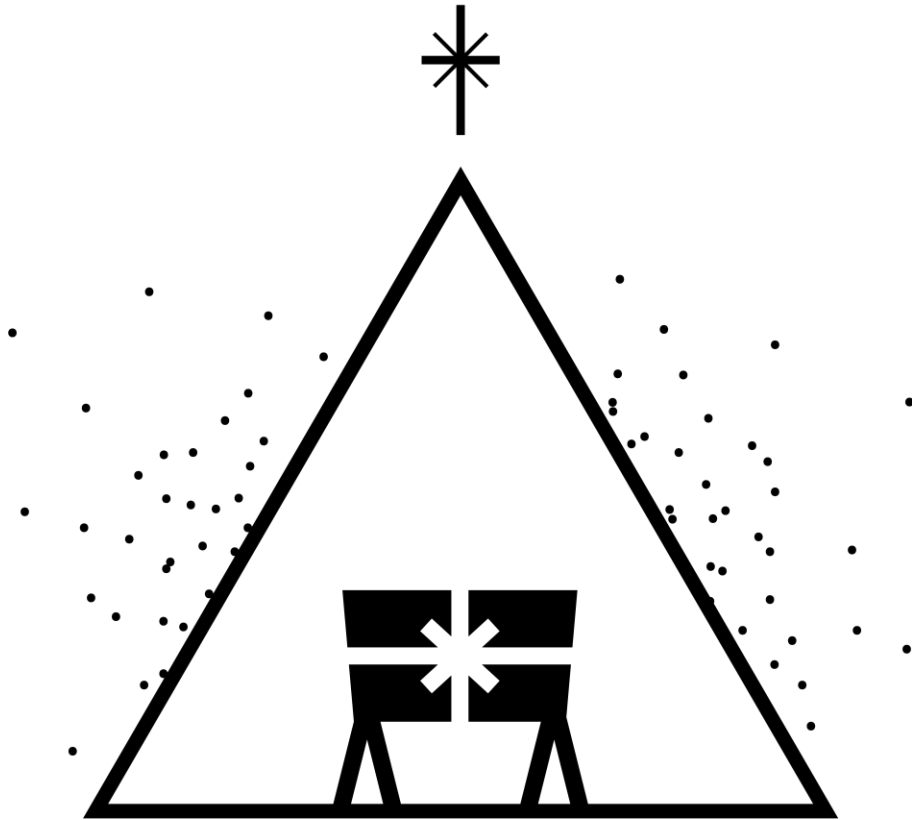


WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



THE GIFT OF GOD

God Gives Himself as One of Us
Christmas Day 2024

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

December 25, 2024



Welcome To Worship

If you are a visitor to our church, we extend you a warm welcome. We are happy you are here. Please fill out a Connect Card to let us know how we might continue to serve you.

It's encouraging to see parents bring their families to worship the Lord. If your child becomes restless, you can use the Family Room to calm them. Quiet bags and children's bulletins are also available to keep little ones busy. Restrooms are located in the hallways along either side of the worship space. For those with special needs, large print copies of the service folder and listening devices are available from the ushers. One of our ushers can help you find the restrooms or family room and answer any other questions.

Service Notes For This Service



Have you ever opened a Christmas present and had to ask, "What is it?" Perhaps it was some new type of technology or perhaps a unique toy. You were grateful for the gift, but also not 100% certain what you were looking at. "What is it?" Today, as we look into the manger, we ask that question. In this case, the question is not quickly or easily answered. It requires both deep thought and humble awe. We are looking at the same God who once told the prophet Moses, "No one may see me and live." Yet, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds all saw their holy God and survived. How? God became human, hiding his glory within our flesh, so that he might come to us without instilling fear or dread.

"What is it?" This gift is God and man in one person, exactly what humanity needed to deliver us from our greatest enemies: sin, death, and Satan. On the Festival of Christmas, we thank God for this greatest of gifts.

Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Peter Plagenz; Organist Kristi Perry

Acknowledgements

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Nativity of Our Lord

Please use the hymnals for any tunes that are unfamiliar or to assist in singing harmony.

Welcome

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



Dialogue

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

Our eyes have seen his salvation, which he prepared in the sight of all nations.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord,
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

Being in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich.

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

346 Angels We Have Heard on High

The Word

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty God, grant that the birth of your only Son in the flesh may set us free from our old bondage under the yoke of sin; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Exodus 33:18–23; 34:5-7

To reveal himself to us, God hid himself in human flesh. To reveal himself to Moses, God hid Moses within the cleft of a mountain.

¹⁸Then Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”

¹⁹The LORD said, “I will make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD in your presence. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” ²⁰He said, “You cannot see my face, for no human may see me and live.”

²¹The LORD also said, “Look, there is a place next to me, where you shall stand on the rock. ²²It will happen that, while my glory passes by, I will put you in a crevice in the rock. I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back. But my face will not be seen.”

⁵The LORD came down in the cloud. He took his stand there with Moses and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶The LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed: “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and overflowing with mercy and truth, ⁷maintaining mercy for thousands, forgiving guilt and rebellion and sin. He will by no means clear the guilty. He calls their children and their children's children to account for the guilt of the fathers, even to the third and the fourth generation.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Psalm of the Day

353 Joy to the World
A setting of Psalm 98

Second Reading

Romans 8:31–32

If the Father was willing to give us the gift of his only Son, clearly there is no good thing he would withhold from us.

³¹What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?



The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

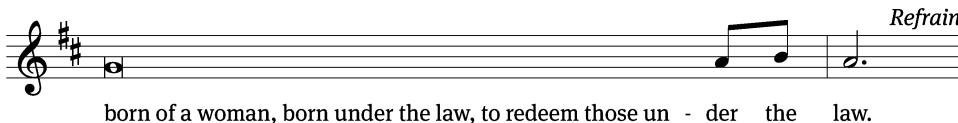
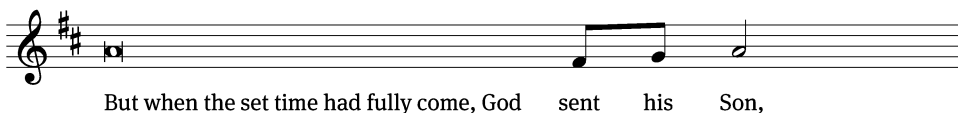
Galatians 4:4,5



Refrain



Tone



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Gospel

John 1:1–18

In Jesus the God whose glory is impossible to see is seen. The God who cannot be known is known.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. ⁵The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

⁹The real light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵John testified about him. He cried out, "This was the one I spoke about when I said, 'The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.'" ¹⁶For out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is close to the Father's side, has made him known.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated



Hymn of the Day

358 Of the Father's Love Begotten

Sermon

Stand

Athanasian Creed

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever...

It is furthermore necessary for eternal salvation that one faithfully believe that our Lord Jesus Christ also took on human flesh.

Now this is the true Christian faith: We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man. He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity; and though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons but one: one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God; one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person; for just as the rational soul and flesh is one human being, so God and man is one Christ. He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from there will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire. This is the true Christian faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved.

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Eternal Father, we give you thanks and praise on this holy day for sending your one and only Son to share our humanity, carry our guilt, and become for us the perfect Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Lord, we praise you.

Keep our faith in your Son alive and strong. Nourish us with your Word and sacraments and by your Holy Spirit give us strength to overcome Satan's power and empty promises. Help us to withstand the temptations the world and our sinful nature put on our path.

Give us faith and courage.



This creed is named for St. Athanasius, a staunch defender of the Christian faith in the fourth century. It was written over a century after the death of Athanasius to combat two errors that undermined key scriptural teachings. The Athanasian Creed continues to serve the Christian Church as a standard of truth. It declares that whoever rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ is without the saving faith.

The creed also briefly speaks of the necessity of good works in the life of the Christian. The good works God produces in us and through us are the natural consequence of the faith hidden in the heart. Good works do not contribute to our salvation. However, good works demonstrate our faith in Christ and testify to others that we are Christians.

Remember ministers of the gospel throughout the world who on this day are proclaiming that a Savior has been born. We especially commend to your care the missionaries we have called as members of the Wisconsin Synod. Since they cannot enjoy the fellowship of their extended families this Christmas, grant to them the inner joy that comes with service in your kingdom.
Protect all those who proclaim the gospel in our place.

We pray for our city and countryside, for our neighborhoods and subdivisions, and for all who live and work and find delight here. Give to the leaders of government wisdom to make and uphold laws that promote the good of society. Grant our nation peace, health, and prosperity that we may have the opportunity and resources to spread the good news to all people.
Govern and prosper your people.

Fill us with kindness and arouse us to do good to all people, especially those who are less fortunate than we. Bring your healing to those who are sick or diseased in body or mind and comfort those who are mourning the death of someone they love. We especially pray for brothers and sisters who are setting aside their celebration today to care for the sick and stand at the side of the dying.
Sustain those who endure the troubles of life.

Be a source of strength to all your people and fill them with your power and peace. If any are among us today who have lost the true meaning of this festival, let them rediscover the joy that comes from Christ alone.
Let your peace reign in the hearts of all.

Special prayer and intercessions

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

As you sent your Son to bring peace to all people on earth, so we pray for all people, those known and those unknown to us.
We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Connect Card & Offering

The loose offerings from today's service (those not in envelopes) will be given to our pastor and staff minister in thanks for their dedication and service to the Lord.

Guests, please don't feel obligated to take part in the offering. We're just happy you're here as our guest to hear and take to heart the message of Jesus. If the gospel message has moved you to give and you would like an electronic option, you can scan this QR code with your mobile phone. It will connect you with our website's giving page.



Musical Offering

The Sacrament

Stand

Preface

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.



It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose wonderful and mysterious birth you have opened our eyes to the glory of your grace and renewed in our hearts the fervor of your love. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Tune: *MUNICH*



1 Sing, "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts on high,

2 Ho - san - na in the high - est! How blest is Christ our King,



your ev - er - last - ing glo - ry fills earth and sea and sky."

who died as our Re - deem - er, e - ter - nal life to bring!



Our voic - es cry, "Ho - san - na!" Lord, hear our hum - ble plea:

How blest are you, Lord Je - sus, now com - ing in God's name!



in mer - cy, come and save us; in love, come set us free.

"Ho - san - na in the high - est!" our grate - ful hearts pro - claim.

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Tune: Neu-vermehrtes . . . Gesangbuch, 3rd ed., Meiningen, 1693; Public domain

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal King and gracious Father. In love you made us the crown of your creation. In mercy you planned our salvation. In grace you sent your Son to redeem us from sin.

We remember and give you thanks that your eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh and made his dwelling among us, that he willingly placed himself under law to redeem those under law, that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross, that he has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood in this Sacrament. Forgive our sins, increase our faith, strengthen our fellowship, and deepen our longing for the day when Christ will welcome us to his eternal feast. Praise and thanks and honor and glory be to you, O God our Father, and to your Son and to the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

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.

Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.



Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

Jesus, Lamb of God

Tune: *PUER NOBIS*



1 O Lamb of God, once lift - ed high up - on a
2 O Lamb of God, your sac - ri - fice has can - celled



cross to bleed and die, in per - fect love you
sin, has paid its price; your per - fect love will



took our place— be - stow on us your sav - ing grace.
nev - er cease— have mer - cy, Lord, and grant us peace.

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Tune: Latin, 15th cent.; Public domain

Be seated

Distribution

Distribution Hymn

674 *The Infant Priest Was Holy Born*

Stand

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

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

The Lord look on you with favor and T give you peace.

Amen.

Be seated

Hymn

363 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

