

Sixth Lesson *Luke 2:15-20*

The shepherds visit the manger.

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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child laying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, as it had been told them.

Carol *The First Noel*

ELW #300 (vss. 1, 3 & 5)

Luther’s Christmas Prayer:

(All) Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, make thee a bed, soft, undefiled, within my heart, that it may be a quiet chamber kept for Thee. My heart for very joy doth leap, my lips no more can silence keep, I too must sing, with joyful tongue, that sweetest ancient song, Glory to God in highest heaven, who unto man His Son hath given while angels sing with pious mirth. A glad new year to all the earth! Amen!

(Martin Luther’s Christmas Prayer)

The Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Closing Hymn *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

ELW #290 (vss. 1 & 3)

Sending

L: The angel said to frightened shepherds, “Do Not Be Afraid”!

C: For Unto Us a Savior is Born!

(CCLI License # 1137749)

Festival of “Lessons and Carols”

Sunday, December 31st, 2023

Prelude

Welcome/Announcements

Call to Worship

L: Sing to the Lord a new song;

C: sing to the Lord, all the earth!

L: Sing to the lord and bless God’s name;

C: tell the good news of salvation from day to day.

L: Declare God’s glory among the nations, God’s marvelous works among all the peoples.

C: For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.

L: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice.

C: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world, and those who live in it.

L: Let the whole creation sing for joy at the presence of God, who is coming.

C: God is coming indeed, to judge the earth with righteousness, and the peoples with equity and truth. Praise the Lord!

Opening Hymn *Joy to the World*

ELW #267

Prayer

(All) Dear God, the story of salvation begins in your timeless love and finds its completion in a Holy Child born to the Virgin Mary. Help us to meditate upon the word and sing songs of praise to you as we hear again the story of Jesus’ birth. As your love became flesh for us, may we become Christmas to others in these urgent days. In the Christ-child’s name we pray. Amen.

Carol *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ELW #283 (vss. 1 & 2)

First Lesson *Isaiah 9:2, 6-7* Nancy Johnson
Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who live in a land of deep darkness - - on them light has shined. For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His 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.

Second Lesson *Micah 5:2-5a*
The prophet Micah prophesies the glory of Bethlehem.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephratha, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth a son; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem* ELW #279 (vss. 1, 2 & 4)

Third Lesson *Luke 1:26-35, 38*
The Angel Gabriel Visits the Virgin Mary.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what word of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angels 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 the Son of God." 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.

Carol *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* ELW #275 (vss. 1 & 4)

Fourth Lesson *Luke 2:1-6*
In Bethlehem, Mary gives birth to her firstborn, a son.

In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

Carol *Away in a Manger* ELW #277

Children's Sermon Bruce Bonander

Christmas Devotion

Offertory Hymn *What Child Is This* ELW #296

Fifth Lesson *Luke 2:8-14*
Shepherds are visited by God's messengers.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood over them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Carol *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* ELW #282 (vss. 1, 2 & 4)