

The Signs of Christmas

A Children's Christmas Service by Michael Marquardt Morrison Zion Lutheran Church December 24, 2010

Processional Hymn "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" (CW 55)

 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.

- God from true God, and Light from Light eternal, Born of a virgin, to earth he comes, Only begotten Son of God the Father. 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 heav'n above. Glory to God, All glory in the highest. Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
- 4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n, Word 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.

The Christ candle is the white candle at the center of an Advent wreath that symbolizes the arrival of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Tonight it is brought forward in the processional as a visual representation of Christ's advent, or coming.

Stand

- M: Jesus Christ is the light of the world,
- C: the light no darkness can overcome.

Congregation

- M: Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,
- C: and the day is almost over.
- M: Be our light and scatter the darkness,
- C: and hear our evening hymn of praise.

you In the gra - cious Light, Lord Je sus Christ, Ο light shines The lamps 2 Now sun - set comes, but forth; are end less 0 Son 3 Wor - thy of praise, of are you mor tal, Fa ther's glo ry shone. Im -ho ly, -Son, lit to pierce the night. Praise Fa ther, and life through God, Lord: Where-fore you are giv ing ly Son. blest is he. And blest are you. his on -Spir - it: God Who dwells in the е ter nal light. -And the high est heav'n a - dored. all the earth in

M: Lord God, we thank you for this day of grace now drawing to a close. Stay with us and warm our hearts with your forgiving love in Christ. May your Word keep our faith burning brightly that we may walk in the light of your presence through the darkness of this world. Come and bless us as we worship you: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Be Seated

PSALM 98

Refrain: children; Verses: congregation

Refrain: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done mar-vel-ous things.



Sing to the Lord a 'new song,* for he has done mar'velous things.

The Lord has made his sal'vation known* and revealed his righteousness to the 'nations.

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of 'Israel;* all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation 'of our God.

Refrain

Shout for joy to the Lord, 'all the earth,* burst into jubilant song with 'music;

make music to the Lord 'with the harp,* with the harp and the sound of 'singing.

Shout for joy before the 'Lord, the King.* He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with 'equity.

Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son* and to the Holy 'Spirit, as it was in the be'ginning,* is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.

Refrain

Service Introduction

Bells. Christmas trees. Ribbons and bows. Stars. Wreaths. Lights. Holly. Mistletoe. We see these things all around us, and they all tell us it is Christmastime. You may have many of these items in your homes. Perhaps you even have an Advent wreath or a nativity scene set up in your living room. There are so many images that remind us of Christmas, and without them Christmas seems almost empty. But what do they all mean? The church has a rich heritage of symbolism tracing back to the beginning of the world. Look around at our church building and consider the many images that surround us. They initially serve as reminders, but upon further inspection they teach us truths about God and his Word.

Educational psychologists tell us that we learn best if all of our senses are engaged in the learning process. At Christmas we hear the familiar music and the Christmas story, taste the food, smell the lit candles, see the lavish adornments, and greet our family and friends. Our service tonight focuses on how God speaks to us through the many visual

symbols that he has given us through the ages to remind us of the history of his people, to instruct us in his plan of salvation, to support our understanding of his truths, and to beautify our worship.

Tonight you already saw the Christ candle brought to the front of the nave and placed on the Advent wreath to symbolize the coming of Christ at Christmas.. You also see special banners that display images and symbols, which have special meaning at Christmas.

As you worship tonight, take special note of these symbols and signs that we are given to focus on Christ's birth at Bethlehem.

Part One: The Tree

Nicholas Griepentrog: The Christmas tree is easily one of the most recognizable symbols of the Christmas season. Some believe that Martin Luther may have been the first to set up an evergreen tree in his home and decorate it with candles. The tree as a symbol for Christmas, however, goes all the way back to the beginning of time when God placed two special trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Kaitlyn Kuchenbecker: God gave special instructions to Adam and Eve regarding these trees:

Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die. One day in the garden, Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve to eat from this tree. Adam and Eve both ate fruit from the tree and had to answer to God for their sin. But before God told them of the consequences, he first gave them a promise. This was the first promise of the Savior, who would be born to pay for that sin in the garden as well as the sins of the entire world. This promise was found in God's curse on Satan, who would be defeated by the Savior's death on another tree.

- **Grades 1-8**: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)
- **Madeline Sabel**: God's plan for the Savior is like a red thread woven through the fabric of the Old Testament, reminding believers of the Messiah and his work for them. God used animal sacrifices as special symbols to show that their Savior's life had to be offered in death for their own in order to rescue them from eternal punishment. He also had them burn incense during their prayers to show them that those prayers did rise to God, like the smoke of the incense, and that he heard their cries for help.
- **Bryce Blauert:** The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah about another tree. He was speaking of the promised Messiah. But the picture doesn't stop with a tree. He also speaks of the work the Messiah would do on earth. This Prince of peace would return his people to the state of perfection that they had in the Garden of Eden.

Responsive Reading

- M: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
- C: from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- M: The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-
- C: the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
- M: the Spirit of counsel and of power,
- C: the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
- M: He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
- C: or decide by what he hears with his ears;
- M: but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
- C: with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
- M: He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
- C: with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
- M: In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;
- **C: the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.** (Isaiah 11:1-4,10)

"Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel" (CW 23)

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

Congregation 3. Oh, come, O Dayspring from on high, And cheer us by your drawing nigh; 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 Key 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!
- **Heidi Schultz:** The first chapter of the gospel of Matthew shows how Jesus' family tree grew from the seed of Adam and Eve to its sturdy trunk in Abraham, Jacob, and David, all the way to the branches of Joseph and Mary. In the first chapter of Luke, we hear how Mary, an ordinary young woman, received a visit from an extraordinary messenger.
- **Grades 5-6 Boys:** In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said,
- Grades 5-6 Girls: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."
- Grades 5-6 Boys: Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her,
- **Grades 5-6 Girls:** "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."
- Grades 5-6 Boys: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin." The angel answered,
- **Grades 5-6 Girls:** "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."
- **Grades 5-6 Boys:** "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38)

Heidi Schultz: Mary rushed to see her cousin Elizabeth and tell her the news. Elizabeth, however,

was not the only one to hear this announcement and rejoice.

- **Grades 5-6 Boys:** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:41,42)
- **Heidi Schultz:** On hearing Mary's news, Elizabeth was overjoyed. Her unborn son, whom we know as John the Baptist, leaped with delight. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth prophesied. And Mary, whom we have come to think of as quiet and introspective, burst forth in a song of her own.

"Song of Mary," Magnificat

Grades 5-6

Refrain: Proclaim the greatness of God; Rejoice in God, my Savior Rejoice in God my Savior

For he has favored his lowly one, and all shall call me blessed The almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name *Refrain*

He favors those who fear his name, in every generation.

He has shown the might and strength of his arm, and scattered the proud of heart *Refrain*

He has cast the mighty from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with all good gifts, and sent the rich away *Refrain*

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy. He promised his mercy to Abraham and his children for evermore.

Refrain

In the Latin language, which at one time was the language of the church, the first word of Mary's song is Magnificat, which means "to glorify."

Part Two: The Manger

Lucas Soderlund: A nativity scene makes a lovely Christmas decoration and reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. At the center of any nativity scene is a manger, a feedbox. That bed for the Creator of the universe was not the ideal place for a newborn. But it was the perfect start in life for our Savior. It was a picture of the humility that he took on himself all through his life—a picture of his submission to God's law and the laws of men. The account of Jesus' birth begins in Luke chapter 2, with Mary and Joseph obeying the law of the Roman emperor that the population of the entire empire should be counted.

Grade 4: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

Grade 3: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem

the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Grades 3-4: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

"Away in a Manger" (CW 68)

- Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the bright 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 you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky, And stay by my side until morning is nigh.
- Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay Close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care, And take us to heaven to live with you there.
- **Olivia Tasch:** The King of kings and Lord of lords humbled himself by taking on the form of a human. God be praised that this "riches to rags" story turns into a "rags to riches" story for us sinners. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, wrote:
- **Grade 4:** "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.
- Grade 3:"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba*, Father."
- **Grades 3-4** "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:4-7)

"God Loves Me Dearly"

- God loves me dearly, grants me salvation; God loves me dearly, loves even me. *Refrain*: Therefore I'll say again: God loves me dearly God loves me dearly, loves even me.
- 2. I was in bondage, sin, death, and darkness; God's love was working to make me free. *Refrain*

Preschool and Kindergarten

- 3. He sent forth Jesus, my dear Redeemer; He sent forth Jesus and set me free. *Refrain*
- 4. Jesus, my Savior, himself did offer; Jesus, my Savior, paid all I owed. *Refrain*

Part Three: The Angel

- **Olivia: Tasch:** Scripture speaks of angels throughout its pages. They are God's messengers. God sent angels to people to announce important news. Angels visited Abraham to tell him that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a baby boy in their old age. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of John to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Later he proclaimed to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Savior. After the birth in the manger, angels made an announcement to shepherds at work in the fields.
- **Grades 1-2 A** There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,
- **Grades 1-2 B:** "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."
- **Preschool and Kindergarten:** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:8-14)

"Angels We Have Heard on High" (CW 63)

 Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains, And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains. Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Grades 1-2

- Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heav'nly song? Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing; Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- Grades 1-2 A: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,
- **Grades 1-2 B:** "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."
- Grades 1-2 A: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Grades 1-2: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them

about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Preschool – **Grade 2:** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:15-20)

"Silent Night! Holy Night" (CW 60)

- 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; Heav'nly 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.

Part Four: The Star

- **Dezarae Wiedow:** Stars seem to appear everywhere at Christmas. You can find them on the tops of Christmas trees, on wrapping paper, cut out as cookies, even in the eyes of children when they hear and recite the Christmas story. Certainly the Christmas lights on houses and the candles in the Advent wreath can remind us of stars too. The Bible's many references to stars often point to Jesus. God led Abraham outside one night and had him gaze upon the stars.
- Grade 7: "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Genesis 15:5)
- **Dezarae Wiedow**: Part of that covenant with Abraham was that the promised Savior would be one of those descendants that God promised him. In the book of Numbers, Moses wrote:
- **Grade 8:** I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. (Numbers 24:17)
- **Dezare Wiedow**: We know from the book of Revelation that the star spoken of is Jesus, as Jesus himself says in the last chapter of Scripture:
- **Grades 7-8;** "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." (Revelation 22:16)
- **Luke Witt:** God put a special star in the sky for Magi from the East to lead them to the newborn Savior. Matthew wrote in his gospel:

Congregation

Grades 7-8: They went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (Matthew 2:9-11)

"I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes" (CW 51)

Grades 7-8

I am so glad when Christmas comes, The night of Jesus' birth, When Bethl'em's star shone as the sun And angels sang with mirth.

The little Child of Bethlehem, The King of heav'nly grace, Came down from His exalted throne To save our fallen race.

He's now returned to heav'n above, God's Son He is alway; He ne'er forgets His little ones But hears them when they pray.

I too would sing my Savior's praise, My joy, my crown, my Lord; For He has made me His own child By Water and the Word.

- Luke Witt: The apostle Peter wrote in his second letter that we have the word of the prophets, which is certain. The star that the Magi followed is for us too. It directs us to the Scriptures.
- **Grades 7-8:** We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)
- **Luke Witt:** Until that day dawns, when the Morning Star rises for us and all believers and our eyes at last shall see him, may we, his children, who will be crowned like the stars, sound his praises, not only in this festive season but every day throughout our lives.

"Sing Alleluia"

Children

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, sing alleluia.

Long ago and far away, on a cold and wintry night, a precious gift was sent our way, a gift of love and light. For on that night in Bethlehem, in a lowly manger stall, God sent His son to save us all. Come, sing alleluia, sing alleluia, come and join the angel choir and sing with joy alleluia.

High above a star appeared to light the winter sky. Trav'lers came from far and near to seek the reason why. All who saw the shining star or heard the angels sing brought gifts of love to greet the King. Come sing alleluia, sing alleluia, come and join the angel choir and sing with joy alleluia.

Once again the air is cold, a star is shining bright. Once again the story's told about that holy night. Now we join to celebrate the wonder of His birth with songs of joy and peace on earth. Come sing alleluia, sing alleluia, come and join the angel choir and sing with joy alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, sing with joy alleluia.

Offering

Stand

- M: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all his glory in the life to come; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

The Song of Simeon Nunc Dimittis

Congregation

(sung) In peace, Lord, you let your servant now depart according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for every people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

The beginning phrase of Simeon's song in Latin is Nunc Dimittis, which means "Now dismiss." Simeon sang this song as he held the 40-day-old Jesus in his arms and thanked God that he was able to see with his own eyes God's promise fulfilled in his lifetime. We share in his joy that we are able to see the baby Jesus through our eyes of faith.

Blessing

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: Amen.

Be Seated

"Joy to the World" (CW 62)

- 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.
- Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Congregation

- 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.

Preschool and Kindergarten (facing the congregation)

- Back: Alaina Feldkamp, Peyton Cappelle, McKenzie Mathies, Marshall Edinger, Isabella Blauert, Scott Schutlz, Hannah Hutjens, Jordan Van Rossum, Cody Hassemer
- Front: Jordan Magley, Andrew Doyan, Owen Scheider, Brayden Zirbel, Marcus Humann, Kate Geib

<u> 1^{st} and 2^{nd} Grade</u> (facing the congregation)

- Back: Georgia Blauert, Mitchell Leick, Paige Zirbel, Cole Yohanek, Anna Voster, Justin Laabs, Jordyn Ossmann
- Front: Cole Van Rossum, Emma Geib, Charlie Sabel, Desiree Koomen, Ethan Diny, Emma Otto, Jacob Gajewske, Carter Salm

3rd and 4th Grade

- Back: Zachary Diny, Natalie Zirbel, Matthew Krueger, Lindsey Doyen, Hayden Meulemans, Leah Kuchenbecker, Elaine Blauert, Andrew Gajewske, Emily Cappelle, Jerod Voster, Leah Nushart
- Front Hailey Witt, Alyssa Laabs, Hailee Fritsch, Samantha Zittlow, Terrell Edinger, Erin Krueger, Aaron Schultz, Sydney Salm, Thomas Voster, Trisha Feldkamp, Matthew Gajewske

5th and 6th Grade

- Back: Jesse Doyen, Bryanna Cappelle, Evan Vaughn, Jerod Wiedow, Colin Salm, Ashley Leiterman, Jonathan Otto,
- Left: Marissa Leick, Cody Kittell, Victoria Wagner, Matt Sabel., Erin Krueger, Brandon Leiterman, Megan Laabs,
- Right: Emmett Kiley, Rachel Ihlenfeldt, Noah Witt, Gloria Blauert, Matthew Wendt, Emily Malcore, Jacob Beining
- Floor: Leah Voster, Thomas Shultz, Leah Ihlenfeldt, Alexander Laabs, Lauren Griepentrog, Anthony Feldkammp

7th and 8th Grade

- Back: Nathan Beining, Emily Vaughn, Dezarae Wiedow, Olivia Tasch, Heidi Schultz, Madeline Sabel, Kaitlyn Kuchenbecker,
- Middle: Wes Ott, Brandon Leiterman, Luke Witt, Lucas Soderlund, Bryce Blauert, Nicholas Griepentrog
- Front: Joshua Ihlenfeldt, Shane Nushart, Brandon, Van Iten, Megan Schultz, Anna Nushart, Jenna Lemke