

WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, December 22, 2019

And the angel said to them, "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."

Luke 2:10-11

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

ENTERING INTO WORSHIP

Greeting and Blessing*

Responsive Reading*

Psalm 9:7-11 (p. 787)

Hymn of Preparation*

Hymn 214

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echo back their joyous strains.

*Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
Which inspire your heav'nly song?

*Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

*Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Amen.*

* Congregation is requested to stand, if able.

Congregational Confession of Sin

Leader: Almighty God, we are reminded this morning of your divine purpose for the incarnation: that in the fullness of time, you sent forth your Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem us and grant us adoption as your children.

All: We are grieved that our condition was so sinful that it required nothing less than the humiliation and death of the Son of God. Though you have blessed us with eternal riches in Christ, we have sinned against you with our wicked thoughts, our sinful actions, and our careless words. We have caused hurt to ourselves and to others, and we are not worthy to be called your children.

Leader: Forgive us, we pray. Humble our hearts through your grace that makes living for Christ our joy and delight. Displace our desire to sin with a greater desire for Christ.

All: We ask this through the merit and mediation of our risen and ascended Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

Private Confession of Our Sins

Assurance of Forgiveness

Matthew 1:20-21

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. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

ADORATION AND PRAISE

First Reading*

Luke 2:1-21

Congregational Response

Hymn 201

O Little Town of Bethlehem

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.

For Christ is born of Mary;
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

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;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel. Amen.

Confession of Faith

The Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 98. *What is prayer?*

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

Q. 99. *What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?*

A. The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is the form of prayer that Christ taught his disciples, commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer.”

Q. 100. *What does the Preface of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?*

A. The Preface of the Lord’s Prayer, which is, “Our Father in heaven,” teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Stewardship

Tithes and Offerings

Doxology*

Hymn 731

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

Second Reading*

John 3:1-21

Congregational Response

Hymn 211

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray;
*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

From God our heav'nly Father,
A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

"Fear not, then," said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright;
This day is born a Savior
Of a pure virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in him
From Satan's pow'r and might."
*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks afeeding,
In tempest, storm, and wind:
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
The Son of God to find.
*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy. Amen.*

Pastoral Prayer (Luke 1:46-55)

Sermon

"God So Loved the World"
John 3:16

Pastor Ben Muresan

GOD'S BLESSING ON HIS PEOPLE

Hymn of Thanksgiving*

Hymn 203

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye 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."

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Hail the heav'n-born 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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King." Amen.

LORD'S DAY DEVOTION AND QUESTIONS

We put a lot of effort into showing the people we love how much we love them. Husbands buy flowers for their wives; children give presents to their parents; parents speak to their children using loving words, and they also show their children affection. There are many examples of how we demonstrate our love to others. But what is the greatest demonstration of love? How did God show us his love? John Calvin writes:

For as people are not easily convinced that God loves them, in order to remove all doubt, he has expressly stated that we are so very dear to God that, on our account, he did not even spare his only-begotten Son. Since, therefore, God has most abundantly testified his love towards us, whoever is not satisfied with this testimony, and still remains in doubt, offers a high insult to Christ, as if he had been an ordinary man given up at random to death. But we ought rather to consider that, in proportion to the estimation in which God holds his only-begotten Son, so much the more precious did our salvation appear to him, for the ransom of which he chose that his only-begotten Son should die. To this name Christ has a right, because he is by nature the only Son of God; and he communicates this honor to us by adoption, when we are engrafted into his body.

1. For review, read John 3:1-15. How would you summarize Nicodemus' understanding of salvation before he spoke to Jesus? Why were Jesus' words so surprising to him?
2. How does John 3:16 connect with verses 1-15?
3. Read Psalm 136. What do you learn about God's love from these verses? How do you think verse 23 connects with John 3:16 and Christ's incarnation?
4. Read Westminster Larger Catechism Q/As 46-48. When did Christ's humiliation begin? How did he humble himself throughout his earthly life? How does knowing and understanding Christ's humiliation benefit us?
5. What is the meaning of "eternal life" in John 3:16? How do we begin experiencing that life in this age? Read Colossians 3:1-17 to help you formulate your answer.
6. In preparation for our next study through this gospel, read John 3:16-21. Why do you think people love "darkness rather than the light"? How might this help you understand what true, saving faith looks like?