

Worship in the Home: January 3, 2021

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Worship in the Home

Second Sunday of Christmas, Year B

January 3, 2021

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray and incorporate other symbols of Christmas. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to God's people on earth.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gifts of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

⁷Thus says the LORD:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."

⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.

⁹With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I am as a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is as my firstborn.

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "The one who scattered Israel will gather them,
and will keep them as a shepherd a flock."

¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed Jacob's people from hands too strong for them.

¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.

¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 147:12-20

¹²Worship the LORD, ¹O Jerusalem;
praise your ¹God, O Zion,

¹³who has strengthened the bars ¹of your gates
and has blessed your children within you.

¹⁴God has established peace ¹on your borders
and satisfies you with the ¹finest wheat.

¹⁵God sends out a command ¹to the earth,
a word that runs ¹very swiftly.

¹⁶God gives ¹snow like wool,
scattering ¹frost like ashes.

¹⁷God scatters ^l hail like bread crumbs.

Who can stand against God's cold?

¹⁸The LORD sends forth the ^l word and melts them;
the wind blows, and the ^l waters flow.

¹⁹God declares the ^l word to Jacob,
statutes and judgments to Israel.

²⁰The LORD has not done so to any ^l other nation;
they do not know God's judgments. ^l Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made know as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that before God we should be holy and blameless in love. ⁵God destined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ: this was God's good pleasure and will, ⁶to the praise of God's glorious grace, freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God's grace ⁸lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹God has made known to us the mystery of the divine will, according to God's good pleasure set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to divine counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of God's glory. ¹³In Christ you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of God's glory.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 1:[1-9] 10-18

The holy gospel according to John.

Glorify to you, O Lord.

John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.

[¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The Word was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through the Word, without whom not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

¹⁰The light was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made God known.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

This year on the Tenth Day of Christmas we keep Sunday once more, and the whole mystery of the incarnation of God in Christ washes over us again. Of course, we are often part of that world that does not know him, his own people who do not accept him. But the Word is given to us in these readings. Receiving it, the Spirit of God comes to us and we are brought to faith again. We welcome into our hearts and lives Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, the very one who has shared our nature and our lot, the very light that illumines all things. Then, as we rightly weep about the needs of ourselves and others, God meets us with consolations. Hearing the Word together with all the church, we are made a watered garden, a place of grain, wine and oil in the sacraments, a rescued city, a people of the light. In the Word, which is the very presence of Christ, we receive grace upon grace. We are renewed to turn with this same news to our neighbors and to all the suffering earth.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 295), "Jesus, the Light of the World" (All Creation Sings 914 / This Far By Faith 59), "Peace Came to Earth" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 285). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[Of the Father's Love Begotten](#)
[Jesus, the Light of the World](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

As we near the conclusion of the Christmas season, let us pray for God's mercy throughout this new year, responding to each petition with words from the first reading, "Save your people, O LORD."

A brief silence.

All through 2021, O redeeming God, bless your church. Renew the strength of bishops, pastors, deacons, musicians, and all servants of the church. Assist congregations in paying their bills. Give us hope in your goodness and joy in your salvation.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O bountiful God, bless your earth. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in the balance you intend, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands, deserts to rainforests. Reveal new ways for us to live in harmony with your creation.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O ruling God, bless the nations of the world. Bring peace and justice where there is violence and abuse of power. Inspire those in authority to serve the common good, and preserve stability in the United States. Protect those who risk danger for the sake of others.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O reconciling God, lead us out of patterns of prejudice and into reconciliation with one another. Help us to honor all persons as members of your family and our siblings under your care.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O loving God, give us wisdom in our resolutions and strength during hardships. Console those who are afraid or lonely. Give jobs to the unemployed. Direct us toward the solution to the world's problems, to feed the hungry, to house the homeless, to serve the neighbor.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O compassionate God, attend to those who suffer. End the pandemic. Restore health care workers. Heal the sick. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Visit those for whom we pray:

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

All through 2021, O precious God, pour over us and into us your Holy Spirit, that we may live as your own, and accept the silent petitions we offer.

A longer period of silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

At this beginning of 2021, O eternal God, hear our praise for all those whose lives proclaimed your praise, especially those who died during 2020. At our end, bring us with them into the garden watered by your mercy.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

O God, you are the Beginning and the Ending of all. Receive our prayers for the sake of one who made known to us the mystery of your will, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Light Dawns on a Weary World" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 726), "The First Noel" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 300). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[The First Noel](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Holy God,

the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait,
we praise you for joining us to your people of old.

We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness
and promise a new earth with peace for all.

For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord,
who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world,
and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God.

We magnify you, O God.

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word.

Nurture our faith with your grace,
accompany us with your might,

and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God.

All praise to you, holy God,
today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

Offering Prayer

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Then speak the Blessing:

Almighty God,
who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary,
proclaimed joy through the angels,
sent the shepherds with good news,
and led the magi by a star,
bless us this day + through the Word made flesh.

Amen.

Here is a brief prayer to use as a table grace for the 12 days of Christmas:

With joy and gladness we feast upon your love, O God.
You have come among us in Jesus, your Son,
And your presence now graces this table.
May Christ dwell in us that we might bear his love to all the world,
For he is Lord forever and ever.

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[A Babe Is Born](#)," "[O God of Light](#)," "[Now the Heavens Start to Whisper](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday Psalm 110. **Tuesday** Luke 6:27-31. **Wednesday** ([Epiphany of Our Lord](#)) Matthew 2:1-12. **Thursday** Psalm 29. **Friday** 1 Timothy 4:11-16. **Saturday** 1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12. **Baptism of Our Lord:** Genesis 1:1-15; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. To purchase copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *All Creation Sings* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from *All Creation Sings* will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.
In House Church Services have been cancelled until further notice.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wings, Steve Murdock, Bob Broberg.

Pastor's Mid-week Message – December 30, 2020

The fact that God visited our planet in the Babe of Bethlehem is beyond anyone's comprehension. Some of us remember a Christmas Eve many year's ago when three astronauts – Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders - on a mission to the moon celebrated this night, from their orbit just above the moon's surface. They showed us what they saw there. Then we heard one of the men read the story of creation as found in Genesis 1:1-10. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth..." Borman closed the lunar telecast with these words: "Good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless you all upon the good earth."

The fact that a man walked the moon is awesome. The fact that the God of all creation came to earth, is beyond imagination.

The second thing we must see is that God did it for us. God had only one agenda in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, and that was to bring us back unto Himself. I don't know about you, but when I think of the wonder of Christmas, and what God did for us, it makes me want to do something in return. The poet said, "What can I give him poor as I am, if I were a shepherd, I'd give him a lamb; If I were a wise man, I'd do my part; what can I give him, I'll give him my heart."

That's what Christ really wants – our hearts.

Once there was a young man named Howard Walter. He was a graduate of Princeton University. He was a person of sterling character who went on to seminary, and then into the mission field of India.

One Christmas, out of his own heart and life, he wrote his mother a poem. Recognizing the beauty of his words, she sent it to *Harper's* magazine. It was his Christmas greeting to her. He died in 1919, only 14 years after his graduation from Princeton, when influenza was epidemic in India. But he will live on forever in this beautiful Christmas poem dedicated to his mother. The verse has been set to music by Joseph Yates Peek. You may not have thought of it as a Christmas poem before, but that's what it is:

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care,
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
I would be friend to all the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

That sounds like a first-rate Christmas poem to me. I love that last line: "I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift." God has invaded our world in Bethlehem's Babe. Let us give thanks for His great love, as we carry the Christmas spirit with us through all the year.