

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

January 3, 2021

Second Sunday of Christmas



Introduction to the Day

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

We gather each week to worship and pray on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples. For thousands of years they have walked on the land and paddled the waters of the Salish Sea. We are grateful to the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh Nations for their stewardship of these lands and adjoining waters throughout the ages.

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Gathering Hymn: Good Christian Friends, Rejoice



- 1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
- 2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
- 3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;



give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!



ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.



Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

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

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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Praise: Love Has Come



1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 1: 1-14

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

“In the beginning.”

These words are Primal; Cosmic.

That is how the Gospel of John begins. Chapter 1, verse 1: “In the beginning.”

They are meant, I believe, to remind us of another chapter 1 — chapter 1 of Genesis — that beautiful, poetic framing of a creation story.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” It is Cosmic. Expansive. Massive. Mystery.

This also is the theological world view of the writer of the Gospel of John.

In contrast, whereas John gives us cosmic theology, the gospels of Luke and Matthew give us something very tangible, something that is part of our experience.

In Luke’s Gospel — chapter 2 — a story that is read on Christmas Eve — you would have heard about shepherds and fields; about barns and animals.

It is a story about people in-over-their-heads.

These poor shepherds — minding their own business, doing what they were paid to do, tending sheep, keeping them safe.

And then their world explodes.

They are not able to figure out what all this heavenly stuff is about. But they do the human thing and go and seek the baby, and see him lying there in the barn.

And then they do another human thing. For when you come across something strange or new or mysterious or exciting — you just can’t keep it to yourself.

So they share what they have seen on Instagram and other social media platforms — okay, in their day, it meant that they simply told others.

That was their social media platform.

But they shared it person to person; bearing witness to what they had seen.

They could not keep silent.

They bore witness to what they saw.

So, too, with the Gospel of Matthew.

It is down-to-earth stuff.

It speaks of things we can imagine, experience, and understand.

In Matthew's Christmas story, we hear about camels, gifts and wise elders. We hear about stars in the sky, and of kings and their treachery.

But more than that, there also is human searching and longing. That, too, is part of our experience, part of our everyday search for meaning in life.

Luke and Matthew give us stories that encompass flesh and bone theology:

God among us.
God in the flesh.
God IN our world, not removed from it.

Now contrast Luke and Matthew's stories with that of the gospel of John. "In the beginning . . ."

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and our brains begin to hurt as we try to figure out what in God's name is being said here.

It is mysterious; cosmic; transcendent.
The word "Word" again calls us back to Genesis, chapter 1.

In Genesis, God SPOKE and things happened.
In Genesis, God SPOKE, and heavens and earth were formed.

In Genesis, God SPOKE, and sea and sky were formed;
plants and fungi and animals came into being,
and among them were the human ones.

God SPOKE.
Speaking had power.
Things happened when words were spoken.

Here in John chapter 1, the life-giving, creative, sustaining and redeeming essence of God is referred to as the WORD, the logos.

It seems so foreign to us. Distant.

But John makes sure that this transcendent, mysterious way of speaking does not stay there, removed from us.

John now begins to move from the cosmic to the ordinary.

What is fascinating by this transition here in John chapter 1, is that in doing so, John lifts up our eyes, expands our understanding, our imagination.

We see, at one and the same time, that the cosmic God also is the God that is here, “at hand,” among us, with us.

The WORD becomes flesh.

From the cosmic, transcendent language, to the down-to-earth language.

Flesh. One of us. Real life human. Jesus. Become one of us.

The cosmic God becomes human, here, among us.

It is all so mysterious, and I must admit that I have a hard time really understanding it all. My scientific brain struggles to make sense of it.

The early church also really struggled to define who this Jesus was. Eventually, they settled on a statement found in our Nicene Creed that articulates this mystery AND this flesh-and-blood reality:

True God and true human. 100% God — 100% human.

The danger with all of this “in the beginning” language and the phrases “The Word was with God and the Word was God,” is that I can keep God as simply a CONCEPT, an idea. That’s the danger.

God is so mysterious, so other-worldly, so out of my experience, that I can easily keep God out there, away from me, not part of my life.

Perhaps it is safer that way.

Maybe keeping God as an idea, as a concept, is preferable,

because once a baby comes
you can’t just THINK about it anymore.

There is flesh-and-blood right there before you,
and that child calls you, compels you, to be in
relationship.

And that is what happens here in John chapter 1.
The Word became flesh and lived (dwelt) among
us.

I am not here during this Christmas season of 2020 to try and convince you. I could
argue, cajole, debate, should I so choose.

But, really, all I can do,
all any of us can do,
is bear witness to this story, to the majesty of this story.

I sing in a choir — Chor Leoni's Men's Choir. One of the songs that we
sing is entitled "Stars."

The words are by poet Sara Teasdale; the music is a recent
composition by Eriks Esenvalds from Latvia.

At the conclusion of the song is this remarkable line:
"I know I am honoured to be witness of so much
majesty."

The poem is talking about the expansiveness of the night
sky, but I think the writer of John chapter 1 would agree.
"I am honoured to be witness of so much majesty."

I think that is what John's gospel is trying to say to us.
This cosmic, expansive chapter 1 is reminding us not only of God's majesty, but
also of our place in this created order.

We humans tend to think that we are the centre of the universe.

After all, we are cosmologically sophisticated beings, or so we think.
We can view the heavens through our human-made Hubble
telescopes, massive radio telescopes and others.

We can decipher Gravitational Waves that hint at the
complexities of the Big Bang event.

We can manipulate genes and chromosomes.

But John's gospel will not let us get away with such a limited view. John's gospel embodies a cosmic, world-view.

We can easily get blinded by the light of our own egos, pride, privilege and arrogance.

But just as it is with trying to see the stars, you need to move away from the lights in order to see the light, in order to see what IS there.

You see, the stars are always there.

It is just that sometimes other things keep us from seeing them.

For we get blinded by light pollution, particularly when we live in cities; other stuff gets in the way of our seeing what IS there.

And maybe that is a metaphor for our human journey.

We are so easily distracted, unable to SEE.

John's gospel re-focuses us.

Even the celebration of Christmas sometimes gets in the way. It is easy to overload Christmas with sentimentality, after all;

to argue about just how sweet the baby Jesus really was,

and that, surely, no crying he makes — as if that has anything to do with glory, majesty, salvation.

It reminds us that God's ESSENCE, God's grace, God's love, God's embrace is there, even when the lights of our own making keep us from seeing them.

John chapter 1 is a statement of profound faith:
In the beginning of John's gospel, there is utter majesty:
there is God.

Everything else is set aside.

And it is just glory upon glory, majesty upon majesty.

But . . . John's gospel does not stay there. The Word became flesh and lived among you.

That's the Christmas story. For you.
For you.



Hymn of the Day – Of the Father's Love Begotten - verses 1,4,5



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
 4 Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his
 5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly



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
 prais - es sing; pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



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 -
 and ex - tol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be
 and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -



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
 si - lent, ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
 min - ion, and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more! A - men.

Prayers of Intercession

As we near the conclusion of the Christmas season, let us pray for God's mercy throughout this New Year, responding to each petition with words from the first reading, "Save your people, O LORD."

A brief silence.

Head of the Church and Redeeming God, strengthen your church across the nations, denominations and traditions. Renew the strength of bishops, pastors, deacons, musicians, and all servants of the church. Assist congregations in paying their bills. Give us hope in your goodness and joy in your salvation.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

God of the Nations. Inspire leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon our Prime Minister, Cabinet and legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

Creator of all life, help us enter the New Year reverently, aware that you have endowed every creature and plant, every person and habitat with beauty and purpose. May we regard the world you have made with tenderness. May we honor your creation, rather than destroy.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

Reconciling God, lead us out of patterns of prejudice and into reconciliation with one another. Let us release our grudges, our anger and our pains, for these are nothing but binding chains. Help us to honor all persons as members of your family under your care, serving all who are in need, regardless of race, color or creed.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

Shepherd of your People, we pray for our congregation, for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire your will above all else. We ask that you open doors needing to be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask for your wisdom, for your strength and power to be present within the leaders of our congregation. We pray you would make us and them strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, let your gifts flow freely through us, so that you would be honored by our lives, and others would be drawn to you.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

God of all Times, we thank you for helping us to make it through this difficult year. Thank you that you've carried us through the uncertainty of deep waters, through trials, and through the pain of losses, both great and small. We are constantly aware of how much we need you, your grace, your strength, your power working through even the toughest days. Thank you for your reminder that both in seasons of celebration and in seasons of brokenness, you're still with us. Fill us with your joy and the peace of your Spirit. Direct our hearts and minds towards you. Help us to remember that the gift of Christ—Immanuel—is our greatest treasure, not just at Christmas, but for the whole year through.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

Compassionate God, attend to those who suffer. End the pandemic. Restore health care workers. Heal the sick. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Visit those for whom we pray: Pastor Larry, Billie, Tilly, Lois N., Aud, Pat S., Estelle, Arlene, David, Don _____

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

Eternal God, at this beginning of 2021, hear our praise for all those whose lives proclaimed your praise, especially those who died during 2020. At our end, bring us with them into the garden watered by your mercy.

A brief silence.

Receive our prayer, merciful God.

Save your people, O LORD.

O God, you are the Beginning and the Ending of all. Receive our prayers for the sake of one who made known to us the mystery of your will, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Cold December Flies Away



1 Cold De - cem - ber flies a - way at the rose - red splen - dor.
2 In the hope - less time of sin shad - ows deep had fall - en.
3 Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world a - wak - ens.



A - pril's crown - ing glo - ry breaks while the whole world won - ders
All the world lay un - der death. Eyes were closed in sleep - ing.
In the lil - y's pur - est flow'r dwells a won - drous fra - grance.



at the ho - ly un - seen pow'r of the tree which bears the
But, when all seemed lost in night, came the sun whose gold - en
And it spreads to all the earth from the mo - ment of its



flow'r. On the bless - ed tree blooms the red - dest flow'r. On the tree blooms the
light brings un - end - ing joy, brings the end - less joy of our hope, high - est
birth; and its beau - ty lives. In the flow'r it lives, in the flow'r, and it



rose here in love's own gar - den, full and strong in glo - ry.
hope, of our hope's bright dawn - ing, Son be - lov'd of heav - en.
spreads in its heav'n - ly bright - ness sweet per - fume de - light - ful.

Thanksgiving for the Word

Let us pray.

Holy God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor,
at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world,
and throughout the ages, you proclaim newness of life.
For your wondrous Word, we thank you, O God.
We thank you, O God.

In the fullness of time, your Word became flesh,
to shine in our world's darkness,
to speak peace to all people,
and to welcome us as members of your family.
For your loving Word, we adore you, O God.
We adore you, O God.

Grant us now the gift of your Spirit,
that held, nourished, and protected by your Word,
we may live as your children,
bearing your goodness throughout the world.
For your powerful Word, we praise you, O God.
We praise you, O God.

All glory to you, holy God,
now and forever.
Amen.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. 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 us this day + through the Word made flesh.
Amen.

Sending Hymn: Jesus the Light of the World



1 Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, Je - sus, the Light of the world;
2 Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise, Je - sus, the Light of the world;
3 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Je - sus, the Light of the world;
4 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Je - sus, the Light of the world;



"Glo - ry to the new - born King," Je - sus, the Light of the world.
join the tri - umph of the skies; Je - sus, the Light of the world.
Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord! Je - sus, the Light of the world.
hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness! Je - sus, the Light of the world.

Refrain



We'll walk in the light, beau-ti-ful light, come where the dew-drops of mer-cy are bright.



Shine all a-round us by day and by night, Je - sus, the Light of the world.

Dismissal

Beloved of God,
go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude: “Stars” First published as a poem by Sara Teasdale in 1930 and then adapted to music by Eriks Esenvalds, in 2011. Performed by Chor Leoni Men's Choir – used with permission.

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
The aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill
I watch them marching
Stately and still.

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.



Thank-you to the following people who share their gifts today to make this service happen: Pastor Vida Jaugelis, Candace Storm, Sonja Koruga, Kathleen Stoll, Kyler Storm, Jim Berger, Ursula Adler.

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Announcements

A link to this week's service will be sent out as usual on Sunday morning and will take you to a Youtube video recording. The service will not be live streamed on Facebook.

I want to thank the congregation for my Christmas gift this year. It was most appreciated and very generous. All the best! Shelley

Church Council and the Renewal Committee are both holding meetings next week.



Don't forget to 'like' our page on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GDLCNV to stay up to date on everything that is happening.

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Gail Berger, Kathleen Stoll