

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2023

4:00pm



As We Gather

Whether tonight is for us the best of times or the worst of times, the birth of Jesus leaves us with only one response. And what would that be? Paul wrote it down. They are the words of our text. 1 Thessalonians 5:16, "Rejoice evermore!"

PRELUDE, “Come and Hear the Joyful Singing”

Vesper Bells and Chancel Choir

INVOCATION AND CALL TO WORSHIP

(Based on John 1:1-18)

- P** In the beginning was the Word,
C **And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**
P All things were made by him,
C **And without him nothing was made.**
P In him was life,
C **And that life was the light of men.**
P The light shines in the darkness,
C **But the darkness has not overcome it.**
P The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
C **We have seen his glory,**
P The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,
C **Full of grace and truth!**
P We worship on this holy night in the name of our heavenly Father:
C **Who sent his Son to become flesh and dwell among us.**
P We call upon Jesus, the only Son of the Father:
C **Who is our Savior and our Lord.**
P We pray for the Holy Spirit’s presence and power,
C **So we may see Christ’s glory,**
P The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,
C **Full of grace and truth!**

PROCESSIONAL HYMN, LSB 379, stanzas 1 & 2 “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, Joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O
2 High - est, most ho - ly, Light of Light e - ter - nal,

come ye, O come — ye to Beth - le - hem;
Born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal He comes;

Come and be - hold Him Born the king of an - gels:
Son of the Fa - ther Now in flesh ap - pear - ing!

Refrain

O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him,
O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord!

Text and tune: Public domain

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

- P** Lord Jesus, we praise you for this opportunity to celebrate your birth. Yet we must confess to you that much of the newness has worn off. The angels’ message has grown old in our hearts, and your birth has become more of a sentimental tradition for us to observe rather than a life-changing reality for us and all people.
- C** **And Lord, we are hurting because of it. Our hearts feel empty and alone. Our spirits remain restless and unsatisfied despite the abundance of our possessions. Our souls are weighed down by nagging guilt, feelings of inadequacy and haunting fears. Lord, we need to be assured of your love. We need to know your forgiveness. We need to experience the peace, the power, and the joy of Christ Jesus.**

(Silence for personal reflection and confession)

- P** God has heard our prayer and he answers it with the same message he has been announcing for over two-thousand years: *“Unto you is born a Savior; he is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:11) Dear friends, this was not just his message to the shepherds then; it is God’s message to us here, now, tonight. And so as a called and ordained servant of the Word, I forgive you all of your sins; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** **We have seen his glory,**
- P** The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,
- C** **Full of grace and truth!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** The Lord be with you.
- C** And also with you.
- P** Let us pray: Heavenly Father, may the birth of Jesus—announced by the angels, witnessed by the shepherds and marveled at by the magi—empower us on this holy night to rejoice; indeed, to *rejoice evermore*; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

READING, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

SERMON

“Rejoice Evermore”

Pastor Bob Gehrke

1 Thessalonians 5:16

HYMN, LSB 387, stanzas 1, 2 and 4

“Joy to the World”



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the na - tions



King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him
play, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
prove The glo - ries of His righ - teous -



room And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture
plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
ness And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His



sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
love, And won - ders, won - ders of His love.

Text and tune: Public domain

FIRST READING, Isaiah 7:11-14

Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights. But Ahaz said, I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said, Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

HYMN, LSB 359, stanzas 1 & 2

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”



1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom - ing From ten - der stem hath
 2 I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, The rose I have in



sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing As proph - ets long have
 mind; With Mar - y we be - hold it, The vir - gin moth - er



sung, It came, a flow - 'ret bright, A - mid the
 kind. To show God's love a - right, She bore to



cold of win - ter, When half - spent was the night.
 us a Sav - ior, When half - spent was the night.

Text and tune: Public domain

SECOND READING, Micah 5:2-4

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

HYMN, LSB 361, stanzas 1 & 4

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”



1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, How still we see thee lie!
 4 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, De - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep The si - lent stars go by;
 Cast out our sin, and en - ter in, Be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing light.
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels The great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to - night.
O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Text and tune: Public domain

THIRD READING, Luke 1:26–38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

HYMN, LSB 370

“What Child Is This”



1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mar - y’s lap is
3 So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peas - ant, king, to



sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet While
own Him. The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; Let

shep - herds watch are keep - ing? This, this is
lov - ing hearts en - throne Him. Raise, raise the

Christ the king, Whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
song on high, The vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;

Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The babe, the son of Mar - y!
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mar - y!

Text and tune: Public domain

FOURTH READING, Matthew 1:18–23

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But 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. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

HYMN, LSB 384, stanzas 1-3

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

1 Of the Fa - ther’s love be - got - ten Ere the worlds be -
2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, When the vir - gin,
3 This is He whom seers in old time Chant - ed of with

gan to be, He is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
full of grace, By the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
one ac - cord, Whom the voic - es of the proph - ets

He the source, the end - ing He, Of the things that are, that
 Bore the Sav - ior of our race, And the babe, the world's Re -
 Prom - ised in their faith - ful word. Now He shines, the long - ex -

have been, And that fu - ture years shall see
 deem - er, First re - vealed His sa - cred face
 pect - ed; Let cre - a - tion praise its Lord

Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.

Text and tune: Public domain

FIFTH READING, Luke 2:1-7

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.
²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

HYMN, LSB 364, stanzas 1 & 3

“Away in a Manger”

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask Thee to stay

The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head.
 Close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.

The stars in the sky _____ looked down where He lay,
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in Thy ten - der care,

The lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 And take us to heav - en to live with Thee there.

Text and tune: Public domain

SIXTH READING, Luke 2:8-14

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

HYMN, LSB 368

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
 2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
 3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;

And the moun - tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
 What the glad - some tid - ings be Which in - spire your heav' n - ly song?
 Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.

Refrain

Glo - - - ri - a
 in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - - -
 - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o.

Text and tune: Public domain

SEVENTH READING, Luke 2:15–20

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

CHANCEL CHOIR, “The First Noel/Pachelbel’s Canon”

EIGHTH READING, John 1:14-18

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

HYMN, LSB 358, stanzas 1-3 & 5

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”



1 “From heav’n a - bove to earth I come To bear good
2 “To you this night is born a child Of Mar - y,
3 “This is the Christ, our God Most High, Who hears your
5 “These are the signs that you shall mark: The swad-dling



news to ev - 'ry home; Glad tid - ings of great
cho - sen vir - gin mild; This lit - tle child of
sad and bit - ter cry; He will Him - self your
clothes and man - ger dark. There you will find the



joy I bring, Where - of I now will say and sing:
low - ly birth Shall be the joy of all the earth.
Sav - ior be From all your sins to set you free.
in - fant laid By whom the heav'ns and earth were made.”

Text and tune: Public domain

NICENE CREED *(see the screen or thee inside back cover of the hymnal)*

OFFERING

This is a time that we, as a church family return a portion of the financial blessings God has given us. If you are our guests today, please do not feel obligated to participate. We have many ways to give your tithe or offering. You may place your offering in the plate when it is passed, mail it to the church, text to give by texting 84321 with any dollar amount (be sure to select "South Shore"), give online at sstwb1.org/give, or use the Church Center App from your smartphone (available for both Android and iOS). Disciples of Jesus at SST, please fill out an ivory SST Registration card and place in the offering plate.

Guests: If you would like more information regarding South Shore Trinity, please fill out a blue Guest Registration card before and place it in the offering plate or hand to an usher before leaving.

VESPER BELLS

"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P Lord, at Your birth:

C We rejoice evermore!

LORD'S PRAYER

P Hear us, merciful and mighty Father, as we pray the prayer our Savior taught us:

C **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.**

BENEDICTION

P 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.

C Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING

As we light our candles, we remember and worship our Savior, Jesus Christ, God's light of love. The pastors will light their candles. At that time, you are invited to turn on your candle. The switch is on the bottom. You may take your candle as our gift to you or you may place it in the box as you leave to be used next year.

P "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you." (Isaiah 60:1) "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12) "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:8-9). "In the same way, let your light shine before people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

(We sing verse 1 in English and then in German followed by verses 2 and 3)



1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,
 1 *Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,*



all is bright Round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
 at the sight; Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
 love's pure light Ra - diantbeams from Thy ho - ly face
ein - sam wacht Nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.



Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, Sleep in heav - en - ly
 Heav'n - ly hosts sing, Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
 With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy
Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, Schlaf in himm - li - scher



peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Ruh, Schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.

Text and tune: Public domain

