

Home Worship January 3rd Second Sunday of Christmas

Welcome to worship. The December Newsletter is out in mail and email. If you are not getting one please let our office know. Hoping you enjoyed the Christmas Eve video and the Lessons and Carols from the Synod. Today I am sharing my nativity with you. My family made it in my father's wood working shop. Thank you to all who continue to support the work of the church. Stay in touch if you or someone you know needs help and or prayer.

Confession and Forgiveness

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. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gifts of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

⁷Thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel."

⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. ¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." ¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. ¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. ¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

Psalm 147:12-20

¹²Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion,
¹³**who has strengthened the bars of your gates and has blessed your children within you.**
¹⁴God has established peace on your borders and satisfies you with the finest wheat.
¹⁵**God sends out a command to the earth, a word that runs very swiftly.**
¹⁶God gives snow like wool, scattering frost like ashes.
¹⁷**God scatters hail like bread crumbs. Who can stand against God's cold?**
¹⁸The LORD sends forth the word and melts them; the wind blows, and the waters flow.
¹⁹**God declares the word to Jacob, statutes and judgments to Israel.**
²⁰The LORD has not done so to any other nation; they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the

praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The Holy Gospel according to John 1:[1-9] 10-18 Glory to you O Lord

John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.

[¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. The word of the Lord.....

Praise to you O Christ

Sermon

Last Friday a New Year began for us, full of promise and hope and life. Of all the words in the bible the words of John's prologue are definitely some of my favorites: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."* I think that I like these words so much because they echo the words of Genesis 1: *"In the beginning God created..."* In Genesis, God speaks, and creation happens.

God speaks and creation happens, the spoken *"Word of God"* does the work of forming everything. The spoken *"Word of God"* was God. *"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."* John says: God's Word became human in Jesus...from the very beginning...

Words matter. I was taught to think before I begin to speak. This was instilled in me as a child and affirmed in my former career. This is difficult thing to do and I do make mistakes, however it is a good practice to think before speaking and I do tend to weigh my words before a meeting, a phone call or a written note.

I never understood the old childhood chant *"sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you."* Words and insults do hurt. In our culture, words are cheap and many people do not think before they speak. Hate speech is a real thing and the media platforms all knows how influential it is. Words can hurt and words..... can also heal. God's Word creates and heals.

When most of us think of "God's Word" or hear the phrase *"Word of God"* we think of the written scripture. The printed Word of God called the bible which was made for us from the accounts of thousands of people who held a deep faith in God and passed down history, wisdom and stories to reveal God in different ways. The bible is inspired by God and reveals Jesus to us. John speaks to us, but not about the words of the bible that isn't yet written or printed. John tells us that the *"Word of God"* is all that is created.

I heard a prayer once that I say very often before falling asleep and when I wake up in the morning *"Thank you Lord for all that was, all that is and all that ever will be"*. This prayer makes me feel connected to creation and the *"Word of God"* the creator.

I come to you today in written word and/or on this computer in a visual way. We would all much rather be in the sanctuary of St. Mark's hearing and meditating on today's words. And as true as that is, John's gospel reminds us that the *"Word of God"* is far beyond any church sanctuary or gathering. The *"Word of God"* is in all that is created. It is in the light of the snow

under a grey sky during this time of year. The “*Word of God*” is in the phone calls we make to share care and love for each other. The “*Word of God*” most certainly is in a child born in Bethlehem who is hope for the world.

In other gospel accounts Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham. Luke goes all the way back to Adam. But John traces Jesus' origin all the way back to the spoken "Word of God" in the beginning. *"What has come into being in him—the Word, this spoken creating Word of God—was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."* Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus identifies himself with these words: *"I am the light... I am the life"* Jesus is the Word and the Word walked, and continues to walk among us.

This is the final Sunday of the Christmas season. Soon I will put away my nativity set. As I do, I will reflect on a poem that reflects on John's prologue and helps us to transition from Christmas back into the New Year and the days ahead:

“The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

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.*** Redeeming God, you gather together your people from the farthest parts of the earth. Protect your church from stumbling. Let it not be overcome by sorrow, division, or despair. Make us radiant with goodness, that we might live always to the praise of your glory. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You bring together heaven and earth. All creation testifies to your splendor. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in delicate balance, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands,

deserts to rainforests. Show us new ways to live in harmony with the world around us.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm's way and those risking danger for the sake of others.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You bring consolation to those who weep. Embrace those who feel far-off, excluded, or defeated. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Sustain the weak and weary. Refresh those who labor under the weight of pain or sickness (***especially Lisa Miller and Brad Shippert. We pray for the families suffering with the coronavirus and we pray for an end to the virus with safe vaccinations and treatments. We pray for those in care facilities: Sibyl, Barb, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne, Linda, Ed and Marian Schnulle. We pray for those in military service: Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis).*** Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You come to us in the beauty of darkness and of light. Bring justice and reconciliation to communities divided by oppressions and misuse of power. Guide us to speak holy words of advocacy and truth. Help us to honor your image in one another.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You turn our mourning into joy. We give thanks for those who have died in faith. With all the saints, give us our inheritance in Christ. In the fullness of time, gather us all together in your mercy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Amen.**

Prayer of Offering

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught ...

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.

Invitation to Communion

The Word is revealed in a manger, in simple bread and wine. Come meet Christ in this meal.

Holy Communion Together

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.
By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until
he comes.

Take your bread/wafer	The body of Christ given for you
Take you juice/wine	The blood of Christ shed for you
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.	

Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us from your very self
with the body and blood of Christ. Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim your
promise to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Blessing

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

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**