

December 24, 2023



WELCOME TO OUR

Christmas Eve

SERVICE



MT. ZION

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Madison Heights, MI

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2023 Children's Christmas Eve Service

Tonight's Theme:

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

Opening Hymn: *Oh, Come All Ye Faithful*

1 *Oh, come all ye faithful, triumphantly sing;
Come, see in the manger our Savior and King!*

[Refrain]: *To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;*

*Oh, come, let us adore Him, Oh, come let us adore Him,
Oh, come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

2 *True Son of the Father, He comes from the skies;
To be born of a virgin He doth not despise. [Refrain]*

(ALL STAND) 3 *To Thee, then, O Jesus, this day of Thy birth
Be glory and honor through heaven and earth,
True Godhead incarnate, omnipotent Word!*

*Oh, come, let us adore Him, Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*



The Invocation and Opening Response

P *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

C **Amen!**

P *When the time was fully come, God sent forth his Son.*

C **Jesus was born to be our Redeemer.**

P *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*

C **We have seen his glory, full of grace and truth.**

P *No one has ever seen God*

C **But we have seen Jesus, full of grace and truth.**

P *He is the very image of God*

C **All the fullness of God dwells in Him bodily.**

P *You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

C **Let us go and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has revealed to us.**

Congregational Hymn: *From Heaven Above*

1 "From heav'n above to earth I come To bear good news to ev'ry home:
Glad tidings of great joy I bring, Whereof I now will say and sing:

2 "To you this night is born a child Of Mary chosen virgin mild;
This little child of lowly birth Shall be the joy of all the earth.

3 "This is the Christ, our God Most High, Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will Himself your Savior be From all your sins to set you free.

4 Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,
A quiet chamber set apart For You to dwell within my heart.

Pastor Narration: *The manger scene... According to popular legend, it was almost 800 years ago in an Italian village that the first manger scene was set up. With life-size figures, it was placed in the town square. Since that time, our manger scenes have taken many forms, from table-top stables and figurines of wood or ceramic to lighted figures on people's front lawns.*

Fletcher Narration: *But what is the purpose of the manger scene? Its purpose is to help us better appreciate what God has done for us by sending His beloved Son into such humble poverty. God left the splendor of heaven and He became one of us. The manger scene reminds that "Jesus Made His Home with Us!"*

Children's Hymn: *Away in a Manger*

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

I. The Predicted Homecoming

Pastor Narration: *Let's set the stage for this real-life drama. Jesus' birth in the stable is not when the story of God's love first began. When we draw back the curtain of the ancient prophecies of God's Word, we see that it was always part of God's plan to make His home with us in order to save us from the curse of sin. The coming of God into human flesh was predicted long before it actually happened.*

Fletcher Narration: *In the beginning, just after creation, when Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, God's love and mercy immediately announced the first Gospel promise of the plan to save us. Jesus Christ, the "Offspring of the Woman" would crush Satan's power.*

Ezekiel Wittorp: Genesis 3:15 "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Pastor Narration: God continued to remind His people of His plan to send Jesus into the World so that even our families today would be blessed.

Aurora Naumann: Genesis 22:17-18 [God said to Abraham,] "I will surely bless you... And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Fletcher Narration: The book of Isaiah has been called the Gospel of the Old Testament. 800 years before the first Christmas, we have this promise:

Jed Naumann: Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Congregational Hymn: Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

*1 Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word,
I come in half belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred,
But there is room and welcome there for me. (2x)*

*2 In that unlikely place I find Him as they said:
Sweet newborn babe, how frail! And in a manger bed:
A still, small voice to cry one day for me. (2x)*

*3 How should I not have known Isaiah would be there,
His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart I stare:
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me. (2x)*

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

II. The Humble Homecoming

Pastor Narration: The manger scene tells us that the God who created the universe, became an actual human being. He came to earth and made His home with us. But what a home Jesus' first dwelling was! Compare Jesus' first home to what most children in our country come home to everyday. Jesus did not live in a home of wall to wall carpet, with gas or electric heating, cozy beds, and comfortable furniture. Jesus was born in a stable -- a stable probably built into the side of a hill -- a stable with all the sights, sounds, and smells typical of such a place.

Fletcher Narration: What made Jesus leave His glorious and perfect home in heaven and live in a place like that? One word answers the question: LOVE! LOVE made Jesus take on our humanity so that He could take away all our hurts! This is how it happened ...

Ezekiel Wittorp: Luke 2:1-3 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Aurora Naumann: Luke 2:4-5 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, To be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.



All Children: Luke 2:6-7 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Children's Hymn: Joy to the World

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

III. The Homecoming Announcement

Pastor Narration: *The story of Christ Jesus has been called the greatest story ever told. But what if it had been the greatest story never told? What if the birth of Jesus had been kept a secret? In His mercy, God would not allow that to happen. But isn't it true that we are often guilty of keeping this best of all news to ourselves?*

Fletcher Narration: *When a baby is born, do we keep it to ourselves? No! we tell everyone we know. Dozens of birth announcements are sent out to family and friends. How can we keep the marvelous homecoming of Jesus a secret? The angels sure couldn't. When we see a manger scene, we remember how important it was for those heavenly messengers to be present:*

(All Stand and Recite Luke 2:8-20 in Unison):

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe

wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Congregation Hymn: *Go Tell It on The Mountain*

*[Refrain:] Go! tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and ev'ry-where;
Go! tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!*

*1. While shepherds kept their watching O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold through-out 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 lowly manger The humble Christ was born;
And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)*

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

IV. Homecoming Gifts

Pastor Narration: What else needs to be mentioned from the manger scene? What about the wisemen? As you may know, the wisemen did not arrive in Bethlehem the night of Jesus' birth. Jesus, in fact, may have already reached the age of two before the wisemen ever laid eyes on him. Yet the wisemen are an important part of the story of how God Made His Home with Us! For the actions of the wisemen remind us of how thankful we can be for the gift of Immanuel - God-with-us! What a great privilege to offer Jesus our gifts of thanks!



Fletcher Narration: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ... And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1-2,11)

Congregational Hymn: As With Gladness Men of Old

1 As with gladness men of old Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious Lord, may we Evermore be led by Thee!

2 Holy Jesus, every day Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past, Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide, Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

Jesus Made His Home with Us!

IV. From Humble Homecoming to Calvary's Cross

Pastor Narration: What more can be said about the manger scene? Have we missed anything? Let's not forget THE CROSS! We have already said that the cross was a part of Jesus' homecoming. But let us all fully realize that the cross was the very reason for Jesus coming to make His home with us! The shadow of the cross hung over the manger scene.

Fletcher Narration: It has been said that Jesus is the reason for the season. It would be more accurate to say that Jesus and His cross are the reason for the season! If we don't see the cross in Christmas we miss the entire point of Christmas! Baby Jesus was born to die -- to die in our place as sin's punishment! A familiar Christmas hymn asks the question, "What Child is This?" Let us hear the answer from Holy Scripture:

The Pastor's Message: John 3:16

For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him
should not perish but have eternal life.



The Offering of Thankful Hearts

Responsive Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

P *Among our precious children dear,*

C [Refrain]: **Lord, Jesus, come, and make your home.**

P *With all who come to worship here,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Within the homes in which we dwell,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Where people seek your praise to tell,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Where there is need or want or pain,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Where mourners seek to hope again,* **C** [Refrain]

P *With loved ones who are far away,* **C** [Refrain]

P *With all who watch and wait and pray,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Whene'er we hear Your Word of grace,* **C** [Refrain]

P *Until in heav'n we take our place,* **C** [Refrain]

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.**

The Benediction

Closing Hymn: *Silent Night* (Sung a cappella and by candlelight)

1. *Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin, mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.*

2. *Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar Heavenly hosts sing alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born.*

3. *Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

Welcome! Especially to our guests and visitors. And thank you to Mr. Fletcher Hughes and our dear children for assisting in our worship tonight! It is our prayer that the Christmas gospel will strengthen God's gift of faith in our hearts. Faith that trusts in His greatest gift of all – Jesus Christ, His Son and our Savior. Please join us for our Christmas Day service tomorrow at 10:00am!