

December 24, 2025 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

AS WE GATHER

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are all about Jesus' birth. In fact, there are appointed readings for Christmas Eve, Christmas Midnight, Christmas Dawn, and Christmas Day. Christmas Eve focuses on the birth of Jesus, Christmas Midnight and Dawn focus on the birth of Jesus and the announcement to the shepherds, and Christmas Day focuses on who Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, is according to John chapter 1. And yet, tonight we also read the fourth and final Servant Song in Isaiah: The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). This is perhaps the most popular of the Servant Songs, because it so clearly talks about Jesus' suffering and death. What a contrast between the readings! In the Gospel we get Christ's birth; in the Old Testament, we get His death. Why the contrast? Because the whole goal of Christmas – of Christ's birth – is for the Christ child to save His people. How? By dying for them. By dying for *you*.

WELCOME

HYMN *LSB 357, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*

INVOCATION AND CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

People: **who made heaven and earth.**

Pastor: If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

People: **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.**

Pastor: Since we are gathered to hear God's Word and call upon Him in prayer and praise, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

People: **Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,

People: the light no darkness can overcome.

Pastor: Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,

People: and the day is almost over.

Pastor: Let Your light scatter the darkness

People: and illumine Your Church.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Pastor: And the angel said to [the shepherds], "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (*Luke 2:10–12*)

Pastor: The Christ has come!

People: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Pastor: For unto you is born this day a Savior,

People: He is Christ our Lord!

Pastor: This Christ Child, our Savior, was born with a mission.

People: He was born to suffer and die for us.

Pastor: Tonight, as we celebrate that Christ was born to suffer and die in order to save us, we light the Christ candle, remembering that Christ is the Light of the world, the Light no darkness can overcome.

(The Christ candle is lit)

People: Christ is our Light.

HYMN *LSB 934, "My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord"*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray. O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 52:13–53:12*

¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴ As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— ¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous

one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Pastor: O Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

EPISTLE READING *1 John 4:7–16*

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Pastor: O Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC *“O Holy Night”*

GOSPEL READING *Matthew 1:18-25*

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the

angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Pastor: In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

People: **But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.**

HYMN *LSB 370, "What Child Is This"*

SERMON *"The Servant was Born to Suffer"*

APOSTLE'S CREED

All: 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.

OFFERING

PRAYER

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord:

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For... let us pray to the Lord:

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

We take a moment of silence for individual, silent prayer.

Pastor: Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord:

People: **To You, O Lord. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we are bold to pray:

All: 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.

THE CANDLE LIGHTING

At this time, the pastor will light a candle from the Christ Candle which symbolizes Jesus who is the Light of the World. The ushers will light their candles from the pastor's candle and then light the candle of each worshiper nearest the center aisle. Please note: The lighted candle is always held upright when giving light to the next person.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Silent Night" (ft. Emily Ernest)

Emily will sing and play the harp for stanza 1. The congregation may join in for stanzas 2 and 3. The words are printed below. Words and music can be found in the hymnal, LSB 363.

Solo: 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.

All: 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!

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.

BLESSING

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

People: Amen.

The candles are extinguished

HYMN LSB 887, "Now the Light Has Gone Away"

CLOSING

Pastor: Go in peace and serve your neighbor.

People: Thanks be to God!

Service adapted from the service of Evening Prayer found in LSB 243-252. Confession and Absolution adapted from Divine Service Setting Four, LSB 203. Candle lighting adapted from Grace Lutheran Church Christmas Eve bulletin 12/24/2024.