



Prelude: *Mary Did you Know?* by Natalie Krogstad

Welcome

Gathering Hymn: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Evening Prayer: **Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of the virgin, Mary. Grant that we may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen**

Lighting the Advent Wreath

O come, O come, Em - man - u -
el, and end this gloom of night. Bring
hope to the world, bring peace to the
earth, and fill us with love's pure light.

- P: For those walking in darkness, a new light has dawned.
C: **Christ is our light and the source of everlasting hope**
P: For those living in fear and dread, a new light has dawned.
C: **Christ is our light and the source of everlasting peace**
P: For those living in hopelessness and despair, a new light has dawned
C: **Christ is our light and the source of everlasting joy**

P: For those living in loneliness, a new light as dawned
C: **Christ is our light and the source of everlasting love**

The story of Mary: Luke 1:26-35

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words, and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." The word of the Lord **Thanks be to God.**

P: The Lord himself will give you a sign.
C: **Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.**

P: And they shall name him Emmanuel,
C: **Which means, God is with us.**

Mary Prayer: **Almighty God, in choosing the virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son, you made known your gracious regard for the poor and lowly. Grant us grace to receive your Word in humility, and so to be made one with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

Hymn *What Child Is This* by Dylan Haugen

The story of Joseph: Matthew 1:18-21

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The word of the Lord **Thanks be to God.**

P: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse.
C: **And a branch shall grow out of his roots.**

P: The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him.

C: The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

P: The spirit of counsel and might.

C: The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Joseph Prayer: **O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

Hymn: *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

The story of the Star: Matthew 2:1-2,7-10

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. The word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

P: Arise, shine, for your light has come.

C: And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

P: For darkness shall cover the earth,

C: And thick darkness the peoples.

P: But the Lord will arise upon you,

C: And his glory will appear over you.

Star Prayer: **O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

Special Music: *Welcome to the World* by Kim Haisley

The story of the Angels: St. Luke 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see -- I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all the people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" The word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

P: Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings.

C: Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings.

P: Lift it up, do not fear.

C: Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Angel Prayer:

Almighty God, you have made yourself known in your Son, Jesus, redeemer of the world. We pray that his birth as a human child will set us free from the old slavery of our sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Hymn: *Angels We have Heard on High*

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains

Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Message: There Were Shepherds

What kinds of things are necessary for Christmas? What do you just have to have in order to celebrate the day? Of course, our Lord Jesus is the center of everything, and each year we celebrate his birth among us. Even though the world may seek to ignore him, there would be no Christmas without him! But what else do we like to see at Christmas, to make our celebrations special? We sing carols and hymns, send cards, bake cookies, in a normal year we would attend parties and gather with our families and exchange gifts. We come together to worship and praise God for the gift of his Son. We decorate our churches and homes with trees and greenery, lights and ornaments and nativity scenes. Angels usually find important places in our decorating, but so do lowly shepherds. How could we decorate without those shepherds? They make an appearance on Christmas cards (usually in the company of angels) and in our nativity scenes. They have roles to play—dressed in bathrobes and head coverings—in children's Christmas services and living nativity displays. Shepherds held a useful but humble role in society in Jesus' day. Yet humble or not, I suspect that most of us here tonight would have been more than happy to join those shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem on that first Christmas night and be the first to hear the news—from angels!—that

the Savior had been born.

When the shepherds heard the good news, they ran to Bethlehem to see the child in the manger, the little child who would grow up to be both Shepherd and King for his people. Because that is what God does. He takes shepherds and makes them kings. Long before Jesus was born, God sent the prophet Samuel to the home of Jesse of Bethlehem to find and anoint a new king for Israel from among Jesse's sons. Samuel had to wait for a while as God's choice for king—Jesse's youngest son, David—was called in from the fields where he had been watching the sheep. God later said to David, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel."

When David ruled as king, God promised him that his son, his descendant, would be king one day and that his son's throne and kingdom would endure forever. His throne and kingdom would endure forever because the promised Son of David would be God himself, in the flesh. God was coming to visit his people; he was coming to save them. The prophet Isaiah said that when the promised Son arrived, the good news would be announced to the world: "Behold your God!" God would come, the prophet said, to "tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms." God, the Shepherd of Israel, was coming and he would "gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:9-11).

That is what the angels announced that night in the fields near Bethlehem: "Behold your God!" "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." The shepherds ran to see God in the flesh, the promised Son of David, the little child who would call himself the Good Shepherd. Jesus the Good Shepherd came to gather his scattered people into one flock. He came to feed them with his Word and with his own body and blood. He came to shelter them with his love and finally, he came to lay down his life for his sheep. God takes shepherds and makes them kings, and this Good Shepherd, born in the stable in Bethlehem, would one day become a king crowned with thorns.

He would be crowned with thorns and nailed to a cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world because this newborn Shepherd-King was also a lamb, the perfect lamb. Jesus, the Lamb of God, took our sins onto himself and suffered the penalty of death that we earned for ourselves. But the story does not end there. Jesus the Good Shepherd said, "I lay my life down that I may take it up again . . . No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father" (John 10:17-18). Jesus laid down his life for you and for me and, on the third day, the first Easter morning, he took up his life again. He took up his life again to give us life. The Good Shepherd promises his sheep, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Our Good Shepherd, born in Bethlehem, suffered death in our place and rose to life on the third day to give us eternal life. On that first Christmas night, the Bethlehem shepherds came

to see and worship the infant Shepherd-King, the little lamb lying in a manger. Finally, we too, with all the saints in glory, will see our Shepherd-King, not in a manger but on his heavenly throne. On that great eternal day “the Lamb in the midst of the throne” will be our shepherd, and he will guide us to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We hope that those Bethlehem shepherds will be there too, and we can join them in worshipping Christ the Lord, our Savior, whose birth we celebrate tonight. Amen.

The story of Jesus' Birth: St. Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from the Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Special Music: *Christmas Hallelujah* by Dawson Hayden

Lesson of Light: John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. The word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Light Prayer: **Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to lighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen**

Special Music: *O Holy Night* by Pastor Michele while the video of the Christmas Journey is played)

Announcements:

Closing Prayer

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

Blessing

The Almighty and Incarnate God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. Amen

Closing Hymn *Silent Night*

Silent night, Holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin, mother and child, Holy infant, tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

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

Silent night, Holy night, Shepherds quake, at the sight
Glories stream from heaven above, Heavenly, hosts sing Hallelujah.
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, December 27th – No services

Sunday, January 3rd – 9AM streaming from Nora

A wish to you from Pastor Michele.....



Liturgy adapted from a writing by The Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel, ELCA