

December 31, 2017  
First Sunday of Christmas

## INTRODUCTION

*In the psalm all the natural world praises God, including all humanity, male and female, young and old. 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 speak of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.*

### PRELUDE

*"Lo! How a Rose E're Blooming"*

James Mansfield

### \*GATHERING SONG

*"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"*

ELW 275

Angels, from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
once you sang creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,  
watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing,  
yonder shines the infant light.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.

Sages, leave your contemplations,  
brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great desire of nations,  
you have seen his natal star.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.

All creation, join in praising  
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,  
evermore your voices raising  
to the eternal Three in One.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.

**\*CHRISTMAS DIALOGUE**

- P** Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shines light in the world.  
**C** **By day and night he shines for all to see.**  
**P** Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty  
**C** **that the world may see the justice and richness of God.**  
**P** God so loved the world that God sent Jesus,  
**C** **so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.**  
**P** Jesus is the light of the world.  
**C** **Jesus is the light of our lives.**  
**P** Sing to God a new song!  
**C** **A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world.**

**\*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** *Almighty God,*  
**C** **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**

*"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"*

ELW 288

Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
give ye heed to what we say:  
Jesus Christ is born today;  
ox and ass before him bow,  
and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today!  
Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye hear of endless bliss:  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He has opened heaven's door,  
and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this!  
Christ was born for this!

**Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye need not fear the grave;  
Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all  
to gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save!  
Christ was born to save!**

**FIRST READING**

**Isaiah 61:10-62:3**

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that the Lord'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.

**Reflection**

*Why are the people of Jerusalem rejoicing in the Lord? (verse 10) Think of how a bride is adorned (and a bridegroom as well), or what the earth looks like in spring. What emotions do these images call forth? The prophet (speaking for God) is shouting about Jerusalem's vindication and salvation. Why? As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, what cause do we have to rejoice? What is our vindication and salvation? As Jerusalem was restored, what has been restored for us? Sometimes once Christmas is over, we experience a letdown—now it's just winter. What does this text call for in us? How can we continue to rejoice?*

## Psalm 148

<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, heav- | en of heavens,  
and you waters a- | bove 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 forev- | er 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, do- | ing 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!**

### Reflection

*This psalm is a call to rejoice! Who all is rejoicing? (verses 2-3, 7-12) Why are they rejoicing? (verses 5-6, 13-14) How do join in this rejoicing in the Lord?*

## SECOND READING

## Galatians 4:4-7

*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 sons and daughters.*

<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.

### Reflection

*In this text Paul calls on the Christians in Galatia to join in the rejoicing. Why? (see the beginning of this particular argument in 4:1-3—we were born under the Law, and so we have no more rights than minors—children or slaves) How did God address this enslavement? (verses 4-*

5) *We are no longer slaves or children with no rights. What have we become, through Christ? (verses 6-7) This is another text that calls us to rejoice in what God has done! How are you rejoicing this Christmas season?*

**\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**GOSPEL**

**Luke 2:22-40**

*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.

**Reflection**

*This story from Jesus' infancy (which is unique to Luke among the Gospels) has Mary and Joseph following the Law. What do they do? (verses 22-23) Note that the offering they bring to the*

*Temple is the offering not of wealthy people but of poor people. I think, in our culture, which lifts up and celebrates wealth and riches, it is important to remember who Jesus is. Nevertheless, in spite of poverty, Jesus' wealth (so to speak) cannot be hidden. Who notices when Jesus is brought to the Temple? (verse 25) How does he recognize Jesus? (verses 26-27) How does he respond? (verses 28-32) Simeon joins in the rejoicing of all creation. What do Mary and Joseph think? (verse 33) What warning does Simeon give to Mary? (verses 34-35) Who else notices Jesus and his parents? (verses 36-38) How does she join in the rejoicing of all creation? How can we follow the example of Simeon and Anna (even those of you who are young!) in this Christmas season?*

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

Kris Langdon

**SERMON**

Brenda Bass

**SONG OF THE DAY**

***"Shine On Us"***

Lord let Your light  
Light of Your face shine on us  
Lord let Your light  
Light of Your face shine on us  
That we may be saved  
That we may have life  
To find our way in the darkest night  
Let Your light shine on us

Lord let Your grace  
Grace from Your hand fall on us  
Lord let Your grace  
Grace from Your hand fall on us  
That we may be saved  
That we may have life  
To find our way in the darkest night  
Let Your grace fall on us

Lord let Your love  
Love with no end come over us  
Lord let Your love  
Love with no end come over us  
That we may be saved  
That we may have life  
To find our way in the darkest night  
Let Your love come over us  
Let Your light shine on us

**\*CHRISTMAS CREED**

**☒ We believe in God,  
the one who comes before us and goes behind us,  
creating life and opportunities to love and care for the world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ  
who walks with us into real life each day.  
He is God, yet human like us  
and experienced all life's joys  
and pains and challenges like we do.  
But his love is so great  
that not sin nor suffering  
nor even death could stop it.  
Today the love of Jesus lives  
and continues to bring new life to the world.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
who comes like the wind and blows in and through us  
to bring God's power and light to all the world.  
The Spirit breathes life into us,  
the body of Christ we call the church,  
and enables us to follow the way of Christ.  
We believe in God,  
who goes before and behind, with, in and through us,  
bringing hope and life and newness to the world. Amen!**

**\*PRAYER SONG**

*"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" vv. 1*

**ELW 276**

**Infant holy, infant lowly,  
for his bed a cattle stall;  
oxen lowing, little knowing  
Christ the child is Lord of all.  
Swiftly winging, angels singing,  
bells are ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the child is Lord of all!  
Christ the child is Lord of all!**

**\*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Drawn near to God as children and heirs of Christ's promise, we pray for all people of God, for our nation and our world, and for those in need.

*A brief silence.*

For the faith communities of *St. Joseph* and for faith communities throughout the world. Help us to see ourselves in our neighbors, especially those who differ from us, and draw us together in common service to those who are hungry, poor, and oppressed. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of the earth as we begin another year entrusted with its care. Give us lively imaginations to see ways to conserve its limited resources, harness its renewable energies, and conform ourselves to its natural goodness. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For peace among nations, for peace in our homes, and for peace in our hearts. Urge us to cry out at injustice and inequality among your people until vindication comes and righteousness prevails. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For those who struggle to see the future, and for all who lack even their basic needs. Transform our love toward them with the vision of eyes that have seen the salvation of God. We especially pray for the family and friends who lost their loved one, Owen Holmes. We lift up to you those in need of your healing hand: *Roxanna, Mary Anna, Kay, and Linda* and for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (*pause for 10 seconds*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For those who cannot see, for those who cannot hear, for those who have varied use of their limbs, and for those able to exercise all the senses. Help us to appreciate the fullness of God's gift of life in our varied abilities, and to celebrate the diversity that reveals a more complete image of the one who makes us all family. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for those who have gone before us in this year and now rest in you. Led by Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon, let us live in your praise until the day we depart in your peace. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Into your outstretched arms, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Jesus Christ, the light and life of the world.

**Amen!**

**OFFERTORY**

***"Of the Father's Love Begotten"*** vv. 1, 4, 5

**ELW 295**

**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.**

Let the heights of heav'n adore him;  
angel hosts, his praises sing;  
pow'rs, dominions, bow before him  
and extol our God and King;  
let no tongue on earth be silent,  
ev'ry voice in concert ring  
evermore and evermore.

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!

**\*OFFERING PRAYER**

**P** *God with us:*

**C** You came as a baby to a manger. You slept on straw and greeted shepherds. You come again in bread and wine. Remind us how good you are at blessing ordinary things. And then, through these gifts, help us to bless the lives of others in the strength of your holy name. Amen!

**\*PREFACE** (*Tune: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"*)

**P** *The Lord be with you.*

**C** **And with you, His servant.**

**P** *O, come; let us lift our hearts unto the Lord.*

**C** **With hearts uplifted**  
**thanks to God we render;**  
**with joy we come before you.**  
**In gratefulness implore you.**  
**With thankful hearts adore you evermore!**

**\*GREAT THANKSGIVING**

**P** *It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

**\*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** (*Tune: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*)

**☞ Holy, holy, holy Lord!**  
**God of hosts, by all adored!**  
**Heav'n and earth cannot contain**  
**all the glory of Your name!**  
**Hail, hosanna, God most high!**  
**Blest is He who now draws nigh!**  
**In the name of God the King!**  
**Hallelujahs glad we sing;**  
**Hail, hosanna! Praises due,**  
**Be forever, Lord, to You!**

**\*EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

- ☞** *Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:*  
*Blessed are you for the birth of creation.*  
*Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.*  
*Blessed are you for your promise to your people.*  
*Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.*  
*Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.*  
*Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,*  
*the Word made flesh.*  
*In the night in which he was betrayed,*  
*our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;*  
*broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:*  
*Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.*  
*Do this for the remembrance of me.*  
*Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,*  
*and gave it for all to drink, saying:*  
*This cup is the new covenant in my blood,*  
*shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.*  
*Do this for the remembrance of me.*  
*Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:*
- ☞ Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**
- ☞** *With this bread and cup*  
*we remember your Word dwelling among us,*  
*full of grace and truth.*  
*We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.*  
*We look with hope for his coming.*
- ☞ Come, Lord Jesus.**

**P** *Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us.  
Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people.  
Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.*

**C** **Come, Holy Spirit.**

**P** *All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever.*

**C** **Amen!**

**\*LORD'S PRAYER** (*Tune: It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*)

**C** **Our Father, Lord on heaven's high throne,  
most holy be Your name.  
Your kingdom come, Your will be done  
on earth - in heaven the same.  
Give us this day the food we need;  
forgiven may we be.  
Into temptation do not lead,  
from evil set us free.**

**Yours is the kingdom, unto You  
in grateful love we bow;  
And Yours the pow'r, Lord, let us  
view Your mighty presence now.  
The glory Yours, Your praise be sung  
by angel hosts and all.  
In Ev'ry Land, by ev'ry tongue  
forevermore! Amen!**

#### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

**P** *Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let every heart receive your Savior.*

**\*BLESSING**

**P** *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep  
you in his grace.*

**C** **Amen!**

**\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION** (*Tune: I Heard the Bells*)

**G** Oh, thank the Lord, whose goodness sure  
and steadfast love forever endure!  
Our eyes have seen, our ears have heard,  
and we have tasted of God's word.

Lord, let us show the world Your light;  
let us declare Your glory bright,  
Proclaim Your death until You come  
to take Your ransomed servants home.

Glory to God, the Father, Son,  
and Holy Spirit, Three in One!  
Oh, thank the Lord, whose goodness sure  
and steadfast love forever endure!

**\*BENEDICTION** (*Tune: O Come, All Ye Faithful*)

**P** *The Lord bless and keep you,  
look with love upon you,  
be gracious, and cause His face to shine with peace!*

**G** **Glory to the Father,  
Son, and Holy Spirit!  
The Savior close beside us,  
God's love from harm to hide us,  
the Spirit's power to guide us evermore!**

**\*SENDING SONG**

*"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!

While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled  
when, lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

Down in a lonely manger  
the humble Christ was born;  
and God sent us salvation  
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

**\*DISMISSAL**

- P** *Glory to God in the highest!*
- C** **Peace to God's people on earth!**
- P** *Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.*
- C** **Thanks be to God!**