



Ministers | All of Us
Rector | Wren Blessing
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CHRISTMAS | 2018
GRACE CHURCH

A bell rings. We listen to the longing in our hearts. We remain seated.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

A Call to Worship

The Celebrant invites us to stand. The Advent wreath is lighted.

Celebrant Arise, shine, for your light has come.

All Today we go to Bethlehem.

Celebrant The glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.

All Today we dream and sing.

Celebrant All creation holds its breath.

All Today the angels rejoice.

Celebrant The One for whom we have waited is come.

All Today, God is in our midst.

The Collect

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us pray.

God of hope, this season is filled with the brightness of your light. In you, the low is lifted high. We rejoice, we wonder, we stand before you in love. Meet us now in our hopes and fears. Shine your light upon our path. **Amen.**

WE TELL THE STORY

We are seated for the reading.

The First Reading | Isaiah 62:6-12

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.

You who remind the Lord,
take no rest,
and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

The Lord has sworn by his right hand
and by his mighty arm:

I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink the wine
for which you have labored;
but those who garner it shall eat it
and praise the Lord,
and those who gather it shall drink it
in my holy courts.

Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.

The Lord has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:

Say to daughter Zion,
"See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him."

They shall be called, "The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the Lord";
and you shall be called, "Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken."

After the reading, the reader will say
The Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

We stand and say the Psalm.

Psalm | 97

The Lord is King;
let the earth rejoice;
let the multitude of the isles be glad.

**Clouds and darkness are round about him,
righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.**

A fire goes before him
and burns up his enemies on every side.

**His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees it and is afraid.**

The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

**The heavens declare his righteousness,
and all the peoples see his glory.**

Confounded be all who worship carved images
and delight in false gods!
Bow down before him, all you gods.

**Zion hears and is glad, and the cities of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O Lord.**

For you are the Lord,
most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

**The Lord loves those who hate evil;
he preserves the lives of his saints
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.**

Light has sprung up for the righteous,
and joyful gladness for those who are truehearted.

**Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy Name.**

We are seated for the second reading.

The Second Reading | Titus 3:4-7

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

After the reading, the reader will say

The Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

The Celebrant then introduces the Gospel by saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People **Glory to you Lord Christ.**

The Gospel | Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After the Gospel the Celebrant will say

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

OUR RESPONSE TO THE STORY

The Homily

Affirmation of Faith

We stand and say

**We believe in God above us,
maker and sustainer of all life,
of sun and moon,
of water and earth,
of all humanity.**

**We believe in God beside us,
Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,
born of a woman's womb, servant of the poor,
he was tortured and nailed to a tree.
Knowing full passion and deep sorrow, he died forsaken.
He descended into the earth to the place of death.
On the third day he rose from the tomb.
He ascended into heaven to be everywhere present,
and his Kingdom will one day be known.**

**We believe in God within us,
the Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
life-giving breath of the Church.
She is the Spirit of healing and forgiveness,
source of resurrection and of life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers of the People

We share in prayers written by Abigail Kocher and Sam Wells.

Leader God of unexpected gifts, in Jesus you give us the gift of your presence and your love.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

Leader Bless your people around the world, and continue to make Grace Church a community that seeks to reflect your glory and humility.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

Leader Bless all who live in this region, a place of honest human endeavor and unresolved human struggle, and continue to make it a community where your word is made flesh.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

Leader Bless those people and places that long to hear the angels' message of peace and goodwill.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

Leader Most of all, bless those who, like the holy family, have no place to stay, no security to rely on, who are strangers and pilgrims on earth.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

Leader Finally, bless those with whom we have shared Christmases past and with whom, in glory, we long to share Christmas again, because of your Son who came to live with us, that we might forever live with you.

We pause for prayers to be spoken quietly and in our hearts.

Leader To you, God of love,
All we raise our voices.

The Peace

We conclude these prayers with the sharing of God's peace.

Celebrant We turn to one another with outstretched arms saying, "the peace of the Lord be always with you."

People And also with you.

After the peace, we are seated as our offerings are gathered.

THE CELEBRATION OF OUR SACRED MEAL

We are invited to stand as the table is set with the gifts of our hearts and hands.

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People It is right to give God thanks and praise.

The Celebrant continues.

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God, source of life abundant. From before time you made ready the creation. Your Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon and stars; earth, wind and waters; and every living thing. You made us in your image and taught us to walk in your ways. But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away. And yet, as a mother cares for her children, you would not forget us. Time and again you called us to live in the fullness of your love. And so this day we join with Saints and Angels in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity lifting our voices to you as we sing:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and might a-dored,
 heaven and earth shine this night with the glo - ry of your light.
 Loud ho-san-nas now we sing! In the high-est may they ring! Blest is your An-
 oint - ed One, Christ, E - man - nu - el, your Son. Sing Ho-san - na
 at his birth! Glo - ry on high, and peace on earth!

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God. To deliver us from the power of sin and death and to reveal the riches of your grace, you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant, that she might conceive and bear a son, Jesus, the holy child of God.

Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all the world to himself yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love.

Then, the time came for him to complete upon the cross the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

On the night before he died for us, Jesus was at table with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to them, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine. Again he gave thanks to you, gave it to them and said: "Drink this, all of you. And whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Now, gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ, crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come, we offer you our gifts of bread and wine, and ourselves, a living sacrifice.

Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ. Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth and make us your new creation, the Body of Christ given for the world you have made.

In the fullness of time bring us, with all your saints from every tribe and language and people and nation, to feast at the banquet of the world.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ. By him and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

We are now invited to share the gifts of Communion.

Celebrant Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

People Therefore let us keep the feast! Alleluia!

Celebrant The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Please know that at Grace Church all are invited to receive the bread and wine. This sacrament is God's free gift. Assist the Chalice Bearers by tipping the cup from the base. Please tell your server if you prefer a wafer that is free from gluten, soy, and dairy.

GOING OUT INTO GOD'S WORLD

Our Prayer after Communion

We stand and say together

**Eternal God,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Blessing

The Celebrant offers a blessing.

May God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, grant you peace and favor, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the good news. And the blessing of God be upon you, Christ's peace be with you, and the Spirit surround you, now and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Celebrant Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Shepherds:

Let us not run to learn

How to love and run;

Let us run to Love

~ W.H. Auden

from *For the Time Being, A Christmas Oratorio*