

Lessons & Carols
December 24, 2020 at 8:00 p.m.
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

Christmas Proclamation

Pastor: Throughout the season of Advent, the Church has reflected on God's promises, so often spoken by the prophets, to send a savior to the people of Israel who would be Emmanuel, that is, God with us. In the fullness of time those promises were fulfilled. With hearts full of joy let us listen to the proclamation of our Savior's birth.

(The Cantor sings the Christmas Proclamation)

Welcome

Responsive Prayer

Pastor: O God, who spoke all creation into being: When you created human flesh, we betrayed you by our disobedience. When you led us out of slavery in Egypt, we doubted and defied you. Yet you chose to come among us through your Son, Jesus Christ, who suffered death on our behalf, putting an end to the power of sin and death. For this great gift of your steadfast hope, we give you thanks.

All: Help us, O Lord, to keep vigil this night. Help us to watch for the signs of your coming into our midst, not in the splendid palaces of power, but in hearts humbled by

need. Help us to believe that the darkness of cruelty and sin will never overcome the light, and the mercy, of Christ. Help us to endure, knowing that the evil and injustice of this world cannot prevail against your Word. We ask this in the name of your Word made flesh, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Opening Hymn: “O Come, All Ye Faithful” (Verses 1 and 3)

*O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him, born the king of angels:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

*Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

(The congregation may be seated, and remain seated for the Lessons & Carols, unless invited to stand.)

Preface to Lessons & Carols

Pastor: Beloved in Christ, let us prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels; in heart and mind to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and

the babe lying in a manger. Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience to the glorious redemption brought us by this Holy Child—Emmanuel, God with us.

First Lesson: Genesis 3:8-19

Reader: A reading from Genesis.

[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” ¹⁶ To the

woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

First Carol: “I Wonder As I Wander” (solo)

Second Lesson: Genesis 22:15-18

Reader: A reading from Genesis.

¹⁵ The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their

enemies, ¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Second Carol: “Creator of the Stars of Night” (solo)

Third Lesson: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Reader: A reading from Isaiah.

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Third Carol: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (Verses 1 and 4)

*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.*

*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;
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!*

Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-3a, 4a, 6-9

Reader: A reading from Isaiah.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³ His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord... ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth... ⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and

the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
⁹ They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as
the waters cover the sea.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Fourth Carol: "Welcome to Our World" (solo)

Fifth Lesson: Luke 1:26-38

Reader: A reading from Luke.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² 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. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ 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 Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Fifth Carol: “Breath of Heaven” (solo)

Sixth Lesson: Luke 2:1-7

Pastor: Please stand for a reading from the Gospel of Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ 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.

⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.

Sixth Carol: “Away in a Manger” (Verses 1 and 3)

*Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.*

Seventh Lesson: Luke 2:8-20

Pastor: ⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you

will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon

Seventh Carol: “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (Verses 1 and 2)

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!*

*While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.*

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!*

*The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.*

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!*

Offering: “Mary, Did You Know?” (solo)

Eighth Lesson: Matthew 1:18-23

Cantor: A reading from Matthew.

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will

save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

Prayers

Pastor: ...Lord in your mercy.

All: **Hear our 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 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.**

Eighth Carol: “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” (solo)

Ninth Reading: John 1:1-14

Pastor: Please stand for a reading from the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through him, and

without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Ninth Carol: "Silent Night"

*Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!*

*Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.*

Benediction

Sending Hymn: "Joy to the World" (Verses 1 and 4)

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king; let ev'ry 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.*

*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.*

Dismissal

Pastor: The Christ child has been born this night anew in Bethlehem. Go, with peace in your hearts, in love and service to the newborn King.

All: Thanks be to God!

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*Responsive Prayer written by Kathleen Norris and posted on belief.net
(<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2007/12/Christmas-EveVigil.aspx?p=2#57RMVwfsJk1bpjuW.99>)*