

Christmas Day
"The First Christmas Carol"
December 25, 2023

As We Gather

What is the first Christmas Carol? The song the angels sang to the shepherds after they announced the birth of the Savior. Scripture records just a brief text: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests." (Luke 2:14). But this brief statement proclaims the true meaning of the event we celebrate today. Because of the birth of Christ, there is glory for God in heaven, and there is peace on earth. Today we unpack those words, the first Christmas Carol.

Prelude

Welcome

+ Gathering +

"O Come All Ye Faithful" LSB 379

1 O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; Come and behold Him Born the king of angels; Refrain: O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!	Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing!
2 Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal, Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;	3 Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God In the highest: [Refrain]
	4 Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n! Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

Invocation

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

People: **Amen**

Pastor: Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.

People: **The Lord has made His salvation known and revealed His righteousness to the nations.**

Pastor: He has remembered His love and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

People: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

Pastor: Make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

People: with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn – shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

Pastor: Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

People: Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;

Pastor: let them sing before the Lord, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

People: To God be glory and praise, both now and evermore. Amen. Psalm 98

“Of the Father's Love Begotten”

LSB 384

1 Of the Father's love begotten
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see
Evermore and evermore.

2 Oh, that birth forever blessed,
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face
Evermore and evermore.

3 This is He whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord,
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word.
Now He shines, the long-expected;

Let creation praise its Lord
Evermore and evermore.

4 O ye heights of heav'n, adore Him;
Angel hosts, His praises sing,
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Ev'ry voice in concert ring
Evermore and evermore.

5 Christ, to Thee, with God the Father,
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
And unending praises be,
Honor, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory
Evermore and evermore.
Amen.

Prayer

Pastor The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray.
Almighty and unseen God, you have come near to us in the newborn face of your Son, the Christ child, whose presence brings comfort, peace, and joy. Call us out of the captivity of our sin into His freedom. Empower us to proclaim His new birth in our hearts from every level place and high mountain, for He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

Readings

First Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
“Your God reigns!”
⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;
together they shout for joy.
When the LORD returns to Zion,
they will see it with their own eyes.
⁹ Burst into songs of joy together,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-6

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,
“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father”?
Or again,
“I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”?
⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Holy Gospel: John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You O Christ!

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Sermon

“The First Christmas Carol”

Offering

Musical Offering

“Wexford Carol”

Sanctuary Choir

Good people all, this Christmas time
Consider well and bear in mind,
What our good God for us has done,
In sending His beloved Son.

With Mary holy we should pray
To God with love this Christmas day;
In Bethlehem upon that morn
There was a blessed Messiah born.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep,
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;
To whom God's angels did appear,
Which put the shepherds in great fear.

Prepare and go the angles said,
To Bethlehem, be not afraid;
For there you'll find, this happy morn,
A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.

With thankful heart and joyful mind,
The shepherds went the babe to find,
And as God's angels had foretold,
They did out Savior Christ behold.

Within a manger he was laid,
And by his side the virgin maid,
Attending on the Lord of life,
Who came on earth to end all strife.

Prayers

+ The Service of Holy Communion +

Preface

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should, at all times and in all places, give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, for in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory that, seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may be drawn to the love of those things which are not seen. In the beginning, You created all things by Your Word; then, in the fullness of time, Your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Through His body and blood given us to eat and drink, dwell among us even now that, as the angels at Bethlehem first proclaimed the Savior's birth, we too may declare His saving presence to all the earth. Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

People: **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 Words of Institution

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: **Amen.**

Communion

Pastor: Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins.

People: **Amen.** *(Take and eat)*

Pastor: Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

People: **Amen.**
(Take and drink)

Communion Hymns

“See Amid the Winter’s Snow”

LSB 373

See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See the gentle Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years.

Lo, within a stable lies
He who built the starry skies,
He who throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim. *Refrain*

Refrain

Hail, O ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem:
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this! *Refrain*

Teach, O teach us, holy Child,
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee
In Thy Sweet humility. *Refrain*

“Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”

LSB 386

1 Now sing we, now rejoice,
Now raise to heav'n our voice;
He from whom joy streameth
Poor in a manger lies;
Not so brightly beameth
The sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art!
Thou my Savior art!

3 Now through His Son doth shine
The Father's grace divine.
Death was reigning o'er us
Through sin and vanity
Till He opened for us
A bright eternity.
May we praise Him there!
May we praise Him there!

2 Come from on high to me;
I cannot rise to thee.
Cheer my wearied spirit,
O pure and holy Child;
Through Thy grace and merit,
Blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Draw me unto Thee!
Draw me unto Thee!

4 Oh, where shall joy be found?
Where but on heav'nly ground?
Where the angels singing
With all His saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing
In heav'nly joy and light,
Oh, that we were there!
Oh, that we were there!

Post Communion Blessing

Pastor: The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. His peace be with you.

People: Amen

+ SENDING FORTH +

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Pastor: Let us pray.

We praise You, Lord God, for the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation that we have received through the very body and blood of Your gift of love, Jesus Christ our Lord. Strengthen our faith, that we may celebrate with joy and peace and proclaim the good news of salvation in His name; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

Benediction

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

People: **Amen.**

"Go Tell It on the Mountain" LSB 388

Chorus

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and ev'rywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo, above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. ***Chorus***

While Shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold, throughout the heavens,
There shone a holy light. ***Chorus***

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. ***Chorus***

Offering

<http://stjohnslutheran.net/give/>

You may also mail your offering to St. John's (3521 Linda Vista, Napa, CA 94558)

Serving in Worship Tonight

Preacher	Rev. Michael A. Schmid
Lay Readers	Gunnar De Young
Organist	Erin Blackwood
Sound Technician	Brian Schoenfeld
Projection Technician	Bob Klein
Streaming Technician	Joel Wahlers
Worship Preparation Team	Betsy Gewirz, Bob & Doris Klein
Communion Assistants	Joel Wahlers, Mike Newton
Ushers	