

December 24, 2023
4th Sunday of Advent



DO NOT BE
afraid ...
YOU HAVE FOUND
favor
WITH GOD.



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✠ Opening Prayer ✠

Hymn: TLH #62

“Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel”

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C ♪ **Amen.**

P Pastor

Confession of Our Sins

C **Congregation**

We come before God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord.

C ♪ **Who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.

C ♪ **And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O Almighty God, our Maker and redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C **O most merciful God, who has given Your only begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Absolution from Our God

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

P Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given us His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To them that believe on His name He gives the power to become the sons of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

C ♪ **Amen.**

The Introit

Ps. 19:1, 4-6; Is. 45:8a

A collection of passages that set the tone for the service.

- P** Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness;
- C** **Let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout.**
- P** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
- C** **Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,**
- P** which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
- C** **Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.**
- P** Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness;
- C** **Let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout.**

The Gloria Patri

LSB 340:4-5

Latin for "Glory be to the Father."

- C** ♪ **Fling wide the portals of your heart;
Make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heav'n's employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sov'reign enter in
And new and nobler life begin.
To God alone be praise
For word and deed and grace!**
- Redeemer, come and open wide
My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide!
O enter with Thy grace divine;
Thy face of mercy on me shine.
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on
Until our glorious goal is won.
Eternal praise and fame
We offer to Thy name.**

Collect Prayer of the Day

A prayer to God that collects together the thoughts and theme of the day.

P Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

G ♪ **Amen.**

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers-- it is to him you shall listen-- ¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' ¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

⊕ WONDERFUL *Mighty*
COUNSELOR
EVERLASTING *God*
FATHER **P** *Prince of*
Peace

Matthew 25:31-46

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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 Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn: WS #704:1, 3-5

"Oh Lord, How Shall I Meet You"

**Luke 1:26-38**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ And the angel answered 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 called holy-- the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who

was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God."
³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Rejoice, Highly Favored One!

- I. Rejoice! For you need not fear
- II. Rejoice! For your King is near

The Offertory

In this prayer we offer our hearts, asking God for the best gift, the Holy Spirit.

G ♪ **Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit within me Cast me not away from Thy presence; And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; And uphold me with thy free spirit. Amen.**

✠ The Offering of Thankful Hearts ✠

Hymn: TLH #114

"Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love"

✠ The General Prayer & The Lord's Prayer ✠

The Benediction

Numbers 6:24-26

The blessing given by God for His people.

P The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace.

G ♪ **Amen, amen, a – men.**

Hymn: TLH #95

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

There Will Be No Bible Class this Wednesday. Our study of Acts will begin again in the new year!

Our Christmas Eve Service is this afternoon at 4 pm! Please be sure to include this special service in your Christmas celebration!

Next Sunday's Schedule – Bible Class – 9am/Worship – 10 am
New Year's Eve Worship – 7pm

“Not Yet” . . . “Now!”

Adapted from a devotion by Pastor Michael Eichstadt

With Christmas, timing is everything. Remember in July when Christmas seemed so distant? Did you tell yourself at Thanksgiving that there was plenty of time to get cards sent and make travel plans? A few days ago the deadline passed for mailing packages. Are yours still waiting at home? Perhaps you mistimed a purchase online, and a gift now will be arriving after Christmas instead of before. Our timing is seldom perfect. Sometimes we procrastinate and put things off until it's too late. Other times we're too impatient to wait for the right time. Whether we're ready or not, the days and weeks go by with the regularity God ordered at creation. Without fail, the “not yet” of waiting and preparation turns into “now!”

God's timing in bringing about the first Christmas could not have been better. *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”* (Gal. 4:4-5). God was not going to be rushed. According to His perfect order, detail by detail, prophecy by prophecy, year by year, time moved along until “not yet” became “now!”

Christmas timing is much more than getting presents under the tree and guests in the house by December 25. At just the one right moment in history, God's Son was born of the virgin Mary. His birth is a miracle beyond our rational understanding. He did not come merely to live here, but to lay down His holy life as a ransom payment for the debt of sin, your sin and mine.



The “not yet” of waiting, longing, and hoping becomes the “now,” as we look forward to hearing the news of Christ's birth in our Christmas Eve service this afternoon. And just as Jesus came in the fullness of time, so in the fullness of time yet to come, He will return to transform the present “not yet” into a glorious eternal “now.”

Daily Bible Readings for Home Devotions

December 25 – 30, 2023

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

-Psalm 119:105

Mon Luke 2:1-7 In only seven verses, Luke recounts the birth of Jesus. This is no embellished legend, but an event set in history, naming rulers, places and participants. And the hand of God was guiding all.

Tues Luke 2:8-14 The Savior, Christ the Lord, was born for all, even shepherds out in the field. But if God had not let them (and us) know, we would all be in the dark about what He was doing for us.

Wed Luke 2:15-20 The great importance of Jesus' birth is shown by the shepherds who leave their flock to go and see God's gift, and then to become messengers themselves. With Mary may we ponder it all again and again.

Thur Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke through many messengers, but in these last days God spoke through His Son. Through Him God created and sustains the world. Through Him came purification for sins.

Fri Hebrews 1:4-6 The Son of God is far superior to every other messenger of God, yes, even heaven's angels! He is the One whom all the angels worship! (v6)

Sat Isaiah 9:6-7 The wondrous power and peace of the Christ-child is staggering, and cannot be over-emphasized! Through Him were all things made (Jn1:3). But the message that lifts our hearts to heaven is the "unto us," "unto us!" (v6). He is ours!