

CRÉCHE

Seeing Christ in the Decorations
of the Season



Every Heart Prepare

December 17th , 2025

Third Wednesday Advent Service

Noon and 7 PM

Crèche

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the Decorations
of the Season*

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As We Gather

“Prepare!” is often the watchword of the season as the world gets ready for another celebration of Christmas. An integral part of any preparation is decoration. We see decorations everywhere this time of year. The world may not comprehend the real meaning of Christmas, but even secular preparations use many of the same decorations beloved by Christians—an appropriation we shouldn’t mind at all, because these decorations point us to Christ. This year, as we look forward again to the coming of the Messiah, we take a fresh look at how the adornments of the season draw our eyes to Jesus, that we may more richly behold the love, peace, joy, and hope He comes to bring as this beauty is set before us.

Today, we focus on the crèche—those miniature models of the nativity scene that abound each December. Unlike lights and evergreens, the symbols that aided our meditation these last two weeks, the crèche is distinctly Christian. In it, we behold Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, the angels, the stable animals, and, at the center, baby Jesus. Some places introduce the characters in chronological order; others put them all out at once. Either way, the crèche represents a crucial, historical event: God taking on human form and human nature so that He could take our place and redeem us from all sin. We behold it with fresh eyes today.

Savior of the Nations Come

LSB 332 (vs. 1-4)

Savior of the nations, come,
Virgin’s Son, make here Your home!
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh.

Here a maid was found with child,
Yet remained a virgin mild.
In her womb this truth was shown:
God was there upon His throne.

Then stepped forth the Lord of all
From His pure and kingly hall;
God of God, yet fully man,
His heroic course began.

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Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession and Absolution

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Kyrie

LSB 944

Service of the Word

Prayer of the Day

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty, ever-living, and everlasting God, our help in ages past and hope for years to come, You sent Your Son into our flesh to live among us in our world and to walk with us in our times and places so that we would be saved from all sins in every time and place. As we survey anew Jesus' journey from the manger to the cross, grant that we may draw great comfort and confidence in the reality of Your birth, that faith may again be kindled in our hearts; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

Amen.

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading***Philippians 2:1-8***

² So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel***Matthew 1:18-25***

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the First Chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

¹⁸ Now 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. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All 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).

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

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

LSB 338 (Tune: Hyfrydol)

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel’s strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art,
Dear desire of ev’ry nation,
Joy of ev’ry longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver;
Born a child and yet a king!
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

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Message

Vicar Caleb Gustafson

Prayers of the Church

In peace, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

For eyes to behold the Father’s hand in all creation, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

For awareness of beauty and the living traditions of the church that bring Christ to our eyes through arts and crafts, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That we may see the signs of Christ’s return even as we celebrate His birth, and encourage one another all the more as we see the Day drawing near, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That we may be living testimonies of new life in Christ through our loving service to our neighbor—both in word and in deed—let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may be thankful for the bountiful harvest we enjoy amid the many festivities of this season, and be generous to the poor, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may love one another as God so loved us, forgive one another, and work together in the unity we have in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may not be lured into temptation or despair or be distracted by the false Christmases around us, but always hold the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

The Lord's Prayer

Service of the Sacrament

The Words of Our Lord

Away in a Manger

LSB 364 (Evening Service Only)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

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Dismissal

Post-Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing of God's People (Benediction)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 338 (Vs. 1 & 5)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear. **Refrain**

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. **Refrain**

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