

The Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Day, 2017

As We Gather:

Today we celebrate the festival of the Nativity of our Lord. The *anticipation* of Advent gives way to the *celebration* of the birth of Christ. We stand expectantly beside the shepherds to see the mystery of the ages come to pass: "*Unto you is born this day...a Savior, which is Christ the Lord*"

The Explanation of the Christmas Bells

Nothing quite says "Christmas" like bells. So, come on, bring those bells - to worship, throughout this entire Christmas season. Bring one of your favorite bells from home or borrow one of ours when you get here. The idea is that whenever the Spirit moves you - in the hymns and carols, in the liturgy, but especially after each reading of God's Holy Word (as a reminder that Jesus is the Word incarnate) - you'll ring those bells . . . in joy and praise to God. . . for Christmas.

The Distribution of the Lord's Supper

Following Holy Scripture, which speaks of the blessing of forgiveness (and therefore life and salvation) for those who discern the reality of Christ's bodily presence in the Supper (Mt. 26:28, e.g.), but warns of harm and judgment for those who don't (1 Cor. 11:27-30, e.g.), we urge all those baptized and catechized individuals (youth and adults) who would come to the Lord's Table today to celebrate Holy Communion to examine your hearts to see that you:

repent of your sin;
believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
affirm the real presence of Christ's true body and blood in/with/under the bread & wine;
and desire to live your life in accordance with the will of God.

If you have not previously communed here at Shepherd of the Mountains, please first intro-duce yourself to our Pastor, in order that all those who will commune together today - who will share the one bread and the one cup - may be assured that we share as well the same confession and understanding.

(Young) children who are not yet capable of such self-examination are nevertheless invited to come forward - not to receive the body and blood of our Savior, but rather, the blessing of our gracious God.

Organ Preludes and the Lighting of the Candles Welcome to Worship

The Christmas Hymn: #379 "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful"

* (stand) The Invocation

Pastor: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (+) be with you all.*

People: **And also with you.**

* (stand) The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Pastor: *We light the Christ Candle in what was formerly our Advent wreath to demonstrate that God has been faithful and has fulfilled his promise of a Savior. In Christ he has brought the Light of the World to us and to all people.*

People: **Heavenly Father, accept our thanks and praise for calling us out of darkness into your marvelous light. May the "good news of great joy" shine in our lives, that others may be drawn to the manger and there behold your salvation, Christ the Lord. Amen.**

* (stand) The Confession and Absolution of our Sin

Pastor: *"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).*

People: **"The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

Pastor: *"He was in the world" - the world that came into being through him - "yet the world did not know him."*

People: **"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:9-11).**

Pastor: *In the same way, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

People: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Pastor: "If we walk in the light as He himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

People: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Pastor: Therefore, let us confess our sins to God our Father.

People: O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to you all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended you and justly deserved your punishment now and forever. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray you of your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.

Pastor: Instead of wrath, our God gives us mercy and grace. The Father saves us not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done for us in Jesus. Therefore, upon this your confession, I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, now publicly forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

* (stand) The Sharing of God's Peace

Pastor: The peace of the newborn Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

(All are encouraged to greet one another with the peace of the Lord, saying:
The peace of the newborn Lord be with you. And also with you.)

* (stand) The Christmas Hymn of Praise: #380

**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 host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"**

* (stand) The Prayer of the Day

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: 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.

People: Amen.

The Christmas Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 52:7-10

(The LORD's coming salvation.)

^{Isa 52:7} How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" ^{Isa 52:8} Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. ^{Isa 52:9} Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ^{Isa 52:10} The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Pastor: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God. (with bells ringing)

The Christmas Psalm: Psalm 98 (first part)

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.

The LORD has made his salvation known

and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;

all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

The Christmas Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 1:1-6

(The supremacy of God's Son.)

^{Heb 1:1} In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ^{Heb 1:2} but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ^{Heb 1:3} The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ^{Heb 1:4} So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

^{Heb 1:5} For to which of the angels did God ever say,
"You are my Son; today I have become your Father"?

Or again,

"I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

^{Heb 1:6} And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,
"Let all God's angels worship him."

Pastor: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God! (with bells ringing)

The Christmas Psalm (continued)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn--

shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

**Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;
let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.**

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

* (stand) The Announcement of the Christmas Gospel

(according to the ancient form)

*Pastor: In the year 5199 since the creation of the world, when God made the heavens and the earth; in the year 2957 since the great flood; in the year 2015 since Abraham was born; in the year 1510 since the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, through the Red Sea, under the leadership of Moses; in the year 1032 since David was anointed King; in the 65th week of years as Daniel prophesied; in the 194th Olympiad; in the year 752 after Rome was built; in the 42nd year of the reign of Octavian Augustus, when Rome guaranteed peace in the world; in the sixth era of the history of the world; Jesus Christ, eternal God and the Son of the eternal Father, who desired to save the world by his gracious coming, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and now, after nine months, is born at Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah as a man from the virgin Mary.
The birth of our Lord Jesus in flesh and blood.*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel for the Feast of the Nativity is written in the Gospel of St. John, the first chapter.

* (stand) The Gospel Acclamation: #387 "Joy to the World" (v. 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.**

* (stand) The Christmas Gospel: John 1:1-14

(John testifies to having seen the glory of the One and Only in the Word made flesh.)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

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

14 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.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ. (with bells ringing)

The Hymn of the Day: #386 “Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”

The Christmas Sermon

* (stand) The Confession of our Faith for Christmas

In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1ff) -

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mk. 1:1)

and the Word was with God -

I came from the Father and entered the world . . . (Acts 16:28)

and the Word was God.

The radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

(Heb. 1:3)

He was with God in the beginning.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (Rev. 22:13)

Through him all things were made;

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork . (Ps. 19:1)

without him nothing was made that has been made.

For in him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned. (Mt. 4:16)

The light shines in the darkness;

A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. (Lk. 2:32)

but the darkness has not understood it.

Then Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "The voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Mt. 3:3)

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light,

People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. (Mt. 3:5)

so that through him all men might believe.

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan river. (Mt. 3:6)

He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:17)

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" (Mt. 2:1-2)

He was in the world,

"In Bethlehem, in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written." (Mt. 2:5)

and though the world was made through him,

"We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him." (Mt. 2:2)

the world did not recognize him.

When Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him (Mt. 2:3).

He came to that which was his own,

The throne of his father David. (Luke 1:32)

but his own did not receive him.

They . . . mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mt. 27:29)

Yet to all who received him,

At once they left their nets and followed him. (Mk. 1:18)

to those who believed in his name,

One of the criminals . . . said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 22:39,42)

he gave the right to become children of God -

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will,

And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." (Mt. 3:9)

but born of God.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

The Word became flesh,

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph . . . (Mt. 1:18)

and made his dwelling among us.

Joseph went to Bethlehem with Mary While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son . . and placed him in a manger. (Luke 2:5-7)

We have seen his glory,

Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

the glory of the One and Only,

he was the son . . . of Joseph . . . the son of Abraham . . . the son of Adam, the son of God. (Mt. 1:23)

who came from the Father,

And they will call him Emmanuel - which means, "God with us." (Mt. 1:23)

full of grace and truth.

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men with whom He is pleased."

The Christmas Offering

(Please take this time to complete the Friendship Form and route it down and back your pew, taking note of the names of those sitting with you and rejoicing in their presence here today.)

* (stand) The Christmas Offertory: #370 "What Child is This?"
(verses 1, 3)

* (stand) The Responsive Prayer

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we rejoice that you have made your dwelling among us, full of grace and truth, in the presence of your Son, the Babe of Bethlehem. May we greet him with anthems sweet and hasten to bring him our praises.

People: Glory to You, O Lord. Glory in the highest!

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we rejoice this day that you keep your promises and that you have provided your own dear Son, who has opened the door to paradise through the forgiveness of our sin.

People: Glory to you, O Lord. Glory in the highest!

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we rejoice that your Son, who became like us, taking on the form of a servant, is now changing us to be more like Him, a servant.

People: Glory to you, O Lord. Glory in the highest!

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we rejoice that nothing can separate us from you and your love - not sickness, or death, or anything! Lord, we rejoice in your healing presence, and we pray for those who still need to know both your healing and your nearness.

People: Glory to you, O Lord. Glory in the highest!

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we rejoice that you have called us together as your people. Bless the leaders and all of the people of this congregation with a full measure of your joy, that we may echo the song of the angels in our communities and be shining lights in our time and place.

People: Glory to you, O Lord. Glory in the highest!

(Here special intercessions may be spoken. Each portion concludes:
Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.)

Pastor: Be near us, Lord Jesus, we ask Thee to stay close by us forever, and love us, we pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care and take us to heaven to live with you there.

People: Amen. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

* (stand) The Order of Holy Communion

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, for in the mystery of the Word made flesh you have given us a new revelation of your glory that, seeing you in the person of your Son, we may be drawn to the love of those things which are not seen. Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and singing:

(LSB #367 "Angels from the Realms of Glory," v. 5)

**All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising To th'eternal Three in One
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.**

Pastor: Heavenly Father, in many and various ways you made yourself known in the past, but now in these last days you have revealed yourself through your Son, calling the world to the new life and light He brings. Open our hearts and minds to receive Him with faith, who comes to us in his body and blood. Give us confidence to call upon you and to pray as he commands:

(The Lord's Prayer)

**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.**

*** (stand) The Words of Institution**

*Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: Take, eat; this is my (+) body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.
In the same way also he took the cup after supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: Drink of it, all of you; this is my (+) blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

*** (stand) The Communion Invitation**

*Pastor: "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.
. . . Come, for everything is now ready" (Luke 14:15-17).*

The Distribution

(We strongly encourage all those communicants who intend to come to the Sacrament today to prepare for receiving the Lord's gracious gifts with the "Christian Questions" found on page 329 of our worship and hymn book, *Lutheran Service Book*.

(Following Holy Scripture, we urge all communicants to examine your hearts to see that you:

repent of your sins;
believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord;
affirm the real presence of Christ's true body and blood with the bread and wine;
and, desire to live your life in accordance with the will of God.

(Young children who are not yet capable of such self-examination and understanding are nevertheless invited to come forward -- not to receive the body and blood of our Lord, but rather his gracious blessing.

(For those who prefer, the white cups in each tray contain "non-alcoholic" wine.)

*** (stand) The Common Dismissal**

Pastor: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ - given in, with, and under this bread and wine - strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart (+) in peace.

People: Amen.

*** (stand) The Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer**

Pastor: Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

People: And his mercy endures forever.

Pastor: Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with the body and blood of the Word made flesh, Christ our Lord. 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, once born of the virgin according to the Word of the prophets, and now living and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

People: Amen.

*** (stand) The Blessing of Our God**

*Pastor: Go in the peace of Christmas, with the blessings of the Christ Child in your heart. And as you go,
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and (+) give you peace (Num. 6:24).*

People: Amen.

The Closing Hymn: #364 "Away In A Manger"

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Parish Announcements

Organ Postludes

A Time of Christmas Greeting and Fellowship

MISSION MINUTE: On this bright day, God blesses the world - a world mired in the darkness of sin and sorrow and pain and hurt - with light - the light of forgiveness, and therefore of hope and peace and new life. Reflect that light. Share that blessing. Christ, the Savior, is borne - borne by your joyful witness.

"This is the week that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Mon.	12/25	10:00 a.m.	- Divine Service - Nativity Festival - Holy Communion
Tues	12/26	5:00 p.m.	- NO Confirmation Class (Merry Christmas)
Wed	12/27	9:30 a.m.	- NO Ladies' Bible Study (Merry Christmas) - NO <i>LifeLight</i> Bible study
Sun	12/31	8:15 a.m.	- NO Handbell Choir Practice
		9:15 a.m.	- Sunday School/Adult Bible Class
		10:30 a.m.	- Divine Service - Holy Communion (5 th Sunday)
		11:55 a.m.	- LWML "Mites for Missions" coffee fellowship
		7:00 p.m.	- New Year's Eve Service - Holy Communion
Tues	1/02	5:00 p.m.	- NO Confirmation Class (Happy New Year)
Wed	1/03	9:30 a.m.	- NO Ladies' Bible Study (Happy New Year)
		7:00 p.m.	- NO <i>LifeLight</i> Bible Study (Happy New Year)
Fri	1/05	6:30 p.m.	- "First Friday" night at the movies (Dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m.)

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS THIS WEEK: 12/25 (Today!)- our Lord Jesus; 12/28 - Donna K, Dick R; 12/29 - Mary S.

YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONAL HAS ARRIVED! In case you haven't seen them yet, first-quarter 2018 copies of *Portals of Prayer* have been placed in the tract rack in the narthex. Be sure to pick yours up so you won't miss a single day of daily devoting. And when you do, pick up a copy for someone you know who could use a closer walk with God in this new year of our Lord. (As a silent invitation, our service times are conveniently listed right on the back cover.)

IT'S CALLED THE *LUTHERAN WITNESS*, the official periodical of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It's the latest news, information, and teaching on the Lutheran front. And this is your chance to subscribe at our "group" rate: only \$10.80 for ten informative monthly issues. Don't send any money just yet; just give your name and address to Pastor or an Elder and we'll see that you get added to the group subscription list. (If you're already on the list, we'll make the assumption you want to continue, unless we hear otherwise from you.) In about six or eight weeks, when they bill us, we'll let you know you're good to pay, too - by adding \$10.80 - duly marked - to one of your weekly offerings.

LIFE THOUGHTS IN THE CHURCH YEAR (from Lutherans for Life) "*The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared*" (Titus 3:4). And look, it's a baby!"

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Christmas Day
December 25, 2017
The Nativity of our Lord
(928) 367-1183
2035 S. Penrod Lane,
Pinetop, Arizona 85935
Telephone/Fax (928) 367-1183
www.shepherdofthemountains.com
e-mail: shepherdpt@frontiernet.net
Pastor: R. Wayne Morton
Ministers: Each and Every Member
Shepherd of the Mountains
Lutheran Church
(LC-MS)