



Lessons and Carols for the Season of Christmas

New England Synod, ELCA

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Welcome

Bishop Jim Hazelwood

Gathering Music – How Many Kings

Pastor Mark and Deacon Sarah Huber, Sanctuary, Marshfield, MA

Follow the star to a place unexpected
Would you believe, after all we've projected
A child in a manger?
Lowly and small, the weakest of all
Unlikeliest hero, wrapped in his mother's shawl
Just a child
Is this who we've waited for?

'Cause how many kings step down from their thrones
How many lords have abandoned their homes?
How many greats have become the least for me?
And how many gods have poured out their hearts
To romance a world that is torn all apart?
How many fathers gave up their sons for me?
Bringing our gifts for the newborn Savior
All that we have, whether costly or meek
Because we believe

Gold for his honor, and frankincense for his pleasure
And myrrh for the cross He will suffer
Do you believe?
Is this who we've waited for?

How many kings step down from their thrones?
How many lords have abandoned their homes?
How many greats have become the least for me?
And how many gods have poured out their hearts
To romance a world that is torn all apart?
How many fathers gave up their sons for me?
Only one did that for me
Oh, all for me, oh
All for me, all for you

All for me, all for you
All for me, all for you
All for me, all for you

How many kings step down from their thrones?
How many lords have abandoned their homes?
How many greats have become the least?
How many gods have poured out their hearts
To romance a world that is torn all apart?
How many fathers gave up their sons for me?
Only one did that for me
All for me, all for you

Confession and Forgiveness, Greeting, & Prayer of the Day

Kim Bergstrand, Associate to the Bishop

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth! **Amen! Alleluia!**
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory! **Amen! Alleluia!**

Amid the troubles and fears of this world, let us confess our sin and welcome God's forgiveness, grace, and love.

Silence is kept for reflection

Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus.

Forgive our lack of faith and trust.

Your Son was born in the poverty of a stable.

Forgive our neglect of the poor.

The shepherds left their flocks and went to Bethlehem.

Forgive our selfishness and complacency.

With great joy the angels proclaimed, "Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy. Today is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In ✠ Jesus, who is Savior, Christ, and Lord, our sins are forgiven. May you know the peace which the angels sang from the heavens. Indeed, God's forgiveness is good news of great joy!

Amen.

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

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Carol: Away in a Manger

Jonathan Reuning-Scherer, Emanuel Lutheran, Hartford, CT
Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #277

- 1 Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- 2 The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
- 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Children's Message

Pastor Steven Wilco, Associate to the Bishop

1st Reading, Carol, and Reflection

Isaiah 52:7-10

Maeve Schurz, Intern, Bethesda Lutheran, New Haven, CT

A Reading from Isaiah:

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

⁸Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.

⁹Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Holy Wisdom. Holy Word.

Thanks be to God.

Carol: Go Tell It On the Mountain

Jonathan Reuning-Scherer, Emanuel Lutheran, Hartford, CT
Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #290

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

- 1 While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*
- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*
- 3 Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

A Reflection on Incarnation

Pastor Ryan Lun, Good Neighbor Lutheran, Quincy, MA

Incarnation is mystery that word became flesh. 2000 or more years ago, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a place being occupied by Roman empire. Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt with the infant Jesus from imminent persecution. As a mission developer, I am serving among immigrants in Quincy, MA. Most of my church members came to the US 30 years ago. This year, 2020, more and more Hong Kong families are leaving everything behind to live in exile, to save their lives from political persecution happening in the city. Many of them are uncertain of their future. Today, Jesus the Incarnate Word is here with us, with immigrants, with those under oppression, and all living under unjust society. Jesus the Immanuel is bringing peace to the world.

2nd Reading, Carol, & Reflection

Philippians 2:5-11

Maeve Schurz, Intern, Bethesda Lutheran, New Haven, CT

A Reading from Philippians:

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death —
even death on a cross.
⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Word of God. Word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Carol: Midnight Stars Make Bright the Skies

Pastor Steven Wilco, Associate to the Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Worship #280

- 1 Midnight stars make bright the skies,
Bethlehem in slumber lies:
glit'ning heav'n sends forth a great light,
shepherds see a wondrous sight!
Angels ranks in chorus sing.
Silken sounds from heaven ring.
Frightened shepherds hear them say:
"Christ is born on earth today!"

Refrain

Glory be to God on high,
blest are all beneath the sky.

- 2 Midnight slumber lies o'er all,
one lone bright lamp lights the stall.
Choose old clothing, wrap him warmly,
manger shall his cradle be.
Born to save us from our sin,
Word made flesh, our lives to win,
came to earth from heaven's throne,
mortals' sin to bear alone. *Refrain*

Reflection on Incarnation

Beatrice Luciano, Licensed Lay Minister, Ministerio Nueva Creacion, Manchester, CT

Christmas to me and to my community and my congregation really has always been all about family – the gathering of family. It's about the festivities and the traditions like coquito and making the roast pork dinner and exchanging presents not just on Christmas but also on Three Kings Day. But given the fact that this year has been challenging for a lot of us, it's mostly about hope, about peace, about joy and love – the love that is coming to us, about the creation of a bigger family. See, we know that there is hope in knowing that God will be among us. He will be alive and breathing, walking with us knowing us in his humanity and loving us enough to sacrifice himself for our

salvation. His first breath is only the beginning of the divine love that God has for us, and the beginning of our very own lives. I think this is why one of our core beliefs is the Three-in-One, the Trinity – because we know that his birth allows us to have a chance at redemption and grace and peace. His birth allows us to be reborn again every single year. And so, this year especially we celebrate that.

3rd Reading, Carol, & Reflection

1 John 1:1-4

Christian Cederstrom, Intern, St. Andrew's Lutheran, Charlestown, RI

A reading from First John:

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — ²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Carol: We Have Seen the Messiah

Jonathan Reuning-Scherer, Emanuel Lutheran, Hartford, CT

Chorus:

We have seen the Messiah, here for all the world.
We have seen the Messiah, here for all the world.

Shepherds came to see the sight
a baby born to be the light.
Then they went and spread the word,
'cause they had to tell all they had heard. (Chorus)

Mary came with tears of grief
but she found life beyond belief
She found joy where she had hurt
when the risen Lord appeared to her. (Chorus)

Have you seen the aching hearts,
the human hurts, lives torn apart?
When we see the least of these
do we really know who we have seen? (Chorus)

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Reflection on Incarnation

Pastor Arnold Isidore Thomas, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Jericho, VT

God is intimately real and relative to each of us in that the unseen spiritual life that breathes life into us all by so doing incorporates us into God's divinity. This reality of God is inseparable from the Word of God. "For in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God," according to John's gospel. The divine nature of Jesus is that he embodied God's Word, enabling us to know and experience the reality that all on whom the Spirit of God has anointed will in our own unique way be able to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and liberate the oppressed. I believe that all children born into this world embody the image of God, the Word made flesh. That we, as stewards of God's grace, must nurture and raise to their full, Christ-like potential. Christmas is, therefore, the daily encounter of God-with-Us.

4th Reading, Carol, & Reflection

Luke 2:21-40

Wylie Cook, Intern, First Lutheran, Waltham, MA

A reading from Luke:

²¹After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty- four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Our eyes have beheld your Word!

Thanks be to God.

Carol: What Child Is This

Jonathan Reuning-Scherer, Emanuel Lutheran, Hartford, CT

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #296, v. 1 and 3

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Reflection on Incarnation

Kim Bergstrand, Associate to the Bishop

Babies have a powerful effect on us. Have you ever noticed what happens when someone with a newborn walks into a room? People stop. They start to gravitate toward the infant. There are coos and winks and smiles. Inevitably someone asks, “Can I hold her?” We want to hold that child close, to feel that newness of life in our arms and love up on that baby. Or on the other hand, if the infant is crying or in distress, we are also drawn in. What’s wrong? Is she hungry? Is she cold? Tired? Is his diaper wet? And then it’s all hands on deck: helpful advice from friends, family, strangers alike. Try this! Try that! Because that cry triggers something deep within our being: compassion. Compassion for the child – and for the parents! What strikes me is that for someone who is so powerless by any of our standard measures, an infant wields a lot of power. Not power gained through a lot of money or coercion or strength or might, but power through love, through compassion, through relationship and connection. That God would choose to meet us in such a vulnerable way just blows my mind. When I encounter the infant Jesus, dependent on his parents and the goodwill of family and friends, I let my guard down. I’m smitten by the child, and the hope and promise of a savior, the Messiah.

5th Reading, Carol, & Reflection

John 1:1-5, 10-14

Abby Johnson, Intern, St. Paul Lutheran, Arlington, MA

A reading from John:

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

¹⁰He 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 he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")

God comes to us in this word.

Thanks be to God.

Carol: Of the Father's Love Begotten

Pastor Steven Wilco, Associate to the Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #295, v. 1, 3, 5

- 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.

- 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.

- 5 Christ, to thee, with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be:
honor, glory, and dominion,
and eternal victory
evermore and evermore! Amen.

Reflection on Incarnation

Bishop Jim Hazelwood, New England Synod

For many people Christmas is the story from the gospel of Luke, and it's wonderful. But for me, I have to say, John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word..." – that whole prologue that connects the eternal to the temporal – that which is beyond time to that which is right now, here. I love that passage because it captures the core of Christmas, the essence of the incarnation – that God who is beyond words – even beyond the word "God" – that that which is eternal and sacred and holy and mysterious and divine comes *here* in the flesh, in the person of Jesus. For me that just makes all the difference in the world because that which is eternal is now a part of what is a part of our time. And it's an event that happened, yes, 2000 years ago but it is an event that happens again and again and again. So the mystery that we are really entering into this Christmas is that mystery being reenacted again and again. For me, that's the core of the incarnation. That's what makes all the difference.

Prayers of Intercession

Pastor Sara Anderson, Associate to the Bishop

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Your church gathers near and far around your manger throne. Teach us to discover you in unexpected places. Help us live out our calling with humility and grace, trusting not in power and riches but in your presence dwelling in our midst. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. You cause the earth to bring forth its shoots and gardens to spring up. Protect hibernating animals and frozen lands that wait earnestly for longer days of awakening and growth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Inspire leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good. Bring just and lasting peace everywhere, especially we pray to those in Palestine and Israel. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send the spirit of your Son into our hearts, O God. Come quickly to hearts that race with fear, hearts that break with grief, and hearts that long for wholeness especially for those we name before you now... Reveal your power to heal and to save. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We praise the Christ child, made flesh in Mary's womb and born in a stable in Bethlehem, and so, too, we praise you for the many ways you are enfleshed in our human bodies – in people of every size, skin tone, ability, and gender. You are a magnificent creator! Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word. We give you thanks for all your saints, especially for John, the gospel writer we commemorate today. Guide our living and our dying in the light of your glory. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Peace

Pastor Sara Anderson, Associate to the Bishop

Let share the peace now, with those who are with us today.

Let us gather into our hearts and minds, those who are not with you today, whom you love – and send them peace from your heart:

across the street, across the world, or to the kingdom of heaven

(silent reflection)

and if we are alone, let us gather peace into our own heart. *(silent reflection)*

Let us gather into our hearts and minds,
those with whom we have disagreement or discord,
and send them peace as well, as Christ would have you do.
(silent reflection)

Let us gather into our hearts, and minds, the peace that Christ sends to you, now.

May the peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Offering

Pastor Sara Anderson, Associate to the Bishop

We take this offertory time to reflect on the gifts we have received from the generosity of God:

+ Generations of faithful people, who have preserved the holy story and declared God's power and grace, in all circumstances.

+ A promise of faithfulness, and a will to follow the Holy Spirit

+ Gifts of collaboration in our ministries across the Synod.

+ Space for friends, and strangers who become friends, to gather in peace.

+ The gift of love, blossoming across a season of tending, the grace of forgiveness, in matters great and small, and the medicine of comfort among our loved ones.

+ The opportunity to lift up the gifts of time, talent and treasure bestowed upon us by God: to tend wisely and share generously, in God's name.

At this time you are invited to give an offering to your local congregation and, if you are moved to do so, you may also give an offering to the New England Synod at www.nelutherans.org/donate or by sending a check to the New England Synod, P.O. Box 13, Worcester, MA 01614.

Let us pray:

Thank you, Creator of all things,
for creating us, and blessing us with all that we need.

Show us how our gifts may bless others,

show us how to be humble,

and grateful, when another shares their blessings with us. **Amen.**

Offering Song: Joy to the World/AI Mundo Paz

Luz Berrios-Taveras, Ministerio Nueva Creacion, Manchester, CT

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #267 (Tune and English verses only)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

¡Al mundo paz, nació Jesús!
Nació ya nuestro rey;
El corazón ya tiene luz,
Y paz su santa grey, Y paz su santa grey,
Y paz, Y paz su santa grey.

He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Thanksgiving for the Word

Mark Winzler, Associate to the Bishop

Holy God,
everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, wonderful Counselor,
at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world,
and throughout the ages, you proclaim newness of life.
For your wondrous Word.

We thank you, O God.

In the fullness of time, your Word became flesh,
to shine brightly among us,
to speak peace to all peoples,
and to welcome us as members of your family.
For your loving Word,

We adore you, O God.

Grant us now the gift of your Spirit,
that held, nourished, and protected by your Word,
we may live as your children,
bearing your goodness throughout the world.

For your powerful Word

We praise you, O God.

All glory to you, holy God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Mark Winzler, Associate to the Bishop

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.

Blessing & Dismissal

Bishop Jim Hazelwood, New England Synod

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you,
The Lord look upon you and give you peace. **Amen.**

Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

Sending Song: Love Has Come

Pastor Steven Wilco, Associate to the Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn #292

- 1 Love has come—a light in the darkness! Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it; hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior! Love! Love! Glory to God on high.
- 2 Love is born! Come, share in the wonder. Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother; what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers; Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.
- 3 Love has come and never will leave us! Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us. Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas; Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!