

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

We help lost people find the Way.

Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod
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IMMANUEL'S MISSION STATEMENT

As one united family, our mission is to live and preach Christ's forgiveness in the place where God has set us down.

Christmas Eve

Worship

December 24, 2020

*Please stand for portions marked **

SILENT PRAYER

Upon being seated

Prepare your heart and mind for worship today with silent prayer using words of your own or one of the prayers in our hymnal on page 10.

Welcome to all members and guests! May your time of worship be uplifting and renewing as we hear the message of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ! We ask that all our prayers and praises be acceptable to God our Father. If you are a guest, it's our pleasure that you are here today. If you are seeking a church home, please consider Immanuel. We offer the word of God in worship and Bible study, Christian friendship, and opportunities to serve God. Our pastor would be happy to speak to you about our congregation.

Thank you for considering others in worship. We appreciate it when you turn off cell phones and electronic devices during worship. When little children become restless, we provide a "cry room" near the entrance where the service can still be heard and observed. And may we all listen to the word of God with joyful respect, refraining as much as possible from leaving the sanctuary during worship.

Please remain seated for our first two hymns.

HYMN 40

"O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is"

HYMN 51

"I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes"

We stand for our opening hymn in reverence and respect for the King of kings as we enter his presence to worship.

* HYMN 55

"Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful"

WE GATHER FOR WORSHIP

* GREETING IN THE LORD'S NAME

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

C: And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

P: Four Advent candles pointed us to the coming Savior. Tonight we light the Christ candle because Jesus our Savior has come.

C: We light the Christ candle in the sure hope of our salvation.

P: Dear Lord Jesus, you are our guest.

C: Through your word and Spirit may our souls be blessed.

* RESPONSIVE PSALM: Psalm 96

P: Sing to the LORD a new song;

C: sing to the LORD, all the earth.

P: Sing to the LORD, praise his name;

C: proclaim his salvation day after day.

P: Declare his glory among the nations,

C: his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

P: Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;

C: tremble before him, all the earth.

P: Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;

C: let the sea resound, and all that is in it;

P: let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them.

C: Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;

P: for he comes to judge the world in righteousness

C: and the peoples in his truth.

P: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

We join together to pray that we all may see Jesus face to face in heaven.

*** PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE**

Pray together

O God, you made this most holy night to shine with the true Light, Christ Jesus our Lord. Grant that we who believe in your Son as the true Light may see him in all his glory in the life to come. We ask this for his sake, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS WORD

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FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7

God's people who have endured hardship and distress are now going to be blessed with joy and peace. A child will be born to them - one who is the almighty God himself and the Son of David. His kingdom will last forever.

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.
You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as men rejoice
when dividing the plunder.
For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace

there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

SECOND LESSON

Titus 2:11-14

God's salvation has appeared in this world to all men. This message of forgiveness teaches us to live sanctified lives as we wait for Jesus' second coming to this world.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

HYMN 63

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

We stand for the gospel in special reverence and respect for the words of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

P: The gospel according to Luke 2.

C: Glory be to you, O Lord!

*** GOSPEL**

Luke 2:1-20

This is the familiar account of the birth of Jesus Christ.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria). And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor
rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise be to you, O Christ!

HYMN 65 & 66

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Verse 1 – tune 65

Verse 2 – tune 66

Verse 3 – tune 66

Verse 4 – tune 65

SERMON: Isaiah 9:6

"In Jesus We Have Peace"

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

OFFERING

The financial support of Immanuel Lutheran's ministry is the privilege and responsibility of our members. Guests may give an offering to the Lord's work if they desire but should not feel obligated to do so.

Please note that we will not pass the offering plates. An offering plate is available at the rear of the sanctuary where worshipers may give their offerings.

HYMN 60

"Silent Night"

During this hymn the congregation will sing to candlelight. An usher will light the candle of the first person of each pew. The next person should tip his unlit candle to the lit one to light his. The same should be done down the row until everyone's candle has been lit. After the service please return your candle to the basket located in the narthex of the church.

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

WE DEPART WITH GOD'S PEACE

BLESSING

Please extinguish your candles.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN 62

"Joy to the World"

While the ushers dismiss the congregation take the time to say hello to those who are seated near you. Welcome any guests or strangers, introduce yourself, and get to know one another!

You Are Invited to return tomorrow for our Christmas day worship at 10:00 a.m. A Christmas hymn sing will begin at 9:45 a.m.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

The simplicity and quietness with which God sent his Son to this world is amazing. God always thinks differently that we do. He acts and carries out his will among us in ways we don't understand, expect, or sometimes even notice.

That's the way Jesus' birth was. If someone in our world today were in charge of publicizing Jesus' birth, making known the birth of the Son of God and Savior of the world, you know that, given the nature of our media and the technology of instant communication around the world, Jesus' birth would be a media event beyond anything we have ever seen or experienced.

If Jesus' birth happened today poor little Bethlehem would be overrun weeks in advance with reporters from around the world and satellite dishes lined up all the way back to Jerusalem. There would be round the clock news reports on all the news channels.

New reporters would interview Mary and Joseph. There would be reporters on site out in the fields talking with shepherds. And no doubt the reporters would press Mary on the validity of a virgin birth and whether an angel named Gabriel really appeared to her. There would be discussion on Mary's state of mind and whether her child was really different than any other child.

When we consider such a media circus we are thankful, simply for the sake of dignity, that God sent his Son into the world 2000 years ago. It was not a media event. The truth is that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem went pretty much unnoticed by anyone other than some shepherds and those people whom the shepherds spoke to about what they had seen and heard.

We understand of course that Jesus really is the Son of God born of the virgin Mary, but when we read this beautiful account of Jesus' birth in Luke 2, on the surface, there really is nothing too terribly unusual about it other than the fact that Jesus was born not in a bedroom in a home or an inn which anyone would expect, but in a place perhaps next to the inn where the animals were kept.

And even Jesus' birth in this humble place was not that unusual given the fact that the homes and inn in this little town were overrun with people returning to Bethlehem for the census that had been decreed by Caesar Augustus. Joseph simply did what any of us would have done. He found a place where there would be some protection and help from other people if it was needed. Even the cloths, the swaddling clothes, that Mary wrapped Jesus in were not unusual. It was common practice to wrap babies in these pieces of cloth.

But what becomes suddenly unusual in this account of Jesus' birth is what happens right in the middle of the account. "Suddenly," Luke writes, "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests'" Any news reporter would have noticed this appearance and song of the angels as the most visibly unusual part of the night.

An angel had appeared to some shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem to announce to them that a baby had been born. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." And then a whole army of angels sang the first Christmas carol: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

This song of the angels does exactly what a good hymn, especially a good Christmas carol, should do. It first of all gives praise and glory to God. Second it teaches us why it is that we give praise and glory to God.

"Glory to God in the highest." God created the angels to praise and glorify him. God created us to praise and glorify him too. Psalm 100 leads us in that praise. "Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Or our psalm for Christmas Eve encourages us, "Sing to the LORD a new song;

proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples."

And those words tell us why we give praise and glory to God especially on this Christmas Eve. We praise God tonight for our salvation - salvation that is to be proclaimed to all people. The angels sang, ". . . on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." In other words the angels were singing, "Because Jesus the Savior is born there is peace on earth to people to whom God has shown his favor and love."

People who don't really understand who Jesus is or what his birth was really all about misuse this passage a lot. They imagine somehow that the birth of the one Isaiah the prophet calls the Prince of Peace will usher in a time of peace among the nations in this world. And every Christmas we hear the same heart-warming sentiments about peace on earth. And every year brings more war.

The angels were praising God for a much more profound kind of peace - a peace that will really be eternal. It's a peace between heaven and earth, between God and sinful mankind. From the time Adam sinned in the very beginning until this very day sin has created a barrier between a holy God and every sinful human being. Sinful human beings cannot have fellowship with a holy God. Sinful human beings cannot inherit eternal life. The wages of sin is death.

But the angels could glorify God because he had declared peace between himself and all people on earth to whom he was showing infinite favor, love, and forgiveness. And the baby Jesus was the sign that that perfect peace on earth was real.

Jesus would grow up. He would live a holy life. And he would die an innocent death on a cross to atone for our sins and the sins of the whole world. When Jesus rose from the dead God declared the world justified, not guilty, of sin. The angels' Christmas song would have been just as appropriate on the first Easter: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Tonight know that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem a little over 2000 years ago is a sign to you, the proof, that your sins are forgiven and that God has shown his favor to you. He has looked on you and me with favor as we say in the blessing that closes our Sunday services. There could be no greater news than that.