



Christmas Eve
December 24, 2020

To prepare for this service, gather your luminary, the candle for it, and something to weigh the luminary down. You'll also need a candle for *Silent Night*, and something to light your candle—a match or lighter. Any candle will do. If you don't have a candle, consider using a flashlight or even your cellphone, anything that can remind you of the light of Christ born this night.

Prelude

O, Holy Night, Martha Main, YouTube

LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE

In this season leading up to this night, we have been hearing the Good News from all the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John because we have *needed* good news and that's what "Gospel" actually means. We have heard stories of courage all along our journey—of people who have sung out songs of hope, love, joy, and peace. Our luminaries tonight will be a witness to the light we believe has come, and is coming.



Tonight, we return to the story of Jesus' birth as it is told in the Gospel of Luke. This account is the narrative we read again and again on this holy night, for this author gives us the most beloved detail. We yearn to see the scene play out, to hear the music of the angels, to feel the rush to the manger to see what this star that pierces the night sky has come to proclaim. We so desire to believe the Good News of the messengers that is the culmination of humanity's pain of birth: "don't be afraid" for unto us a sign has come that will be to all people... "on earth, peace."

Advent Prayer - Holy One, we thank you for the glimpse of heaven on earth in the faces and the light of those around us. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when our view is obscured by clouds of doubt, you have ignited the flame of hope, love, joy, and peace within us. Let us glow with its brilliance from the inside out. Amen.



We believe in the presence of Emmanuel—God with us. This is the night we celebrate that the Holy came in human form to be light in our lives...to speak to us, touch us, comfort us, and call us. Tonight we light the Christ candle, reminding us that the Light of the World is among us.

For those following along with our @ Home Advent Wreaths, find the white candle with the stars on it and place it in the middle slot of your wreath. A little piece of tape on the back will help your candle shine tall. You're wreath is now complete.

PREPARING OUR LUMINARIES

Prayerfully, open the bag, turn on the candlelight, and find something that will keep your luminary standing firm and strong. This is our luminary prayer:

Light of the World, shine upon us this night. Shine in our lives, that we may shine with your love. Shine in our world, that your light may overcome all darkness and fear. Shine through our worship, that our souls may be strengthened by the power of your light and love. May this luminary be a reminder to us, our neighbors, and the world that on this holiest of nights, the Light of the World shines bright among us. In the name of love and light, we pray. Amen.~



And now, find a spot outside your home to place your luminary. We would love for you to take a picture of your luminary and send it to Pastor Sarah so she can share it with the rest of the congregation. On this night, we hope that everyone in our church family will let their light shine brightly.

WE HEAR GOD’S WORD

Isaiah Reading—*Isaiah 52:7-10 (CEB)*

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of a messenger
who proclaims peace,
who brings good news,
who proclaims salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God rules!”

Listen! Your lookouts lift their voice;
they sing out together!
Right before their eyes they see the
Lord returning to Zion.

Break into song together, you ruins of
Jerusalem!
The Lord has comforted his people and
has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm in
view of all the nations;
all the ends of the earth have seen
our God’s victory.

Gospel Reading and Carols—*Luke 2:1-20 (CEB)*

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant.

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” v. 1

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

“Away in a Manger” All Verses

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, and look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is night.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.*

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" v. 1

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them.

“What Child is This?” v. 1

*What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!*

Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” v. 1

*O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.*

MEDITATION

Fill the Night with Music and Light

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD WITH OUR GIVING

The Love of God is born new in the world as often as we embody that love in the works of compassion, peace and justice. Let us offer our gifts in a spirit of generosity and hope.+

We Give Thanks – With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world, and further your dream for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.+

Carol of Light

Silent Night, Zion Virtual Choir

We come to the classic moment of every Christmas Eve... the moment to light our candles and sing, “Silent Night.” We have wondered this year how we could possibly recreate a sense of normalcy in this moment. We wondered how we could get through it with the joy we usually feel on this night, having lost so much this year.

No, it is not the same. And we know that because of the people we have lost, the jobs and security we have lost, that it will likely not ever be the same. Surely

every year, we will remember this moment when we thought perhaps light and song would elude us. But here we are. We will light our lights and we will have our song. Just like those soldiers in World War I sang across enemy lines. Everything stopped for a short while as the message that all is calm and bright prevailed above the violence and dark night of the world. We have been sorely divided on many things. We are devastated by our losses. We are tired and we are not so calm. But for this moment, this night, let us remember that we are not alone. And that we believe that the music and light of God's promises come again and again: hope for a better tomorrow, love that works for a more equitable world, joy that wells from a place deep within us, and peace that offers us the assurance we need.

You're invited to light your candle and hold it high.

Silent Night

Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child; holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

WE ARE SENT FORTH WITH A BLESSING

We wait for justice
but we do not wait to work for change;
We wait for restored health
but we do not wait to work to heal;
We wait for wholeness
but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;
We wait for peace
but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news

that Christ is born among us,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of hope, love, joy, and peace.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that light alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and repeat after me...

“do not be afraid!”

“do not be afraid!”

Amen!

You may extinguish your candlelight and carry that light within you.

Postlude with Ringing of the Bell

Joy to the World, Martha Main

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