

PRELUDE

AS WE GATHER...What a letdown when people break their promises! A father tells his ten-year-old son, “I know I promised to be at your soccer game, but something has come up.” Maybe we have been a victim of a broken promise like this, or perhaps we’ve been the one who’s broken a promise. In today’s Gospel, however, we see a promise kept. The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a Son. This pledge to Mary is part of the ongoing fulfillment of God’s promises. When we see this promise kept in the coming of Jesus, we have the assurance that we can always trust God that He acts according to His Word. Our heavenly Father never breaks His promises!

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

C: Through him all things were made.

P: In him was life,

C: And that life was the light of men.

P: The light shines in the darkness,

C: But the darkness has not overcome it.

P: The Word became flesh,

C: And made his dwelling among us.

P: To us a child is born.

C: To us a Son is given.

P: And the government will be on his shoulders.

C: And he will be called,

P: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!

ALL: Let us worship the newborn King!

ADVENT SONG

"Light One Candle"

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| 1. Light one candle for hope,
One bright candle for hope,
He brings hope to ev'ry heart,
He comes! He comes! | 3. Light one candle for joy,
One bright candle for joy,
Ev'ry nation will find salvation
In Bethl'em's baby boy. |
| 2. Light one candle for peace,
One bright candle for peace,
He brings peace to ev'ry heart,
He comes! He comes! | 4. Light one candle for love,
One bright candle for love,
He brings love to ev'ry heart,
He comes! He comes, |
| He brings love to ev'ry heart,
He comes! He comes! | |

ADVENT CANDLE THEME AND PRAYER

P: Today, we light the candle of Love. Scripture is filled with scores of references to the steadfast love of God.

I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations. For Your steadfast love is great above the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. (*Psalms 108:3-4*)

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 8:38-39*)

+Lighting of the Advent Candle+

OPENING UP TO GOD

P: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Let us now take some time to be honest to God and one another about ourselves by confessing our sins.

C: Lord, as we gather this morning in celebration, we must admit that the songs that we sing have lacked joy. Too concerned with the challenges of life, our past failures and the darkness of the world around us, we have failed even to lift up our voice. We pray for your forgiveness. Rekindle in our hearts the joy in knowing that You are for us and that You stand by our side forever!

(Silence for reflection)

P: To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. Jesus is the one who was promised many years ago. Because of His life and death, God forgives you all your sins. I declare this forgiveness in God's name—in the name and by the authority granted by God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—I forgive you all of your sins! Sing a new song!

C: Amen!

SONG OF PRAISE: “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful” **LBW 45 (v. 1-3)**

Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the king of angels;
Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come let us adore him,
Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

The highest most holy, Light of light eternal,
Born of a virgin a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing!
Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come let us adore him,
Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God. In the highest:
Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come let us adore him,
Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

GREETING AND PRAYER

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: We pray. Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins that weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy. For You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

“Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever.”

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’ Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

CHOIR ANTHEM

“How far is it to Bethlehem?”

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:26-38

“The angel appears to Mary.”

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the first chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

C: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

P: And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said,

C: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

P: And the angel departed from her. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.

Oh, come oh come, great Lord of might,
Who to your tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel

Oh, come, strong Branch of Jesse, free
Your own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell your people save
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel

Oh, come, blest Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by your advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel

Oh, come, O King of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel

SERMON

A CHRISTMAS CREED

C: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, who sent his Son as my Savior on Christmas.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, announced by the angels, worshiped by the shepherds, and adored by the wise men; who lived to suffer, die, and rise again to free me from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who has brought me to faith in the Christ of Christmas and by whose work in my heart I am led to lay before the feet of Christ the treasures of my love and live under him as my King both now and forevermore. Amen.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: Let us come before our Lord in prayer, asking him to hear our prayer and grant us love.

Lord of love, during this season of Advent, prepare our hearts that we would be made ready to receive Your Son as He comes in His incarnation and birth. Make us ever ready for His final coming on the Last Day. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Lord of love, You have called Your Church to bear witness to Christ's redeeming work. Grant that we boldly proclaim the Good News of the One who brings joy to the world through His life, death, and resurrection, that all who hear it may receive the gift of salvation. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Lord of love, You are the creator and sustainer of all things. According to Your will, grant healing to those who suffer in body and mind. Look with favor upon Your servants, (especially...); and if it is Your will, restore them to health, or give them grace to accept tribulation, knowing that Your grace is sufficient for them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy and Your promise to hear us for the sake of the One in whose name we come, Your Son, Jesus.

C: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

P: Lord, we thank you for giving us a new song. It is not that Your Son simply took his place in the manger-bed. Today we have learned that he resides in our hearts. We pray that your Son would never depart and take permanent residence inside of us—it is in Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

CLOSING SONG: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” **LBW 60**

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”
Joyful, all you nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king.”

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see! Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king.”

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth, Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king.”

DISMISAL