

The First Sunday after Christmas

December 31, 2023

Note: In preparation for this service, light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord and offer the sacrifice of two turtle doves as prescribed by the Old Testament law. While they were there, they met a man named Simeon. He had been waiting his whole life to see the Savior. God had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

When he saw Jesus, he took the baby into his arms and declared to God that he was now ready for his life to end in peace. He had seen the Savior with his own eyes!

They also met a woman named Anna who was advanced in years. She also recognized that Jesus would be the redeemer. May we this day join Simeon and Anna to see in Jesus the salvation provided by God for all who will believe.

We also pray that Christian parents today will learn from the example of Mary and Joseph to be faithful in bringing their children to the Lord in Holy Baptism and raising them in the true Christian faith.

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

Lutheran Service Book 386, Lutheran Worship 47, The Lutheran Hymnal 92



1 Now sing we, now re - joice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;
2 Come from on high to me; I can - not rise to Thee.
3 Now through His Son doth shine The Fa-ther's grace di - vine.
4 Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'n - ly ground?



He from whom joy stream - eth Poor in a man-ger lies;
Cheer my wea - ried spir - it, O pure and ho - ly Child;
Death was reign - ing o'er us Through sin and van - i - ty
Where the an - gels sing - ing With all His saints u - nite,



Not so bright - ly beam - eth The sun in yon - der skies.
Through Thy grace and mer - it, Blest Je - sus, Lord most mild,
Till He o - pened for us A bright e - ter - ni - ty.
Sweet - est prais - es bring - ing In heav'n - ly joy and light.



Thou my Sav - ior art! Thou my Sav - ior art!
 Draw me un - to Thee! Draw me un - to Thee!
 May we praise Him there! May we praise Him there!
 Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

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

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen. (*Luke 18:13*)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Entrance Hymn

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Lutheran Service Book 380, Lutheran Worship 49, The Lutheran Hymnal 94



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
 2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
 3 Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righ-teous-ness!



Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
 Late in time be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the God-head see, Hail the in-car - nate De - i - ty!
Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die,



With the an-gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth-le-hem!"
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Je - sus, our Im-man-u - el!
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them sec-ond birth.



Hark! The her-ald an-gels sing, "Glo-ry to the new-born King!"

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Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

Gloria in Excelsis

Angels We Have Heard on High

Lutheran Service Book 368, Lutheran Worship 55, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



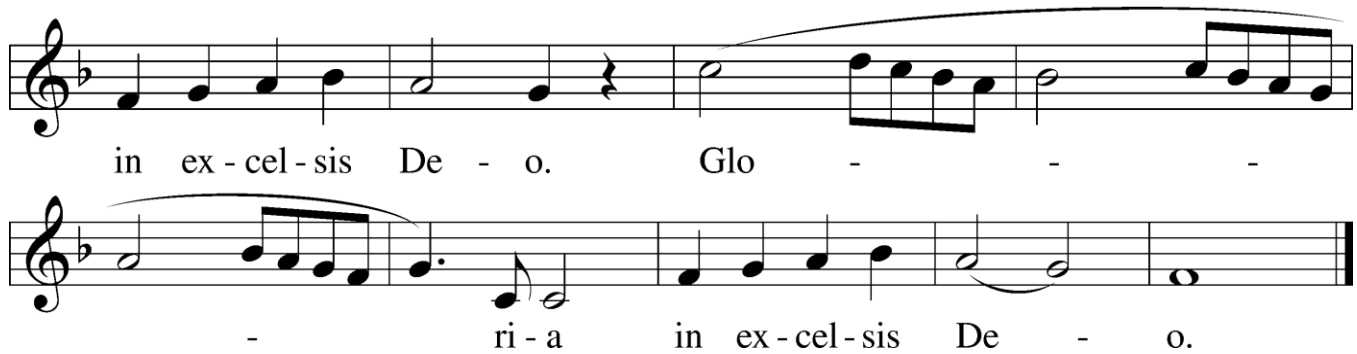
1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet-ly sing-ing o'er the plains,
2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy-ous strains pro-long?
3 Come to Beth-le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;



And the moun-tains in re-ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
What the glad-some tid - ings be Which in-spire your heav'n - ly song?
Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.



Glo - - - - - ri - a



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Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.

²The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1b

L To us a child is born, to us a son is given;

C and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

L And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

C Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- L** Sing to the Lord a new song,
- C** for he has done marvelous things!

Psalm 111

- L** ¹Praise the LORD!
- I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.
- C** ²**Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.**
- L** ³Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.
- C** ⁴**He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful.**
- L** ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.
- C** ⁶**He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.**
- L** ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;
- C** ⁸**they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**
- L** ⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.
- Holy and awesome is his name!
- C** ¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!**

Galatians 4:4–7

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia.

Luke 2:22–40

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 2nd chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

²²And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, [Mary and Joseph] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation
³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

G Praise to You, O Christ.

C 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

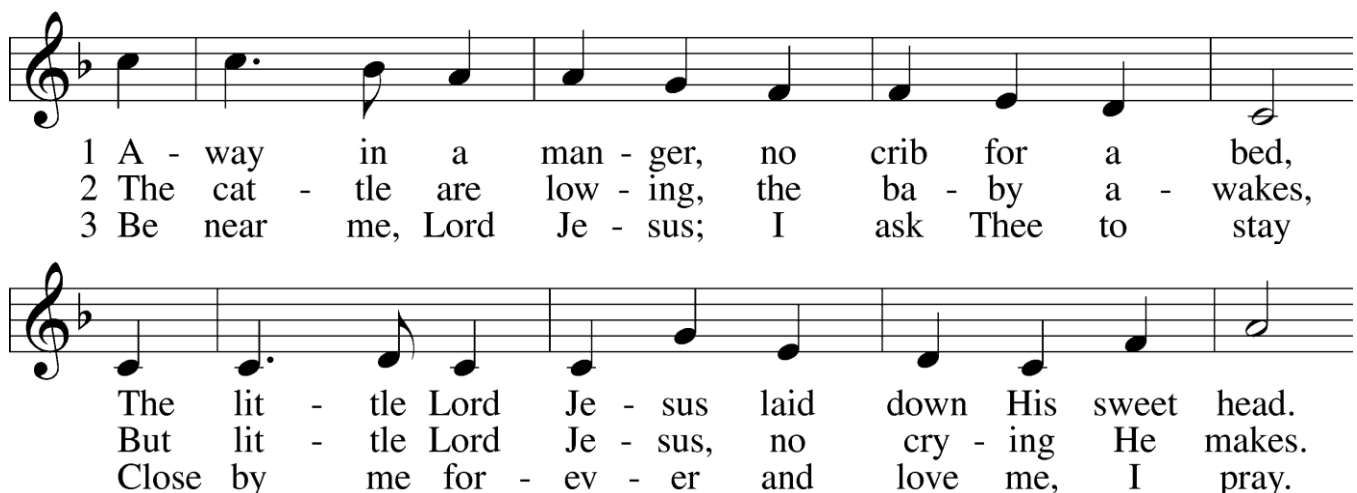
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

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

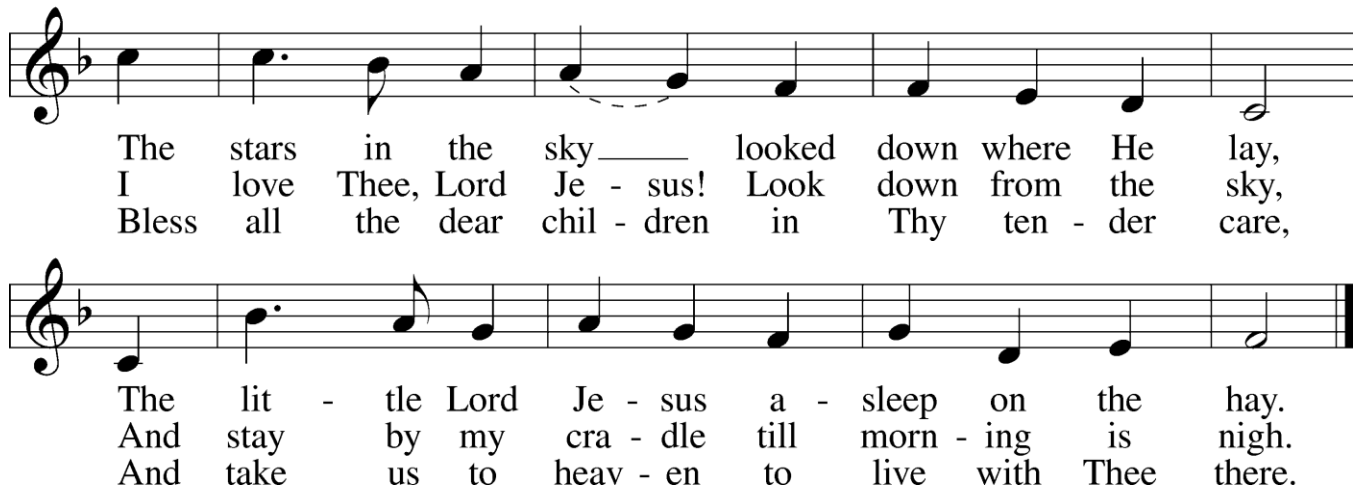
Away in a Manger

Lutheran Service Book 364, Lutheran Worship 64, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,
2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask Thee to stay

The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head.
But lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes.
Close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



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Devotional thoughts:

Happy Groundhog Day! Now that's an odd greeting for the Sunday after Christmas. It demands a little explanation.

The events recorded in the Gospel lesson for today from Luke 2 happened 40 days after Jesus' birth. They are known as the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of our Lord. If you start counting days from December 25th, you will discover that this happened on February 2nd according to our calendar. On our secular calendar, that is Groundhog Day! In the Church Year, besides the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of our Lord, it is sometimes called Candlemas. This is one of the oldest festivals in the Church. We know of a sermon written for its celebration from about the year 300!

With this background, let's pause for a review of the sequence of events following Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. On the night Jesus was born, angels announced His birth to shepherds who came to find Jesus lying in a manger with Mary and Joseph nearby. On the eighth day, the baby was circumcised and given the name Jesus. This corresponds to New Year's Day on our calendar. Next, on the 40th day, the events of today's Gospel took place.

Finally, sometime later, possibly months later, the wise men arrive with their gifts. We celebrate this on January 6. The twelfth day of Christmas was the day before, January 5. Next, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus depart for Egypt and the wise men take an alternate route home. Eventually, Herod realizes that he has been tricked by the wise men and he orders the execution of the boys in Bethlehem who are two years old and younger. This is acknowledged in the Church Year as Holy Innocents Day on December 28.

After this little excursion off-topic, what can we learn from Jesus' first outing to the temple? First, we learn that Mary and Joseph are a devout and religious couple. They are true to the faith of their fathers. They are keeping the instructions given in Leviticus 12 for the purification of a mother following childbirth and bringing a sacrifice to the temple 40 days after the baby is born.

We learn that they are a poor couple. Two turtledoves or two pigeons were only permitted if they could not afford a lamb! As a reminder of the Exodus, the law also required that their firstborn should be dedicated to the Lord and so they brought Jesus to the temple as well.

We also learn what it means for the Savior to finally enter the world. The devout man, Simeon had been waiting his entire life for the Savior. The Holy Spirit promised him that he would see the Savior before he died. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, the promise was fulfilled. He saw the Savior with his own eyes. He was now ready to leave his earthly life and peacefully join all the faithful in eternity.

To this day, we remember his words, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace." For centuries, Lutherans have been singing Simeon's words following communion. It is called the Nunc Dimittis. With our sins forgiven, we too are ready to enter paradise to be with Jesus for eternity.

Simeon also reminds us that God's plan of salvation is not for the Jews only but it is for Jew and Gentile alike. The salvation that Jesus won for us on the cross is for all people. It is for devout and religious people, like Mary, Joseph, and Simeon. It is also for the thief crucified next to Jesus. It is for the tax collector and sinner. It is for you and me.

We also learn of the elderly widow named, Anna. She was faithful in her daily devotions and worship in the temple. She not only gave thanks to God for the gift of the Savior, Jesus, but she immediately began to tell others about the redemption that God had prepared for the people in the person of Jesus.

Anna and the shepherds as well remind us that Christmas is a time to tell others about Jesus. There may be someone in your life who is waiting to learn about Jesus and God's plan of salvation for them. Could it be that God has planned for you to be the one to tell them the message of the angels to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."?

Finally, on the eve of the beginning of a new year, we remember God's presence in our lives just as Simeon and Anna did during their many years of waiting for the Savior. None of us knows what tomorrow will bring but we know that God is faithful to His promises. We remember the words of the hymn writer Isaac Watts who not only wrote, "Joy to the World" but also, "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past".

- 1 O God, our help in ages past,
 Our hope for years to come,
 Our shelter from the stormy blast,
 And our eternal home:
- 2 Under the shadow of Thy throne
 Thy saints have dwelt secure;
 Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
 And our defense is sure.
- 6 O God, our help in ages past,
 Our hope for years to come,
 Be Thou our guard while troubles last
 And our eternal home!

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In my family, it is our custom to celebrate Christmas for all twelve days extending from Christmas to Epiphany. Maybe this year we should celebrate Christmas all the way to Groundhog Day. If we don't, maybe we will pause and remember the Nunc Dimittis:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

What Child Is This

Lutheran Service Book 370, Lutheran Worship 61, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mar - y's lap is
2 Why lies He in such mean es-tate Where ox and ass are
3 So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peas - ant, king, to



sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet While
feed - ing? Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here The
own Him. The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; Let



shep - herds watch are keep - ing? This, this is
si - lent Word is plead - ing. Nails, spear shall
lov - ing hearts en - throne Him. Raise, raise the



Christ the king, Whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you;
song on high, The vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The babe, the son of Mar - y!
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The babe, the son of Mar - y!
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mar - y!

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Prayers

L Lord God, eternal Father and Giver of every good gift, we commit to Your mercy the year now ending. Forgive us our sins where we have done wrong, work in our hearts true repentance and faith, and redeem us from all the evil of this past year.

C Amen.

L Eternal Lord God, in the fullness of time, You sent forth Your Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us and give us the adoption as Your sons and heirs. Hear us, Father, as we call to You in His name. Give us grace to rejoice in Christ's blessed birth, and grant us a glad new year.

C Amen.

L Lead Your Church, Lord, to follow the example of Simeon, that all Your people would embrace the Christ Child by their words and in faith, and so be ready to depart in peace whenever they are called.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, from whom all fatherhood on earth is named, bless our families with Your promises. Give parents diligence and delight in their work, and grant Your favor upon all children, that they may grow in strength and wisdom. Bless widows, orphans, and broken families also with Your mercy, and give them joy in the redemption You have won for us in Christ.

C Amen.

L Gracious Lord, receive our prayers for those who suffer from loneliness. Comfort them with the sure and certain knowledge that You will never forsake them. Give them family and friends within the household of faith with whom they can find loving companionship.

C Amen.

L O God of peace, during this time of war in the ancient land of Jesus' birth and in Ukraine, we pray that You would grant a swift end to the conflict and lasting peace, that right and justice would prevail, and that You would grant Your mighty hand of protection to the innocent and helpless.

C Amen.

L Holy God, mighty Lord, You have given power to the nations and to those who govern for the good of their people. Bless our president, Congress, governor, and all our leaders, that justice may prevail and Your people would be free to live at peace with all. Guard those who protect us, especially our armed forces, police, and firefighters.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, abide among us in this new year with Your Holy Spirit, that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Lutheran Service Book 733, Lutheran Worship 123, The Lutheran Hymnal 180



- 1 O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,
2 Un - der the shad - ow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood Or earth re - ceived her frame,
4 A thou - sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home:
Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.
From ev - er - last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun.

- 5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

- 6 O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last
And our eternal home!

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C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C 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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Joy to the World

Lutheran Service Book 387, Lutheran Worship 53, The Lutheran Hymnal 87



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em -
3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow Nor thorns in - fest the
4 He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the na - tions



King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him
play, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
ground; He comes to make His bless - ings
prove The glo - ries of His righ - teous -



room And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture
plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is
ness And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His



sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, Far as, far as the curse is found.
love, And won - ders, won - ders of His love.

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of Christmas

The First Sunday after Christmas

December 31, 2023 – January 6, 2024

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday – The Eighth Day of Christmas

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 98:1-4; antiphon Isaiah 52:10

- L** The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
C Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
L The Lord has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
C He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
L Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
C Glory be 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.
L The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

We didn't use the introit on Sunday but let us not neglect it this week. It begins with the last verse of the Old Testament Lesson for Christmas Day, Isaiah 52:10. Simeon certainly must have been aware of these words when he said, "My eyes have seen your salvation." He goes on to say that this salvation has been "prepared in the presence of all peoples," just as Isaiah had long ago proclaimed, "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Or maybe Simeon was thinking of Psalm 98:2, "The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations." Either way, it is clear that God has done a marvelous thing by sending Jesus to be our Savior. An angel told the shepherds the Savior was born. The Holy Spirit revealed the baby, Jesus, as the fulfillment of His promise to Simeon. Eventually, the Palm Sunday crowds would recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. The thief on the cross and the centurion standing nearby would also see Jesus for who He is.

Today we make a joyful noise and break forth in joyous song because God has revealed the Savior to us!

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.

L Let us pray:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

C Amen

Tuesday – The Ninth Day of Christmas

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

C Amen.

Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1a

- L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given;
C and the government shall be upon his shoulder.
L And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
C Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
L Sing to the Lord a new song,
C for he has done marvelous things!

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.
Alleluia.

Kyrie

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|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

L Let us pray: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation! We don't often use the word incarnation much anymore so let's stop and consider it today. Incarnation comes from Latin into English and means "in flesh."

Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation. Christmas is a celebration that God has become one of us in the person of Jesus. John put it this way, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Jesus was not just a spirit. He was not just a figment of someone's imagination. But He was a real, living, breathing human being. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He lived his life here on earth just the way we do. He suffered loss and hardship. He got hungry and thirsty. He slept. He wept. He did this for us as our substitute. He did all of this without sinning and then went to the cross to make payment for our sins and give to us His righteousness.

Let us celebrate the incarnation of Christ!

Prayer: Let us pray: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday – The Tenth Day of Christmas

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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| L | In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. |
| C | Amen. |

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

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| L | Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia. |
| C | Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia. |

Kyrie

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|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

Psalm 111

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|----------|--|
| L | ¹ Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. |
| C | ² Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. |

- L** ³Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.
- C** ⁴**He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful.**
- L** ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.
- C** ⁶**He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.**
- L** ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;
- C** ⁸**they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**
- L** ⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!
- C** ¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!**

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
- L** O Christ, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
- L** O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**

The New Year is a good time to think of Psalm 111, the psalm for this week. Verse 4 begins, “He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered.”

A New Year is looking ahead but it is also an important time for remembering. Many would like to forget 2023 because of some hardship and pain. But 2023 was also a year filled with examples of love and compassion.

Self-sacrifice and devotion demonstrated by our fellow citizens are more than we can even begin to imagine. Nevertheless, even more than that is the importance of remembering the wondrous works of the Lord. The most important wondrous work of them all is the redemption that the Lord sent to His people in the person of Jesus. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross so that as His people we not only have the opportunity to remember but we also are granted the ability to look ahead to eternity with Him! How holy and awesome is His name!

Prayer: O Lord, the psalmist has reminded us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, grant that we may not enter the New Year foolishly. Grant that we may have the wisdom to remember Your wondrous works and anticipate eternity with You, through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

Thursday – The Eleventh Day of Christmas

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** **Amen.**

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.
- C** **Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia.**

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.

²The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You may have heard the questions: "Who is Jeanette Isabella?" "Why must she bring a torch?" and "Why is it Christmas carol?"

Curiosity got the better of me and I was motivated to research the answers. Isaiah 62:1 inspired me to share these answers with you.

Jeanette Isabella is not one person but two! The title of the carol is, "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella." These two women or girls are named Jeanette and Isabella. They have been to the stable and have seen baby, Jesus and His mother, Mary. With excitement, they run to a nearby village to share the news of great joy that Christ the Savior is born. Because it is night, they must light their way with a torch!

Isaiah 62:1 says, "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch." Likewise, Jeanette and Isabella cannot keep silent! They must bring the news of salvation. This news is as bright as a burning torch!

We too have been to the stable and have seen baby Jesus and His mother, Mary. We have been to the cross and heard Him declare, "It is finished." We have been to the empty tomb and heard the angel say, "He is not here. He has risen as He said."

We must run to the village and tell the good news!

Prayer: O Lord, let us not lose the excitement of Christmas. Grant that we would be motivated to run and tell of the salvation brought to us by the baby born in Bethlehem, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday – The Twelfth Day of Christmas

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

L Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Galatians 4:4–7

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Tick, tock, time flies! Many years ago, when digital displays were very uncommon, I built digital a clock for my dad. Hours, minutes, and seconds were displayed by LEDs. I was proud of my accomplishment when I presented it to him. After a while, he declared that he wasn’t particularly fond of it. I asked him why and he answered, “I don’t like seeing the seconds of my life tick away before my eyes!” I had never considered that before but now I do sometimes remember his words when I see a digital clock.

Unfortunately, my father was the first of my immediate family to go home to be with Jesus. The seconds of his life were ticking away faster than I had imagined.

Time can go by quickly or slowly. But in God’s economy, things always happen at the right time. In Galatians 4:4, we are informed that Jesus was born at just the right time, in the fullness of time.

God’s plans never go astray. He knew all along that He would send His Son to be our Saviour. He worked it out so that when Caesar Augustus issued a decree for all the world to be taxed, it was just the right time to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus to be born in the City of David.

All of this meticulous planning and timing was for the purpose of making you a child of God! You are no longer a slave to sin but an heir of salvation. Rejoice and be glad!

Prayer: O Lord, the New Year is before us. Last year on this day, we could have never imagined what 2023 would bring. Yet we know that you were with us each and every minute of the day. As we enter the Year of our Lord 2024, grant that we would not forget that all of our times and seasons are in Your hands and You have promised to never leave us or forsake us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

The Epiphany of our Lord

There is a separate Epiphany service for you to download.

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

L Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Matthew 2:1–12

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And 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.” ⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

I played in a rock band in high school. I was able to save all of the money from my summer job for college and use the money I made playing the band for spending money. Life was good. I also often attended wedding receptions and heard live polka bands with accordions and tubas. I was a recording tech for our high school band when they played “Man of La Mancha (I, Don Quixote).” But I had never heard the live performance of an orchestra or even a violin for that matter. I knew that classical music wasn’t for me.

That all changed during my freshman year at Concordia in Ann Arbor. Our choir presented Handel’s Messiah in the chapel with an orchestra for live accompaniment. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the sound. In particular, I will never forget the first time I heard, “For unto us a child is born!”

I can never hear or read Isaiah 9:6 without remembering that experience.

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.

A child has been born and given to us! He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. While Handel’s music is breathtaking, there is nothing more amazing than the truth of the message. God’s own Son is our Savior. Thanks be to God.

Prayer: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son may never leave our minds so that we may always rejoice in the salvation He won for us on the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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