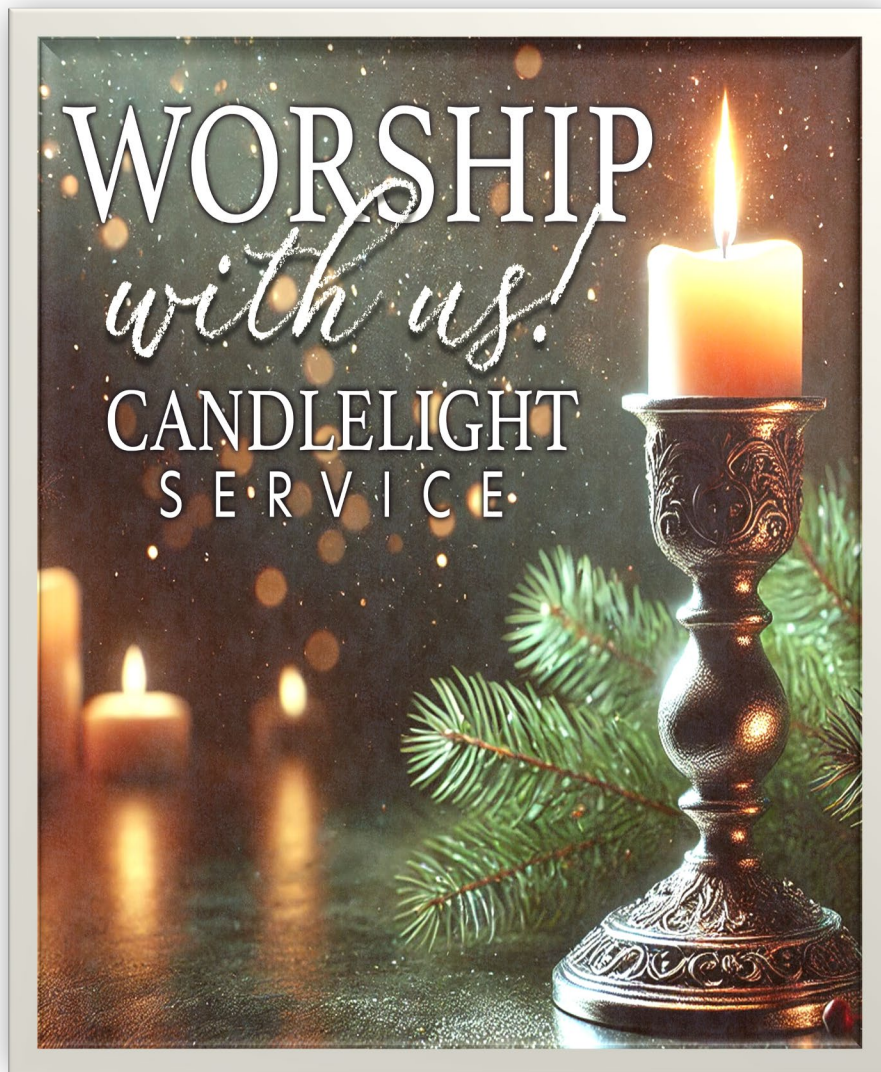


St. John Lutheran Church & School
Berlin, Wisconsin
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24, 2024 6:30 pm

"Prince of Peace"

As We Gather

During the season of Advent, we have prepared to celebrate the birth of God's Son, who was given the name *Jesus*—a Hebrew name that means "God saves." However, in addition to His earthly name, Holy Scripture calls Jesus by various titles that describe something about His person or work. We will examine the four titles given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace—and will study how each of these titles describes something about who Jesus is and what He did for our salvation.

We long for peace in this world but fail to obtain it. Peace comes only through the gift of God in our Savior, Jesus Christ, come into the flesh for us at Christmas. He alone offers us true and lasting peace. Therefore, Jesus is given the title Prince of Peace. He rules over creation and gives us peace with God through His sacrifice for us, which also results in believers being at peace with one another.

PREPARATION

380 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

**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 the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Refrain**

**ref Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**2 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 Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel! Refrain**

**3 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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth. Refrain**

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–88, alt. Text: Public domain

Invocation

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

C Amen.

Confession and Absolution

P We give thanks for the eternal peace our Savior, the Prince of Peace, won, becoming one of us and dying for us. We must confess that we do not see much peace in the world, and we know that we have not been at peace personally. Let us therefore confess our sins to our heavenly Father.

C I confess that I have sinned against You this day. Some of my sin I know—the thoughts and words and deeds of which I am ashamed—but some is known only to You. In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask forgiveness. Deliver and restore me that I may rest in peace.

P By the mercy of God we are redeemed by Jesus Christ, and in Him we are forgiven. We rest now in His peace and rise in the morning to serve Him.

C Amen.

362 O Sing of Christ

**1 O sing of Christ, whose birth made known
The kindness of the Lord,
Eternal Word made flesh and bone
So we could be restored.
Upon our frail humanity
God's finger chose to trace
The fullness of His deity,
The icon of His grace.**

**2 What Adam lost, none could reclaim,
And Paradise was barred
Until the second Adam came
To mend what sin had marred.
For when the time was full and right
God sent His only Son;
He came to us as life and light
And our redemption won.**

**3 He came to that which was His own,
But He was not received;
Yet still through Him God's glory shone,
And some His name believed.
To these He gave the right to be
The heirs of heav'n above,
Born not of human ancestry
But born of God in love.**

**4 Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to dwell
Among us here on earth
As God with us, Emmanuel,
To bring this holy birth.
Though rich, You willingly became
One with our poverty,
That we might share Your wealth and name
For all eternity!**

Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955

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WORD

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 7: 10-14

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Psalm

Psalm 98

P Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things!

C His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.

P The LORD has made known His salvation;

C He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

P He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

C All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

P Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;

C break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

P Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody!

C With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!

P Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it!

C Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth.

P He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Second Reading

1 John 4:7–16

P The Second Reading is from 1 John, the fourth chapter.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God;

if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

364 Away in a Manger

- 1 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.**

- 2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

- 3 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 take us to heaven to live with Thee there.**

Text (sts. 1–2): Little Children’s Book, 1885, Philadelphia; (st. 3):
Vineyard Songs, 1892, Louisville, alt. Text: Public domain

Holy Gospel

Matthew 1:18–25

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

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

387 Joy to the World

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room

And heav'n and nature sing,

And heav'n and nature sing,

And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ,

While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground;

He comes to make His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found,

Far as the curse is found,

Far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace

And makes the nations prove

The glories of His righteousness

And wonders of His love,

**And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.**

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748 Text: Public domain

Sermon “Christmas Displays God’s Love”

Apostles’ Creed

**C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life + everlasting. Amen.**

Offering

370 What Child Is This

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!

2 Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary!

3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come, peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837–98 Text: Public domain

Prayer of the Church
12-24-24 – Christmas Eve Prayers

Luke 2:1–10

Tonight, we'll pray a special, Christmas Eve, responsive prayer. You can pray your parts by looking at the screens or in your bulletins.

P: Jesus, as you came to us that first Christmas...

C: Come to us now to hear our prayer.

P: Tonight, as we look at the stars...

C: Remind us that you are far brighter – the light of the world.

P: As we look at the manger...

C: Remind us that every circumstance is good because you are there with us.

P: As we look at the baby....

C: Remind us that you love us so much that you humbled yourself to become one of us.

P: As we look at the evergreen Christmas tree...

C: Remind us that you are the everlasting God who became man to give us everlasting life.

P: As we open up presents...

C: Remind us that you are the greatest gift of all.

P: As we taste a candy cane...

C: Remind us that your care as our Good Shepherd is far sweeter and more lovely.

P: As we enjoy good food and drink...

C: Remind us that because of your birth, death, and resurrection we'll one day partake of the heavenly feast.

P: As we hear the Christmas music...

C: Remind us that one day we'll hear the far more beautiful choirs of angels because you have given us access to paradise.

P: As we celebrate...

C: Remind us that it is but a glimpse of the eternal jubilation that we'll share in heaven with you.

P: And Lord, as you bring us to think about these things...

C: Fill us with peace, hope, love, and joy – not because it's the Christmas season – but because you love us and because you have become our Savior. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P Hear us as we bring to You all that we have left unspoken, using the words You taught us:

**C 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
forever and ever. Amen.**



LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

(The light is passed from pastor to ushers who pass it to the congregation. Do NOT let small children hold candles unattended. For your safety and to prevent wax from dripping, please do NOT tip the lit candle. Tip only the unlighted candle. Hold the candles straight up and they will not drip. Blow them out gently to prevent melted wax from splattering. Place the extinguished candles in the baskets by the doors as you leave. Thank you!)

P: Throughout the Bible, light and darkness are contrasting symbols. As we light these candles, let us be reminded of the importance of God's light in our world and in our lives...

P: In the beginning "darkness was over the face of the deep."

(Genesis 1:2) *(The pastor lights his candle)*

C: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good." (Genesis 1:3-4)

P: When his people were oppressed in Egypt, God led them out with mighty miracles. *(The Pastor passes his light to the elders)*

C: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light." (Exodus 13:21)

P: And God still goes before us to lighten our dark world with hope; he is with us in the Scriptures that are our light.

(The elders pass on the light to the congregation. Those who have been lit, in turn, light the candles of those around them)

C: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
(Psalm 119:105)

P: These Scriptures foretold of a specific light that would one day come into the world to defeat the darkness.

C: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone." (Isaiah 8:22)

P: Specifically, this Christmas Eve, we celebrate the fact that these Scriptures have been fulfilled. In a dark and dingy stable, the Lord himself took on human form and was born as humble baby. Tonight, we rejoice that in Jesus...

C: "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." (John 1:9)

P: Indeed, Jesus came into the world to enlighten even our deepest darkness. For one day, this light of the world, would hang, shrouded in darkness, on a cross where he would die and be buried in a dark tomb.

C: But “by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:23)

P: By dying to forgive our sins and rising Easter morning, Jesus would bring the light of hope and salvation to the darkest places – sin and death. Truly for us, through faith, Jesus has become “The light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5) Jesus said...

C: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) **Jesus, thank you for becoming our light – help us to follow you and leave the darkness of sin and death behind.**

P: And, as we follow Jesus, may we remember what he said...

C: “Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:15-16) **Jesus, through us may others see and be attracted to your light so that we will all come to faith in you and thus be saved.**

P: For the great promise of eternity for all who believe in the light is that there will be “no need of sun or moon to shine.” (Revelation 21:23)

C: “For the glory of God gives it light, and it’s lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk.” (Revelation 21:23-24)

P: Now, as we hold our candles before us and their glow illumines the darkness, let us be reminded of these passages. Our Lord has created light, he is the light that leads us, he has come into the world as our light, he is the light who overcame even sin and death, and finally, our great and certain hope is that we will live in the glory of his light forever and ever.

Benediction

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

C Amen.

363 Silent Night, Holy Night

sts. 1–3

1 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.

2 Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight;

**Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**3 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.**

Text: Franz Joseph Mohr, 1792–1848; tr. John F. Young, 1820–85
Text: Public domain