proverbs 31:8-9

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 57

Pray for: Our members who have ongoing health care needs.

Saturday, December 30

Scripture: Malachi 1:1 - 2:17; Revelation 21:1-27; Psalm 149:1-9; Proverbs 31:10-24

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 58

Pray for: The preaching, and for our Sunday School teachers.

Sunday, December 31

Scripture: Malachi 3:1 - 4:6; Revelation 22:1-21; Psalm 150:1-6; Proverbs 31:25-31

Catechism: The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q/A 59

Pray for: Our worship this morning.

MISSIONS CORNER

Pray for our missionaries. Their prayer requests are sent out through the Prayer Chain and their newsletters are published in Grace Notes as they become available.

Ray & Michele Call | Presbyterian Church in Belize

Dave & Darlene Eby | Africa Reformation Theol. Seminary Uganda

LORD'S DAY DEVOTION AND QUESTIONS

A close reading of Luke 2:1-7 reveals something of the mystery of how God uses what is seemingly weak in this world to shame the strong. Luke begins the passage by naming Caesar Augustus, one of the most powerful men in the known world at that time. Luke concludes it with a description of Jesus' lowly birth in a manger. In the eyes of the world, Caesar held all the power and this baby born in Bethlehem was a nobody born out of wedlock. And yet in God's economy, Caesar was the nobody; Caesar was merely a pawn in God's plan to bring salvation to his people. God used the selfish and cruel mandates of a tyrant to draw Mary and Joseph from their home in fulfillment of the prophecy uttered 700 years before by the Prophet Micah. Dale Ralph Davis, in his commentary on Luke, writes:

Now there also seems to be a "prophetic" twist to God's providence here. It's in the geography. There is such a stress on the Davidic connection and Bethlehem that, though Luke does not cite Micah 5:2 ("But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, small to be among the clans of Judah; from you will come forth for me one to be ruler over Israel"), it lies in state behind the story. But how will Messiah be born in Bethlehem if Joseph and Mary are living in the north, in Nazareth? It's as if God says, "Let's make Caesar Augustus useful." Hence, a decree for a census, hence the necessity for Joseph to return to his "roots," hence the birth of Jesus in "Davidsburg." Emperors can make such fine servants, even if they are utterly clueless about what is taking place.

Now if God's providence is at work in the politics and geography of Christmas, might it not also be operating in your life? God's fingerprints, however, don't make noise, so you'll often find evidence of His presence at some later point as you look back and see the subtle touches and silent traces of His work. It often seems so "natural"—like a decree for a census. But nothing should surprise you, if He'll even stoop to using an emperor to carry out His plan of redemption.

1. Read Luke 2:1-2 and Galatians 4:1-7. In what sense was Jesus born at the right time? What does this teach us about God's decree and his providence in our lives?
2. Read Luke 2:3-5 and Micah 5:1-6. Along with the place where he would be born, what other Old Covenant prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus' birth? What does this teach us about God's faithfulness to his covenant promises? How should knowing this affect our daily lives?
3. Notice how simply Jesus' birth is described in Luke 2:6-7. What does this tell us about his humanity? Why was it necessary for Jesus to be fully human in order to accomplish our salvation?
4. Read Romans 5:12-21 and Hebrews 4:14-16. What do these passages teach us about the humanity of Christ? How does knowing that Christ is like us in every way, yet without sin, comfort and encourage you?

Song of Simeon

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1. Now may your ser - vant, Lord, ac - cord - ing to your Word,
 2. O Lord, you did pre - pare for peo - ple ev - 'ry - where

de - part in ex - al - ta - tion. My peace shall be se - rene,
 a Light for rev - e - la - tion, and ra - diant glo - ry shall

for now my eyes have seen your won - der - ful sal - va - tion.
 the gloom of death dis - pel for Is - ra - el, your na - tion.

Luke 2:29–32
 Dewey Westra, 1931; alt.

NUNC DIMITTIS 6.6.7.D.
 Louis Bourgeois, 1551
 Harm. Claude Goudimel, 1564