

Good News of Great Joy



PEACE ON EARTH

First Sunday after Christmas

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

December 31, 2023

SERIES THEME: GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

We live in a world with a 24-hour news cycle. Between the countless cable networks or online sources or social media posts, news is flying at us constantly. Most of it seems awful. We doomscroll on our phones—bad news after more bad news. Our hearts grow heavy. Our minds grow anxious. The world is starving for good news. And that is exactly what we get at Christmas. On that first Christmas Eve, the angel told the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy” (Luke 2:10). News is not advice. The angel had not come to give advice about how to cope in a messed-up world. News is simply a report of facts. The angel reported a fact—the birth of One who would make everything right again. This child would remove all our fears and fill our hearts with joy.

THEME OF THE DAY: PEACE ON EARTH

On Christmas Eve a choir of angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” So, where is this peace on earth? Between nations? There are always wars going on somewhere. In our country? Disagreements have only grown more contentious, one group screaming angrily at another group. We might not even have perfect peace in our homes! So, what were the angels singing about? They were singing about peace between a holy God who hates sin and human beings who sin every day. Because of what Christ did as our Savior, there is no hostility between us and God, only peace and love. We have the peace of salvation in our hearts. As we draw near the end of life, like elderly Simeon or Anna, we have the peace of knowing of the glorious eternal life that is to come. As this peace with God fills our hearts, it moves us to live in peace with each other too.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
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Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Three (page 188 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 356 God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

sts. 1-2

Stand

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

Amen.

Confession

CW 189

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Almighty and merciful Father,

we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.

We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.

We have done those things that we should not have done,

and we have not done those things that we should have done.

Have mercy on us, Lord!

Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,

according to your promises in Christ Jesus.

Silence for meditation and reflection

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 190

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Glory Be to God on High

CW 157



Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



We praise you, we bless you, we wor - ship you, we glorify you,



we give thanks to you, for your great glory, O Lord God, heav'n-ly King,



God the Fa-ther Al - mighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Je-sus Christ;



O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sin of the world;



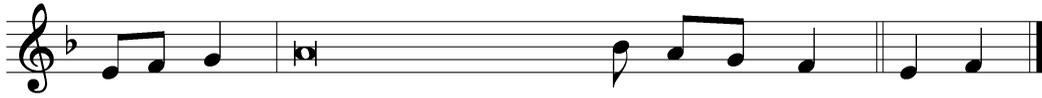
have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; re-ceive our prayer.



You sit at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us.



For you on-ly are holy; you on-ly are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming, deliver us from the corruption of our sin, and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

1 Kings 8:6–13

King Solomon dedicates the temple, a place where the glory of the Lord would be revealed as the peace of salvation was proclaimed.

⁶The priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim, ⁷for the cherubim were spreading their wings over the place for the ark, so that the cherubim covered the ark and its

poles with their wings. ⁸ The poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen from outside. They are there to this day.

⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets, which Moses had placed there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ When the priests came out from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the House of the Lord. ¹¹ The priests were not able to take their positions to minister in the presence of the cloud, because the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord. ¹² Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he dwells in thick darkness. ¹³ I have truly built a majestic house for you, a place for you to dwell forever."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

Colossians 3:12–17

As the peace of Christ rules our hearts, we are moved to live in peace.

¹² Therefore, as God's elect, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against anyone else. Forgive, just as Christ forgave you. ¹⁴ And, in addition to all these things, put on love, which ties things together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ control your hearts, to which you were also called, in one body. And be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And everything you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

²⁹ Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,

³⁰ because my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared before the face of all people,

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

³³ Joseph and the child's mother were amazed at the things that were spoken about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Listen carefully, this child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ Anna, a prophetess, was there. She was a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then she was a widow of eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple complex, since she was worshipping with fasting and prayers night and day. ³⁸ Standing nearby at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord. She kept speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When they had accomplished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 355 Let All Together Praise Our God

Sermon

Stand

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who in unity with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Eternal and gracious Lord, in this holy season we rejoice with hearts and voices because you sent your one and only Son from his majestic glory to save us from the slavery of sin and the

agonies of death. He took on our human flesh that he might reveal your divine glory. He became our brother that we might become your children forever.

Give us quiet time during these busy days to reflect on your love and ponder the miracle of our Savior's incarnation. Help us look beyond our gift-giving and gift-receiving, and discover the greatest gift: the forgiveness of sins and life with you. Put the joys of Christmas into the perspective of our eternal celebration, and let music and art lift our hearts to Christ who is truly the center of the season.

Keep in your loving care all whose Christmas joys are diminished by sickness and sadness, by unhappy recollections and uncertain hopes. Comfort those who sense this Christmas may be their last, and raise their eyes to the brilliant lights of heaven. Soothe consciences that are troubled by guilt and regret, and show them the forgiving love of Christ. [Especially bless . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*]

We commend to your care all who proclaim the message of Christ during these holy days; all who care for people in hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons; and all who put themselves out to bring joy to others, especially children. Let the light of your grace shine through all ministries of mercy.

Send us your Holy Spirit, gracious Lord, that the proclamation of the Christmas gospel may lighten the load of guilt and fear and lift our hearts to confident faith and holy living. By the power of your Word, bring your light to hearts struggling to understand you and searching to find you that they may know the joys of this season as we do. Empower us to lead them to your love in our words and deeds.

All this we ask in the name of the newborn King, born in Bethlehem and now living and reigning forever in heaven. Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 330 Peace Came to Earth

sts. 1–2

THE SACRAMENT

Stand

Preface

CW 199

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose wonderful and mysterious birth you have opened our eyes to the glory of your grace and renewed in our hearts the fervor of your love. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 200

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is a short instrumental introduction. The second and third staves contain the lyrics: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts, heav - en and earth are full, full of your glo - ry." The fourth staff contains the lyrics: "Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est." The music is a simple, melodic line with some rests and ties.



Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Tune: David Kauffman; William Gokelman

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal King and gracious Father. In love you made us the crown of your creation. In mercy you planned our salvation. In grace you sent your Son to redeem us from sin.

We remember and give you thanks that your eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh and made his dwelling among us, that he willingly placed himself under law to redeem those under law, that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross, that he has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood in this Sacrament. Forgive our sins, increase our faith, strengthen our fellowship, and deepen our longing for the day when Christ will welcome us to his eternal feast. Praise and thanks and honor and glory be to you, O God our Father, and to your Son and to the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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 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.

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
Amen.

Lamb of God

CW 202

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; grant us, grant us peace.

Tune: David Kauffman; William Gokelman

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Be seated

Distribution

Close Communion We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.

Distribution Hymn: 661 Draw Near and Take the Body of Your Lord

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

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

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

Amen.

Hymn: 950 Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

Sunday: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship and Communion

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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Worship 62, Offerings: Operating: Needed 2,854.90, Given \$2,365.25. **To God be the glory!**

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