

AS WE GATHER

Throughout history, our gracious God has made outlandish promises. His spokesmen, the writers of biblical books, said that a descendant of David would come to sit on an eternal royal throne. More than that, His titles would include some reserved for God in heaven. He was and is a Wonderful Counselor, revealing God's love in His own life and death; the Mighty God, though hidden within fragile flesh and blood; the Everlasting Father, though trapped in time and space; and the Prince of Peace, ruling not by enforcement of divine law but by forgiving all who call to Him for grace and mercy. Today, we celebrate His birth among us in time, as promised long ago and in our hearts each day.

Gathering Song

O Come, All Ye Faithful LSB 379 (vv 1-3)

Welcome & Invocation

Pastor Aaron Boerst

Opening Hymn

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming LSB 359



1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom - ing From ten - der stem hath
2 I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, The rose I have in
3 This flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der With sweet - ness fills the
4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, Who felt our hu - man



sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing As proph - ets long have
mind; With Mar - y we be - hold it, The vir - gin moth - er
air, Dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor The dark - ness ev - 'ry -
woe; O Sav - ior, King of glo - ry, Who dost our weak - ness



sung, It came, a flow - 'ret bright, A - mid the
kind. To show God's love a - right, She bore to
where. True man, yet ver - y God, From sin and
know: Bring us at length we pray To the bright



cold of win - ter, When half - spent was the night.
us a Sav - ior, When half - spent was the night.
death He saves us And light - ens ev - 'ry load.
courts of heav - en, And to the end - less day.

Text and tune: Public domain

Call to Worship Isaiah 9:2; LSB 361:1

Pastor: The people who walked in darkness

People: have seen a great light;

Pastor: those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,

People: on them has light shined.

Pastor: O little town of Bethlehem,

People: How still we see thee lie!

Pastor: Above thy deep and dreamless sleep

People: The silent stars go by;

Pastor: Yet in thy dark streets shineth

People: **The everlasting light.**
Pastor: The hopes and fears of all the years
People: **Are met in thee tonight.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Pastor: On the four Sundays in Advent, we light a new candle each week. We mark the four candles with these four words: hope, peace, joy, and love. The circular wreath of evergreen branches reminds us of the eternal nature of our Lord God, and that He gives the promise of eternal life for all who believe, just as a circle is unending, and an evergreen lives through winter. The blue colors of the 3 candles remind us of the royalty of Jesus, and how He welcomes us into His Kingdom. The single pink candle reminds us to pause our lives and reorient ourselves to positivity and joy. The center white candle reminds us that Christ is the center of our lives and makes us pure.

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the hope of the nations.

People: **We wait for the Lord, and in His Word we hope.**

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace.

People: **We wait for the Lord, and in His Word we rest.**

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the source of all joy.

People: **We wait for the Lord, and in His Word we rejoice.**

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Lord of love.

People: **We wait for the Lord, and in His Word His love finds us.**

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the center of our lives.

People: **We wait for the Lord, and in His Word he forgives our sins.**

Confession and Forgiveness

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, our hearts are far from the Manger, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.

People: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

(Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination)

Pastor: We do not live in those days, when Joseph and Mary had to return to ancestral homes for a census,

People: **But we do complain and even question God's care when we must move our hearts to new things.**

Pastor: We are not Mary, traveling to Bethlehem as she is about to give birth,

People: **But sometimes we lead lives that send us on difficult journeys and place us in stressful situations.**

Pastor: We are not responsible for the lack of space at the Bethlehem inn,

People: **But we have allowed our Savior to be crowded out of our schedules, budgets, and priorities.**

Pastor: Almighty God used Caesar so that our Lord would be born in Bethlehem, and He can use your circumstances to bring about good. In His mercy he has given his Son to die for you and for his sake forgives you all your sins. As a called servant of the Word, I therefore forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen**

Prayer of the Day

Pastor: Almighty God, source of every good and perfect gift, we give You thanks for all of Your blessings of body and soul. Purify us by Your Word and Spirit that, receiving all You have to give,

we may offer our lives in gratitude to You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 7:10–14

(A virgin birth will be the sign provided by God.)

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹²But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Pastor: This is the Word of our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Anthem Love Has Come (Tune of "Bring a Torch Jeannette Isabella.")

¹Love has come a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love!
Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love!
Glory to God on high.

²Love is born! Come share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of His mother;
What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love!
Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love!
Jesus, Immanuel.

³Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love!
Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love!
Praise to You, God on high!

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Epistle Reading

1 John 4:7–16

(Whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.)

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Pastor: This is the Word of our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation Angels We Have Heard on High LSB 368 v 1

1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
And the moun - tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
Refrain
Glo - - - - ri - a
in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - - - -
ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o.

Text and tune: Public domain

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:18-25

(The birth of Jesus Christ)

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

Song of the Day

O Little Town of Bethlehem LSB 361



1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, How still we see thee lie!
2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, And, gath - ered all a - bove
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly The won - drous gift is giv'n!
4 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, De - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep The si - lent stars go by;
While mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep Their watch of won-d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts The bless - ings of His heav'n.
Cast out our sin, and en - ter in, Be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er Pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear His com - ing; But in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels The great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to - night.
And prais - es sing to God the king And peace to all the earth!
Where meek souls will re - ceive Him, still The dear Christ en - ters in.
O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Text and tune: Public domain

Sermon

The Jesse Tree: Joseph

Pastor Aaron Boerst

Creed – APOSTLE’S CREED

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was
buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He
ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From
thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the
forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life † everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the Church [Isaiah 9:6]

Pastor: This Christmas Eve, we come before our Lord in prayer rejoicing that “for to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” Lord, as we hear the angels’ words, “Fear not,” let us take their admonishment to heart. In the face of fears and anxiety, grant us peace in the Savior born for us. O come, let us adore Him,

People: Christ the Lord!

Pastor: To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given! Lord, during this season of celebration, cheer those who are lonely or mark this season with a painful grief. Give them the true joy that comes from the Savior born for us. O come, let us adore Him,

People: Christ the Lord!

Pastor: To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given! Lord, You chose Mary and Joseph to care for Your Son. Bless all those with whom You have given the vocation of mother or father, grandmother or

grandfather that they care for the children entrusted into their care, sharing with them the Savior born for us. O come, let us adore Him,

People: Christ the Lord!

Pastor: To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given! Lord, continue to watch over those who suffer in body and spirit. Grant them healing and restoration from their afflictions according to Your gracious will. Give them peace in their affliction through the Savior born for us. O come, let us adore Him,

People: Christ the Lord!

Pastor: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

People: Amen.

Pastor: O Lord, Hear us on behalf of those in our congregation and all who stand in need:

Local concerns may be added by congregational elder here.

Pastor: Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

Sharing the Peace

Offering It Came upon the Midnight Clear *LSB 366*



1 It came up-on the mid-night clear, That glo-rious song of old,
2 Still through the clo-ven skies they come With peace-ful wings un-furled,
3 All you, be-neath your heav-y load, By care and guilt bent low,
4 For lo, the days have come to pass By proph-ets seen of old,



From an-gels bend-ing near the earth To touch their harps of gold:
And still their heav'n-ly mu-sic floats O'er all the wea-ry world.
Who toil a-long a drea-ry way With pain-ful steps and slow:
When down in-to the cir-cling years Came Christ as was fore-told.



"Peace on the earth, good-will to all, From heav'n's all-gra-cious king."
A-bove its sad and low-ly plains They bend on hov-'ring wing,
Look up, for gold-en is the hour, Come swift-ly on the wing,
His word of peace shall to the earth God's an-cient prom-ise bring,



The world in sol-emn still-ness lay To hear the an-gels sing.
And ev-er o'er its ba-bel sounds The bless-ed an-gels sing.
The Prince was born to bring you peace; Of Him the an-gels sing.
And all who take this gift will hear The song the an-gels sing.

Text and tune: Public domain

Presentation of Gifts

Pastor: Heavenly Father, You are the giver of all good things, and Your Word makes clear that every good and perfect gift comes from You. We ask that You accept these gifts back unto Yourself and use them to Your glory. [*Psalm 145:15, James 1:17*]

People: Amen.

Lord's Prayer [Matthew 6:9–13]

Pastor: Lord Jesus Christ, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

People: **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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction [Numbers 6:24-26]

Pastor: The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The LORD look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

People: **Amen.**

(As the church darkens, a single flame will be lit from the Christ Candle by the pastor. From this candle, the flame will be spread to all, just as the message of Christ being born our Savior spreads through each of us as we shine in our own lives.)

Sending Song **Silent Night LSB363** **1st stanza in German & sts. 1–3**



1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,
1 *Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,*



all is bright Round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light Ra - diantbeams from Thy ho - ly face
ein - sam wacht Nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.



Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, Sleep in heav - en - ly
Heav'n-ly hosts sing, Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy
Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, Schlaf in himm - li - scher



peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Ruh, Schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.

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