

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Sunday, December 27, 2020**  
**First Sunday of Christmas**

**Introduction to the day**

*The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.*

**PRELUDE**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who was in the beginning,  
who makes a dwelling among us,  
who covers us with justice and mercy.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God of goodness and lovingkindness,  
**we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors.**  
**We have turned away from your invitation to new life.**  
**We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden.**  
**In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins,**  
**those we know and those known only to you,**  
**for the sake of the one who came to live among us,**  
**Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

Hear the good news of peace and salvation!  
God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work,  
but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people.  
With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.  
**C: Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG *In the Bleak Midwinter* (ELW 294)**

1 In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

2 Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

3 What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man I would do my part;  
yet what I can give him-- give my heart.

### **GREETING**

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

**C: And also with you.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray.

**C: 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.**

*The assembly is seated.*

### **WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

### **FIRST READING: : Isaiah 61:10--62:3**

L: A reading from Isaiah.

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

<sup>62:1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.  
<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.  
<sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM:148 read responsively**

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;  
praise God in the heights.  
<sup>2</sup>**Praise the LORD, all you angels;  
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**  
<sup>3</sup>Praise the LORD, sun and moon;  
sing praise, all you shining stars.  
<sup>4</sup>**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens.**  
<sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
who commanded, and they were created,  
<sup>6</sup>**who made them stand fast forever and ever,  
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**  
<sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps;  
<sup>8</sup>**fire and hail, snow and fog,  
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**  
<sup>9</sup>mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars;  
<sup>10</sup>**wild beasts and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds;**  
<sup>11</sup>sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the world;  
<sup>12</sup>**young men and maidens,  
old and young together.**  
<sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.  
<sup>14</sup>**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants,  
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

**SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4-7**

L: A reading from Galatians.

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.*

<sup>4</sup>When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

<sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?**

**You have the words of eternal life.**

**Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:22-40**

P: The holy gospel according to Luke.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

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

<sup>25</sup>Now 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. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided 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, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

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

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then 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 <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

<sup>36</sup>There 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, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At 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.

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

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

*Silence for meditation*

## HYMN OF THE DAY *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (ELW 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*

## APOSTLES CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A: 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.*

A: Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. Strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: All creation is holy to 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.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring 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. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: 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*). Reveal your power to heal and to save. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Adopt us into your family, O God. Bless our elders with the peace and joy of Simeon and Anna. Strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, company, or health care. Connect young and old across generations. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word. For (*John, apostle and evangelist, and*) all your saints, we give you thanks. Prepare our salvation in the sight of all your witnesses of every time and place. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

P: 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.

**C: 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.**

## **SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

## **BLESSING**

P: 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 you this day ✝ through the Word made flesh.  
**Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

### **Postlude**

## ***Announcements***

*We extend our sympathies to family of Sonja and Leonard Taylor who died on Monday,  
December 21.*

Remember in prayer: Rowen Aldridge, Betty and Jim Allen, Luke Antolick, Mary Bower, Bob Braucht, Cindy Cummings, Dawn Hauser, Dave Kuehl at Encompass Health, Ralph Lehman, Sara Leighow, Caleb Leone, Ruth Lupold, David Mitchell, Bob and Phyllis Moriarity, Kathy Neal, Rev. Donald and Ruth Nice, Jack Rishel, Joann Rishel, Ben Saar, Jane Shaffer, Rev. Gary Shumway, John Truax, Jillian Waldman, and all of our shut-ins; the safety of our military troops around the world (Mark Baier, Jade Cordrey, Paul Laidacker, Kenny Leitch, Maddison Myers, Tyler O'Neal, Adam Shaffer, Aaron Stabley, Paul St. James, Jenna White); Everyone affected by the fires on the West Coast; Family Promise and the homeless in our counties. Bishop Eaton, our Presiding Bishop; and Bishop Collins, Bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. For our Companion Synod in Liberia and Ansbach-Wurzburg, Germany; our sister church, St. Wunibald in Heidenheim, Germany and for the New Love Center as it seeks to build a new food hub.

The Lutheran Church **Women's Prayer Chain** is a vital ministry of St. John Lutheran. Anyone in need of prayers is asked to contact any of the following persons:

Gloria Ely – 570-873-3597  
Sarah Davidson - 570-398-0659  
Joyce Braucht - 570-398-2852

**Giving Plus+** Download the “Giving Plus+” app from your app store for your cell phone. This feature is also available on our web site. Enter your email, make up a password, and walk through the choices to give the church an electronic donation by check or debit/credit card. People were asking if they could give electronically by debit/credit card. Now this feature is available. If you have any questions, contact Pastor Aucker.

**Give+ Text:** Simply send a text message to 570-865-1101 with the amount you would like to contribute. Within a few minutes, you'll be sent a text with a link to register. Click on the link and enter your cardholder name and credit or debit card information. Once your registration is complete, you will receive a text verification and a receipt of your donation via email.

**“Grab-a-Tab”** - The youth of St. John would like to ask for donations of little tabs from beverage, soup and dessert cans. It doesn't matter what color the tab, just grab them and deliver them to the church office. This project will benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Danville. “Grab-a-Tab” program allows people of all ages to join in the effort of providing a “Home-away-from-Home” to children with cancer or other serious illnesses and their families.

**Toys for Tots program A HUGE THANK YOU to all of you.**

We started with posters and facebook notices, on to interviewing all the heads of families, then many taking the names of the children and providing gifts for them. To those picking up the toys and sorting them all into categories, then many packing each child's bag with toys they were wishing for. Finally, because of the BIG snowstorm to come, calling all the families to pick up their Christmas bags early. It was a team effort and successful because of all the hard work, dedication, and commitment shown by all, especially by our leaders, Denny Buttorff, and Donna and Dwayne Batschelet. Our end totals were 108 families and 265 children for this year. God is good, He has blessed this ministry. *Merry Christmas and blessings for 2021 to you and your families.*

## ***THIS WEEK'S EVENTS***

Sunday, December 27, 2020

9:00 a.m. Worship Service on Facebook

7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Tuesday, December 28, 2020

7:30 p.m. A.A. and N. A. meetings

Sunday, January 3, 2021

9:00 a.m. Worship Service on Facebook

7:00 p.m. AA meeting

*First Sunday of Christmas*

*Second Sunday of Christmas*