

The Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas

December 25, 2023

Note: In preparation for this service, you may choose to use an Advent wreath. The Advent wreath has four candles around its circumference. Three of them are blue or purple. One is rose-colored. A white candle is in the middle of the wreath. On Christmas Eve and continuing for the entire Christmas season we light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Lutheran Service Book 379, Lutheran Worship 41, The Lutheran Hymnal 102



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, Joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O
2 High - est, most ho - ly, Light of Light e - ter - nal,
3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, Sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
4 Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this hap - py morn - ing;



come ye, O come — ye to Beth - le - hem;
Born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal He comes;
Sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav - en a - bove!
Je - sus, to Thee — be — glo - ry giv'n!



Come and be - hold Him Born the king of an - gels:
Son of the Fa - ther Now in flesh ap - pear - ing!
Glo - ry to God — In — the — high - est:
Word of the Fa - ther Now in flesh ap - pear - ing!

Refrain



O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him,



O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord!

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.

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Lutheran Service Book 367, Lutheran Worship 50, The Lutheran Hymnal 136



1 An - gels from the realms of glo - ry, Wing your flight o'er
2 Shep - herds in the field a - bid - ing, Watch - ing o'er your
3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, Bright - er vi - sions
4 Saints be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, Watch - ing long in
5 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,



all the earth; Ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing,
beam a - far; Seek the great De - sire of na - tions,
hope and fear, Sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing,
Spir - it, Son, Ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing



Now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth.
Yon - der shines the In - fant Light.
Ye have seen His na - tal star.
In His tem - ple shall ap - pear.
To the e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship;

Wor - ship Christ, 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.

Refrain

Glo - - - - - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - - - - -

- - - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - - - - - o.

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Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Isaiah 52:7–10

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

⁸The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.

⁹Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰The 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.

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!

Hebrews 1:1–6

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son,

today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son”?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: John 1:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia, The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

John 1:1–18

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1st chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.

¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C 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.

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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Devotional thoughts:

Ho, Ho, Ho. Merry Christmas!

Pause for a moment and consider this question: "What makes Christmas special?"

Is it Christmas cookies lovingly prepared with extra sprinkles?

Is it a prize turkey delivered to Bob Cratchit? Or is it a ham with an extra special glaze?

Is it the perfect Christmas tree meticulously decorated by the Leonardo da Vinci of your family?

Is it grandma's prize recipe for eggnog or pecan pie with a mountain of whipped cream?

Is it grand music streaming from every direction or is it the beaming smiles of children?

Is it finding the perfect gift under the tree or is it a hug from loved ones?

We could easily spend an hour listing things that make Christmas special. We all must agree that Christmas is an extraordinary event. Pagans, atheists, secularists, unbelievers, and non-Christians of every description cannot help but notice that Christmas is special.

Christmas is the time when we go the extra mile. We buy the exceptional gift. We celebrate to the point of exhaustion!

Why? How did this all begin?

Christmas began in darkness, the darkness of sin and death. Christmas began in a world without Christmas. There was no real joy in the world. Heaven and nature did not sing. It was a world dominated by Scrooges and Grinches, by scribes and Pharisees, by Herods and Caesars. Money changers filled the temple. False prophets came in sheep's clothing but inwardly were ravenous wolves. Hired hands fled and abandoned the flock. Thieves and robbers came to steal and kill and destroy.

But in this world of sin, the dear Christ enters in. John describes it this way, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5-6).

Every Christmas candle, every Christmas star, every Christmas light testifies to this Light shining in the darkness. But unfortunately, not everyone receives His light. Many choose to remain in darkness. As St. Paul writes, they live "in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18).

But for us, children of Christmas, the world is quite different. The Bible describes us this way: "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16).

Long ago, and far, far away, a beam of light from a miraculous star reached the eye of a wise man in the east gazing into the sky. Something special, wonderful, and amazing happened. This beam of light was God's signal that Christmas would change the world. Soon they mounted an expedition to find the new-born king. This was no ordinary king. No ordinary gifts would do. They must bring Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. They must bow down and worship Him, the Light shining in the darkness.

The wise men discovered a baby who fulfilled the angel's promise to Mary. Her child was the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). The star led them to a boy named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). They bowed down and worshiped Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). They gave their gifts to the "Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

The light of that Christmas star has also touched you. It was not a light from a night sky. It was the light of God's word. His word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). Through the gospel, the eyes of your hearts have been enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).

And what have your eyes seen? Have they seen "a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer"? No, you have seen the Word made flesh. You "have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Why is Christmas special? It is special because God's only-begotten Son became one of us! He was born of the Virgin Mary.

This little child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger is God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made being of the same substance of the Father by whom all things were made! This Babe lying in a manger is the Son of God who came down from heaven for us and our salvation!

He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

This is why Christmas is special! Christmas is special because Jesus went the extra mile. Christmas is special because Jesus, God's only-begotten Son is an exceptional gift. Christmas is special because Jesus loved us to the point of exhaustion and death on the cross. Christmas is special because Jesus rose from the dead.

God no longer sends Christmas stars. Angels no longer proclaim the Savior's birth or sing "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men." But He still sends light into the world! "You are the light of the world!" (Matthew 5:14). "You are all children of light, children of the day!" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). You all have received Jesus. You believe in His name. You have become children of God. You were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13).

You make Christmas special when you tell again the Christmas story. You make Christmas special when you touch the people around you with the love of Christ. You make Christmas special when you go the extra mile to

show compassion. You make Christmas special when you give the exceptional gift of forgiveness. You make Christmas special when you serve God and your neighbors to the point of exhaustion!

1 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.

2 For Christ is born of Mary,
And, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king
And peace to all the earth!

3 How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

4 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;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!

“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.

Prayers

L To us a child is born, to us a son is given; let us offer praise, thanks and prayers to God the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Almighty God, we ask that all who celebrate the incarnation and acknowledge that their God reigns would lift up their voices and sing for joy, and would always be ready to tell others about the Word made flesh

C Amen.

L Almighty God, grant that a spirit of peace be given to the nations of the world so that conflicts cease and all see in the birth of Jesus the salvation of our God.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, grant that any who find themselves in want or need would receive the necessities for daily life. Grant that Your people who have received the gift of the Your only-begotten Son would be known for their generosity.

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 Righteous God, You give leaders to every nation and people. Grant us good and wise public servants to defend the innocent and punish evil. 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.

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.

O Little Town of Bethlehem Lutheran Service Book 361, Lutheran Worship 60, The Lutheran Hymnal 647



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!

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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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