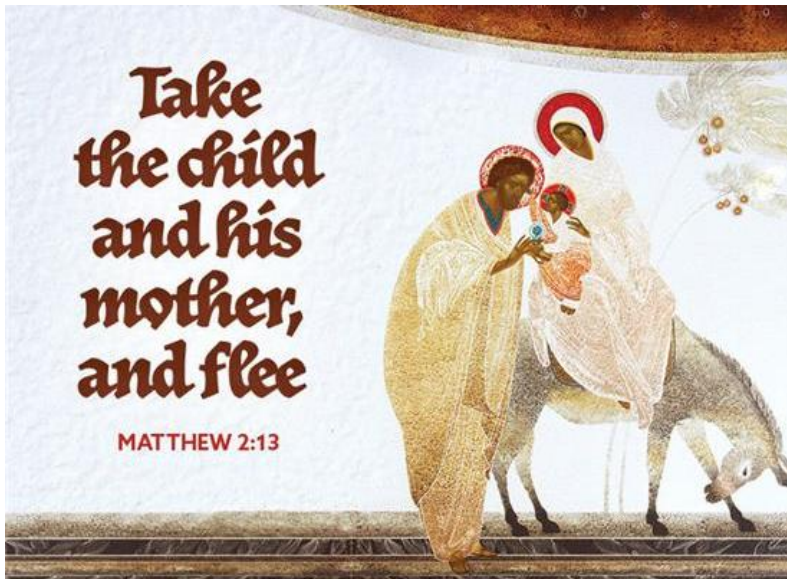




SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2025
FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS



Introduction

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk with all the "holy innocents" of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

GATHERING

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING MUSIC

JESUS, WHAT A WONDERFUL CHILD (ELW #297)

Je - sus, Je - sus, oh, what a won-der-ful child.

Je - sus, Je - sus, so ho - ly, meek, and

mild; new life, new hope the child will bring.

Lis-ten to the an - gels sing: "Glo - ry, glo - ry,

glo - ry," let the heav - ens ring!

Text: African American traditional, alt.

Music: WONDERFUL CHILD, African American traditional

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Arise, shine, for your light has come! The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

People: Darkness may cover the earth, but God's light breaks through with hope.

Leader: Like the Magi who followed the star, we come seeking the One who is born King.

People: We bring the gifts of our hearts; our praise, our wonder, our worship.

Leader: God's radiance gathers all people; God's presence draws us into joy.

People: Our eyes shall shine, and our hearts shall rejoice.

All: Come, let us worship Christ, the Light to the nations and the glory of God's people!

APOSTOLIC GREETING

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

HYMN OF PRAISE

“HERE I AM TO WORSHIP”

Music and lyrics: Tim Hughes

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PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

————— **WORD** —————

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE
PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION
FIRST READING

ISAIAH 63:7-9

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁸ For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully,” and he became their savior ⁹ in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Congregation:

Al-le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we

go? You have the words of e - ter - nal

life. Al - le - lu - ia!

Optional Repeat

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

SERMON

CHRISTMAS ISN'T FINISHED YET

PASTOR DAVE YOUNG

Reflection questions:

1. Isaiah speaks of God sharing in the people's suffering: "In all their distress, he too was distressed." What difference does it make to believe in a God who suffers with us?
2. How do you respond to hearing a story of such deep tragedy in the Christmas season? What emotions does it stir?
3. What does Christmas mean when it meets the harder truths of life—and how does Christ still become "God with us"?

HYMN OF THE DAY

LOVE HAS COME (ELW #292)



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!

OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

The 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

Each petition will end with "Hear us, O God." and the response will be "**Your mercy is great.**"

SHARING OF CHRIST'S PEACE

MEAL

OFFERING

Thank you for your continued generosity in supporting the ongoing ministry of Bethel Lutheran Church! In-person gifts may be placed in the offering plates, mailed to Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church (2077 N. Frederick Pike, Winchester, VA 22603), given online at www.bethelwinchester.com or using the adjacent QR code.



MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

OFFERING PRAYER

Merciful God,

Everything in heaven and earth belongs to you . We joyfully release what you have entrusted to us. May these gifts be the signs of our whole lives returned to you, dedicated to the healing and unity of all creation, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the lord our god. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

PREFACE



HOLY HOLY HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly are you, God of pow - er and



might; Heav - en and earth are filled with your



glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est!



Bless - ed is the One who comes in your name. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est!

JESUS' WORDS ABOUT COMMUNION

LORD'S PRAYER



Our God _____ in heav-en, _____ ho - ly is your name, _____ your



reign come, _____ your will done, _____ on earth as in heav-en _____



Give us today our dai-ly bread, and help us forgive as we have been for - giv-en _____



Words: Matthew 6:9-13; adapt by Mark A Miller and Laurie Zelman Music: Mark A Miller Adapt and music ©2008 Abingdon Press admin by the Copyright Company

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

A child has been born for us, a Son given to us. Come, receive the gift of Emmanuel.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Welcome to the Lord's Table!

Everyone, regardless of age and denomination, is invited to join us for Holy Communion. If you prefer a blessing, simply inform the communion distributors. The ushers will direct your row when it is time to come forward.

You will receive the bread from the first Holy Communion distributor. You will pick up the cup of wine or juice from the tray held by the second distributor. For those who need gluten free a pre-packaged **gluten-free** wafer and a cup of **grape juice** is also available.

Once you have communed, you are invited to return to your seat for silent reflection or singing

LAMB OF GOD



COMMUNION HYMN

“LIVING HOPE”

Music and lyrics: Brian Johnson, Phil Wickham
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Bethel Music Publishing Admin Bethel Music Publishing, Essential
Music Publishing LLC

COMMUNION BLESSING

SENDING

BENEDICTION

SENDING SONG

GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, REJOICE (ELW #288)



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!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866
Music: IN DULCI JUBILO, German carol, 14th cent.

DISMISSAL

