



Nativity of Our Lord I: Christmas Eve

**Friday, December 24, 2021
First Lutheran Church – Sandpoint, ID**

Introduction to the day

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

Welcome to First Lutheran Sandpoint!

Whether in person, on-line, or in Spirit, it is Good to be in Worship together!!

The following “reflections,” from Sundays and Seasons, are offered here to help center our minds and prepare our hearts for God’s Great and Glorious Gift to us this day.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Unplanned, but Filled with Peace

Although many of us spend a great deal of time and energy preparing for Christmas, most of us have learned that things don’t always go according to plan. Whether due to a sick parent, a gift that cannot be found, or an unexpected guest, pivots of one kind or another often need to be made as Christmas draws near.

This reality directly relates to the Christmas story. In more than one way, the birth of Jesus did not go the way Mary and Joseph likely planned. Yet perhaps this is part of the point: after all, there is nothing routine about God coming to us as a baby. Similarly, it is nothing short of incredible that this one would come to dwell among us in order to show us God’s love, set us free from sin, and make possible a life that is whole and abundant.

On this Christmas Eve, we are reminded that nothing can separate us from the love of God made known to us in Jesus, Emmanuel. The birth of Jesus reveals that God has come not for perfect people or those who think they have it all figured out, but rather for people whose lives are messy and noisy, who do not always feel filled with hope, who have worked long hours, who feel the ever-present tension between the already and the not yet. The promise that endures is that the light of Jesus has come into the world for the sake of the *whole* world, and nothing can overcome it. This promise sustains us through the unexpected and sometimes surprising events that come our way. May the goodness of this truth fill us with both wonder and peace.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP -

Lighting the Advent Wreath

L1: At every beginning there is a yearning
for the one who is coming.

O Emmanuel,

Surprise us by your coming.

L2: We gather together to let God's good news
reorient our lives.

O Emmanuel,

Surprise us by your coming.

L1: We wait for the day
when all the world will see the sign
that God is with us.

O Emmanuel,

Surprise us by your coming.

L2: We are shocked by how God comes close,
even at this very moment.

O Emmanuel,

Surprise us by your coming.

L1: Jesus, we welcome your presence now
with the lighting of these candles,
whose flames bring warmth to winter
and fill this place with the glow of hope.

Amen.

Light all four Advent candles, and the Christ Candle.

Adapted from the Clayfire Collection, "What Happens When God Comes Close," by Ryan Marsh, Church of the Beloved, Edmonds, Washington. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress.

GATHERING SONG *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (ELW 257) Verses 1 and 7

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

7 O come, O King of nations, come,
O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you;
restore the broken, make us new. Refrain

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

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.
³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
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.
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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* (ELW 270) v. 1 and 3**

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king;
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!" *Refrain*

3 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth. *Refrain*

Refrain:
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

***GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20**

The holy gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And 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!”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY** *Angels We Have Heard on High* (ELW 289) v. 1 and 3

1 Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.

3 Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your church throughout the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek salvation, hope, and new life. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where light pollution disrupts natural rhythms, encourage new practices. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and holy. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night (*especially*). Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes the Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God's ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your love (*especially*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, while remaining in your pew.

The assembly is seated.

THANKSGIVING

OFFERING SONG – (Reflective Music for Time of Gratitude)

OFFERING

*Take this time to reflect upon what you are grateful for as you live in the reign of God.
Offerings may be placed in the plates as you go out from this worship to live in service to God,
bearing the Light of Christ throughout the week.
Or you can give online <https://firstlutheransandpoint.breezechms.com/give/online>.*

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus teaches us.

**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.**

Ushers please dim the lights.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

The ministers will light their candles from the altar candle, which symbolizes Christ - the Light of the world of whom John's gospel speaks. They will then light the candle of each worshipper nearest the aisle. The lighted candle is never tilted, but is always held upright when giving light to another.

John 1:1–14

In 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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.

Silent Night, Holy Night



1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,



Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child. Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Candles may now be extinguished

SENDING SONG *Joy to the World* **ELW 267 v. 1 and 4**

1 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.

4 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

The assisting minister may send the assembly into mission.

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

WORSHIP NOTES:

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Scripture text from the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version, sundaysandseasons.com)

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Worship Team:

Organ: Corina Hughes

Pastors – Amber Remillard and Steve Neuder

AV/Tech - Scott Youngren and Don Farnham

Prayers – Roy Gilbreath, Brett Peterson, Milt Jacobs, Katheryn Braatz and her family, Jack and Darlene Dickman, Kathy Bradetich, Don Harms, Steve Harms, Debbie Haberlock, Mary Laker, David Hollyer, Frances Cavagnaro, Carrie Cummings, Alyssa Grant, Betty Mitchell, George Marker, Chris Ingham; Charles Shobe Sr., Nicky Schripsema; Wendi Lies; Kara Schripsema; Trey Haberlock; Tom Taylor; Hunter Taylor; Mike Shobe; Marguerite Suttmeier; Janet Merrill, and those on your hearts and minds today.

Luther Park residents, their families, and staff.

All healthcare workers and facilities trying to offer care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Merry Christmas All!

God bless us, Every One!!

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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