



The Episcopal Diocese of Iowa  
A Festival of Lessons and Carols  
Sunday, December 27, 2020 10:00am

*This morning's worship is offered by individuals and families across the Diocese of Iowa.*

**PRELUDE**

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

*The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe*

**HYMN**

*O come, all ye faithful v1-3*

Hymnal 83

**BIDDING PRAYER**

*The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe*

*Officiant* Beloved in Christ, in this season of Christmas, let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, to see the babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by God's holy child; and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of the Church for which he died, and especially in this country and within this state.

And because this of all things would rejoice God's heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself has taught us:

*All*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

*Officiant* The Almighty God bless us with his grace: Christ give us the joys of everlasting life: and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the king of angels bring us all. **Amen.**

## **THE LESSONS**

*Only the text of the lessons are read: the customary introduction or conclusion are omitted.*

### **FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 2:4b-9, 15-25**

*God creates man and woman to live in obedience to him in the Garden of Eden.*

On the day the Lord God made earth and sky—before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the Lord God hadn’t yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land—the Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The Lord God commanded the human, “Eat your fill from all of the garden’s trees; but don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!” Then the Lord God said, “It’s not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him.” So the Lord God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. The human said,

“This one finally is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called a woman because from a man she was taken.”

This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren’t embarrassed

## **HYMN**

*Of the Father’s love begotten v 1,4*

Hymnal 82

### **SECOND LESSON: GENESIS 3:1-15**

*Adam and Eve rebel against God and are cast out of the Garden of Eden.*

The snake was the most intelligent of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say that you shouldn’t eat from any tree in the garden?” The woman

said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden’s trees <sup>3</sup> but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don’t eat from it, and don’t touch it, or you will die.’”

The snake said to the woman, “You won’t die! God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

During that day’s cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden’s trees. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” The man replied, “I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.” The Lord God said to the woman, “What have you done?!” And the woman said, “The snake tricked me, and I ate.”

The Lord God said to the snake, “Because you did this, you are the one cursed out of all the farm animals, out of all the wild animals. On your belly you will crawl, and dust you will eat every day of your life. I will put contempt between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. They will strike your head, but you will strike at their heels.”

## **CANTICLE**

*The Officiant and Congregation alternate verses of the following canticle from Morning Prayer.*

O Lord and Ruler of the hosts of heaven, \* God of our fathers and mothers and of all their righteous offspring:

**You made the heavens and the earth, \*with all their vast array.**

All things quake with fear at your presence; \* they tremble because of your power.

**But your merciful promise is beyond all measure; \* it surpasses all that our minds can fathom.**

O Lord, you are full of compassion, \* long-suffering, and abounding in mercy.

**You hold back your hand; \* you do not punish as we deserve.**

In your great goodness, Lord, you have promised forgiveness to sinners, \* that they may repent of their sin and be saved.

**And now, O Lord, I bend the knee of my heart, \* and make my appeal, sure of your gracious goodness.**

I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, \* and I know my wickedness only too well.

**Therefore I make this prayer to you: \* Forgive me, Lord, forgive me.**

Do not let me perish in my sin, \* nor condemn me to the depths of the earth.

**For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent, \* and in me you will show forth your goodness.**

Unworthy as I am, you will save me, in accordance with your great mercy, \* and I will praise you without ceasing all the days of my life.

**For all the powers of heaven sing your praises, \* and yours is the glory to ages of ages. Amen.**

### **THIRD LESSON: ISAIAH 9: 2, 6-7**

*The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.*

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

**HYMN**

*Joy to the world! v 1,2,4*

Hymnal 100

### **FOURTH LESSON: ISAIAH 11: 1-3a; 4a, 6-9**

*The prophet foretells Christ's peaceable kingdom.*

A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots. The Lord's spirit will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of planning and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. He will delight in fearing the Lord. He won't judge by appearances, nor decide by hearsay. He will judge the needy with righteousness, and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land. He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth; by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked. The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion will feed together, and a little child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze. Their young will lie down together, and a lion will eat straw like an ox. A nursing child will play over the snake's hole; toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den. They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain. The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, just as the water covers the sea.

**HYMN**

*O come, O come, Emmanuel v 1,2,4*

Hymnal 56

### **FIFTH LESSON: ISAIAH 35:1-10**

*The prophet proclaims that God will come and save us.*

The desert and the dry land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. They will burst into bloom, and rejoice with joy and singing. They will receive the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the Lord's glory, the splendor of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and support the unsteady knees. Say to those who are panicking: “Be strong! Don’t fear! Here’s your God, coming with vengeance; with divine retribution. God will come to save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be cleared. Then the lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the speechless will sing. Waters will spring up in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground, fountains of water. The jackals’ habitat, a pasture; grass will become reeds and rushes. A highway will be there. It will be called The Holy Way. The unclean won’t travel on it, but it will be for those walking on that way. Even fools won’t get lost on it; no lion will be there, and no predator will go up on it. None of these will be there; only the redeemed will walk on it. The Lord’s ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. Happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and groaning will flee away.

**HYMN**

*The angel Gabriel from heaven came*

Hymnal 265

**SIXTH LESSON: LUKE 1:26-38**

*The Angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of the Most High.*

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David’s house. The virgin’s name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, “Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!” She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I am a virgin?” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.” Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

**HYMN**

*Away in a manger*

Hymnal 101

**SEVENTH LESSON: LUKE 2: 1-20**

*Jesus is born at Bethlehem and is worshiped by angels and shepherds*

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. 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.

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."

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. 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.

## HYMN

*Angels we have heard on high*

Hymnal 96

## **EIGHTH LESSON: MATTHEW 2:1-12**

*The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.*

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

*You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

**HYMN**

*We three kings v 1-2*

Hymnal 128

*Officiant*      The Lord be with you.  
*People*          **And also with you.**  
*Officiant*      Let us pray.

*The Officiant and People together*

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The Officiant continues*

May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, now fill us with his joy and peace; and may God's blessing be with us and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

**HYMN**

*Go tell it on the mountain*

Hymnal 99

**POSTLUDE**

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