

# The Greatest Gift



**Christmas Eve**  
**6:00pm December 24, 2020**



# ROCK OF AGES

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

Reaching Out in Rim Country with Rock-Solid Hope in Jesus

---

**W**elcome! We are glad that you have joined us to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. Our service is printed for you in its entirety in this worship folder.

- May the message you hear today fill your heart with peace and joy from knowing that Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin.
- Everyone is encouraged to keep extra space from those outside your family. Feel free to use any of the **extra chairs** in the front area and in the entry.
- **Gift bags** for children will be distributed after worship. Please be sure to pick one up on your way out of the building.
- **Large print** service folders and **hearing assistance** devices are available.
- **Restrooms** are located at the far ends of the entry area.
- **Children's activity bags**, quiet toys, and a changing table are available from the nursery in entry area.
- We are part of a world-wide Christian body and support the gospel ministry of the WELS. We'd love to share more with you. Contact our pastor today. You can also visit [wels.net](http://wels.net)





# Lessons and Carols

*An adaptation of a traditional English Christmas Eve Service*

## Hymn

Once in Royal David's City

*Christian Worship 50*



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y  
 2 He came down to earth from heav - en  
 3 But our eyes at last shall see him  
 4 Not in that poor, low - ly sta - ble



Stood a low - ly cat - tle shed, Where a  
 Who is God and Lord of all, And his  
 Through his own re - deem - ing love, For that  
 With the ox - en stand - ing by Shall we



moth - er laid her ba - by In a man - ger  
 shel - ter was a sta - ble, And his cra - dle  
 child, so dear and gen - tle, Is our Lord in  
 see him, but in heav - en, Set at God's right



for his bed; Mar - y was that moth - er mild,  
 was a stall; With the poor and mean and low - ly  
 heav'n a - bove, And he leads his chil - dren on  
 hand on high. Then like stars his chil - dren crowned,



Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child.  
 Lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
 To the place where he is gone.  
 All in white, his praise will sound.

## **Exhortation and Prayer**

Beloved in Christ: In this Christmas season it is our duty and delight to hear again the message of the angels and, in heart and mind, to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us, the Christ-child, lying in a manger.

Let us read and learn in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God from the first days after our fall, and into the birth and glorious redemption brought to us by this Holy Child. Let us hear how peace was lost, and how peace is restored.

But first, let us pray, for this is good and right.

Heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves and all people who worship you and your Son this holy night. By your holy Word, lead us to say with the angels,  
**Glory to God in the highest!**

We pray for your blessing upon the people of our city, our state, our nation, and our world.

**Glory to God in the highest!**

We pray for the poor and helpless, the cold and hungry, the sick and sad, that you would give them the joy of your salvation and the comfort of your presence.

**Glory to God in the highest!**

We pray for unbelievers and enemies of the Church, that through your Law and Gospel you would lead them to recognize your Son as their only hope for eternal life.

**Glory to God in the highest!**

Finally, we remember before you all those who rejoice with us in heaven, who live in greater light and beauty than we, that multitude which no one

can number, who died in faith, and now praise you in your heavenly temple. We confess that we are united with them and with one another.

## **Glorify to God in the highest!**

We humbly offer up these prayers and praises in the words that Christ himself taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

*Be seated*

## **First Lesson** *God Promises a Needed Gift*

Genesis 3:8-15

*Humanity's separation from God dates to the beginning of time, to the fall into sin by the first humans, Adam and Eve. As tragic as this was, the account ends with God's promise of a stunning gift—that the woman's offspring, Christ, would ultimately defeat Satan and restore us to God.*



<sup>8</sup>They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup>The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

<sup>11</sup>God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the livestock, and more than every wild animal. You shall crawl on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup>I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.

## Hymn

## Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

*Christian Worship 34*



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.  
thro' 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!

## Second Lesson -God's Gift is Described

*Striking symbolic language describes the gift more than 700 years before it was given.*

Isaiah 11:1-9



A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. <sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>He will be delighted with the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, nor will he render decisions based on what he hears with his ears, <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and he will render fair decisions in favor of the oppressed on the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath from his lips he will put the wicked to death.

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness will be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his hips. <sup>6</sup>The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together, and a little child will lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear will graze together, and their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the cattle. <sup>8</sup>The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole, and the weaned child will put his hand into a viper's den. <sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

## Hymn

Joy to the World

*Christian Worship 62*

♪ 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.

**2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3. No more let sins and sorrows grow  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**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.**

### **Third Lesson** – *God reveals where his gift will appear*

Micah 5:2-4

*God wants there to be no doubt about his gift. Through prophecy he reveals the exact tiny village where Jesus would be born. The wonder of fulfilled prophecy continues to convince people about the validity of God's gift even today.*



But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel. His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore the LORD will give them up, until the time when the woman who is in labor bears a child. Then the remaining survivors from his brothers will return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup>He will stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. They will dwell securely, for at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.

## **Carol**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem**  
*Christian Worship 65*

*Not to a palace in a city does God send his gift, but to an obscure village.  
"How silently the wondrous gift is given" (stanza 2).*



♪ **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.**

**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.**

**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;  
Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!**

## **Fourth Lesson** -*God's Gift Comes Through a Miracle* Luke 1:26-38

*So many of God's ways of intervening in our world are beyond our understanding. We are blessed to receive God's gift when, like Mary, we humbly accept God's plan and marvel at it.*



In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

<sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled by the statement and was wondering what kind of greeting this could be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup>The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of

the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>Listen, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age even though she was called barren, and this is her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible for God."

<sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

## Hymn

Noel

*Sung by 4 For Christ*

## Fifth Lesson - *the Gift is "God with Us"*

Matthew 1:18-25

*The first lesson described the human race's separation from God. God's gift to end this separation is his Son, Immanuel—"God with us."*



This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother, Mary, was pledged in marriage to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. So he decided to divorce her privately. <sup>20</sup>But as he was considering these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup>All this happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup>"Look, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. And they will name him Immanuel," which means, "God with us."

<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. He took Mary home as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but he was not intimate with her until she gave birth to her firstborn son. And he named him Jesus.

## Hymn

Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

*Christian Worship 23*



1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive  
 2 Oh, come, O Root of Jes - se, free Your own from Sa - tan's  
 3 Oh, come, O Day-spring from on high, And cheer us by your  
 4 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, And o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
 tyr - an - ny; From depths of hell your peo - ple save,  
 draw - ing nigh; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,  
 heav'n - ly home. Make safe the way that leads on high,



Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 And bring them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re-joice! Re-joice!  
 And death's dark shad - ows put to flight.  
 And close the path to mis - er - y.



Em - man - u - el Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

## Sixth Lesson -God's Gift Arrives

Luke 2:1-7

*In a fulfillment of the prophecy in tonight's third lesson, God uses the mighty powers of this world to accomplish his will and to deliver his gift to an otherwise doomed world.*

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup>And everyone went to register, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and



family line of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, his wife, who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

<sup>6</sup>And so it was that while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

## Song

### Away in a Manger

*Christian Worship 68*

*First stanza sung by Rock of Ages Preschool children*

*Second Stanza by 4 For Christ*

*All join stanza 3*



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 you 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.



The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
I love you, Lord Je - sus; look down from the sky,  
Bless all the dear chil - dren in your ten - der care,



The lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
And stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.  
And take us to heav - en to live with you there.

## Seventh Lesson – *God’s Gift is Celebrated*

Luke 2:8-20

*The angels can’t help but celebrate God’s gift. The shepherds eagerly spread the word of this gift as announced by the angels. We join them, glorifying and praising God for all that we have come to know about God’s great gift.*



There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified! <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Now let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they told others the message they had been told about this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

## Carol

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*Christian Worship 61*

**♪ 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 th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

**2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail th' incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with us to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel!  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**3. Hail, the heav'nly 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 us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

## **Sermon**

**Romans 8:32**

### *THE GREATEST GIFT*

Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

## **Offering**

*Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him. Our offerings go to support the gospel ministry of our congregation and our church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.*

*Today the offerings can be placed on the table as you enter or exit.*

# Offering Hymn

**Go, Tell It On the Mountain**  
*Sung by Rock of Ages Children's choir*

*Stand*

## Prayer

O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your only Son, Jesus Christ; grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, so may we also behold him with sure confidence when he shall come to be our judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## Blessing

May he who by his incarnation gathered things earthly and heavenly into one, fill us with such joy that comes with the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. And the blessing of God Almighty—the Father, the ✕ Son, and the Holy Spirit— be upon you and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

## Carol

**Silent Night**  
*Christian Worship 60*

♪ **Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**2. Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar; Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**3. Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

## Worship opportunities during the 12 days of Christmas



**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 AT 9:00 AM**

Christmas Day Song Service

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27 AT 9:00 & 11:15 AM**

Song Service II

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 1 AT 9:00 AM**

New Year's Day Service

**SUNDAY JANUARY 3 AT 9:00 & 11:15 AM**

Sunday Service

---

**Presiding Minister:** Pastor Tom Barthel

**Music:** Keyboard, Jeni Strickland; 4 For Christ;  
Mandolin, Peter Barthel  
Preservice violin, Lydia & Phineas Barthel;

### **Acknowledgments**

Inside artwork © 2011 Ian Welch Paramentics.com  
Scripture taken from The Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version®, EHV®, © 2019 Wartburg Project, Inc. All rights reserved.  
All printed music is public domain.

---



RockofAges-Payson.com

204 W. Airport Rd. Payson, AZ 85541 • Office: 928-474-2098 • pastorbarthel@gmail.com

Pastor Tom Barthel • Mobile: 928-612-8463