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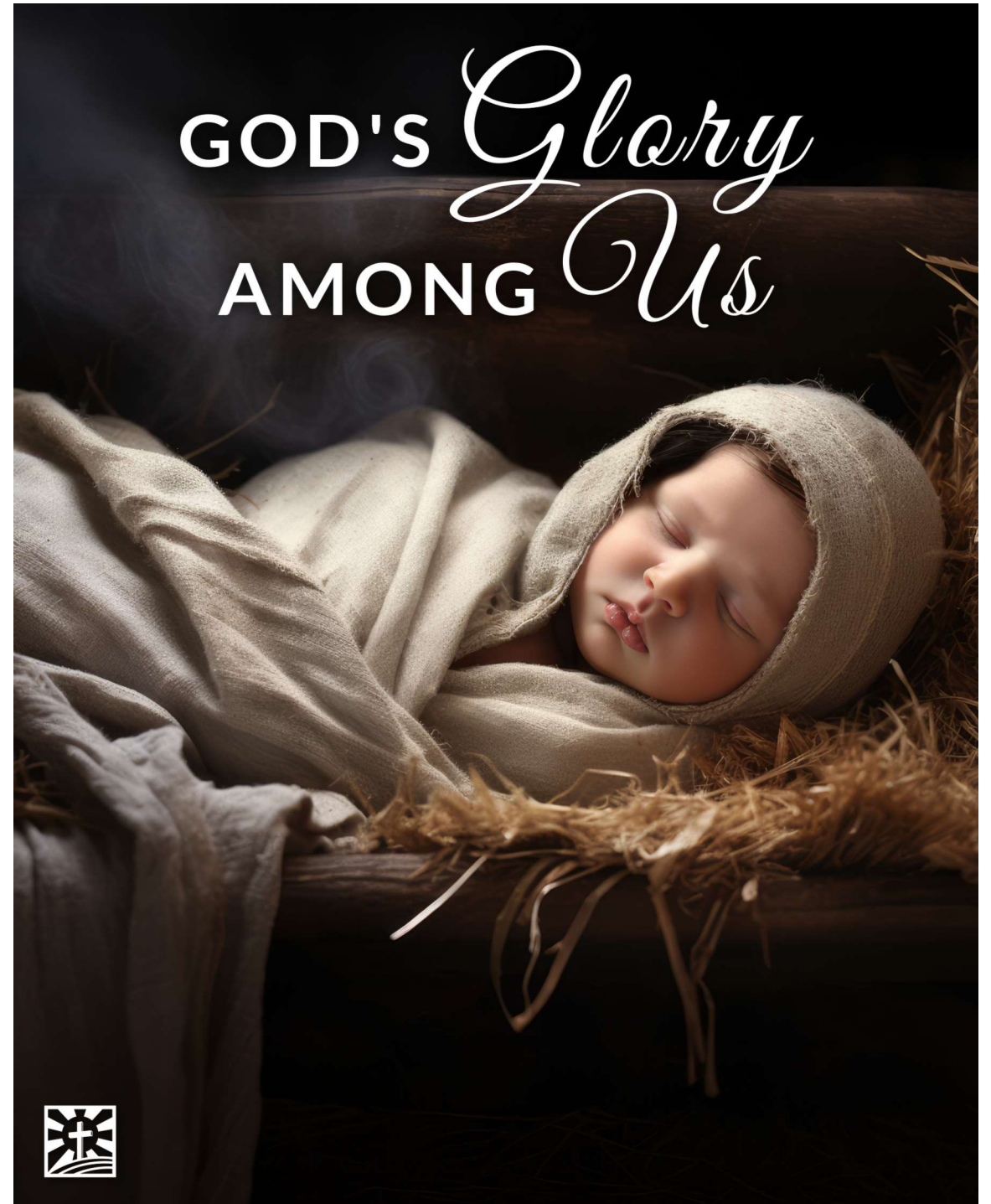
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IN THE NAME OF JESUS

THE THEME OF OUR WORSHIP:

The Gift of God: God gives himself. Have you ever opened a Christmas present, perhaps some toy or technology, and had to ask, "What is it?" You were grateful for the gift, but not 100% certain what you were looking at. Today, as we look into the manger, we ask that question. 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. This gift is exactly what humanity needed to deliver us from sin, death, and Satan. On the Festival of Christmas, we thank God for this greatest of gifts.

WELCOME! Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. At St. Paul's, you will find a worship service designed to praise God and increase people's faith. While all styles of worship take some getting used to, we hope you will find that the main message – the unconditional love Jesus has for us – comes through clearly.

PARTICIPATE. Many parts of our worship service are interactive. Feel free to sing along with the hymns and songs. There are also times in the service when Pastor and congregation speak back and forth. Please join together as you feel comfortable.

PARAMENTS. In Lutheran churches you often see paraments. These are the colored cloths with symbols on them hanging from the altar and pulpit. They change with the church seasons and celebrations as a visual reminder of what we are celebrating in our worship. The color for the Christmas season is white...a symbol of purity and joy. For this reason, the paraments, religious ornaments (Chrismons), and lights on the tree are white. You will also notice the gold trim which stands for royalty, riches and victory.

PERSONAL CONVENIENCES. For your convenience, restrooms are located in the southwest corner of the narthex across from the entrance into the sanctuary...feel free to ask for directions. Cell phones should be turned off or put on vibrate mode so as not to disrupt others during the service. Thank you for your cooperation.

To help you focus while you join us for worship, take the time to eliminate as many distractions around you as possible. We may be separated by in-person or livestream worship, but we can connect with each other here for Christian support and encouragement.

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 ✝ give you peace.

Amen.

HYMN OF DEPARTURE Where Shepherds Lately Knelt | 345:1,2,4

SERVING JESUS WITH HEARTS OF LOVE:

PRESIDING MINISTER: Pastor Brian Pechman

PREACHER: Pastor Adam Bode

SERVICE ACCOMPANIST: Gillian Curia

ALTAR GUILD: Stefani Leverenz, Jenny Walleser, Lisa Specht

USHERS: Eric Specht, Mike Austreng, Dale Wuestenhagen, Jim Eick

DISTRIBUTION

Through the Apostle Paul Jesus tells us that celebrating the Lord's Supper is an expression of our unity with him and with the others who partake in this meal (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). He also says, "So then, whoever eats of the bread and drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). For these reasons, St. Paul's practices close communion with those united to us in beliefs and church membership. We welcome confirmed members of the WELS and ELS to the Lord's Table. We ask that you speak with one of our pastors before taking the Lord's Supper. They are eager to meet with you. We thank you kindly. And greatly look forward to celebrating the Lord's Supper with you. In preparation for communing today...you may use the questions found on pp.295-296 in the blue hymnal.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 331

Hymn Appreciation: Reflecting the joy within his family...Martin Luther wrote "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" for his children's Christmas celebration either in 1534 or 1535. The pattern of a pre-Reformation garland singing game gave Luther's simple hymn structure. Stanzas 1-5 report what the angels said. Stanzas 6 & 15 give voice to the family's response... while stanzas 7-14 make application of the angel's good news. Originally, Luther used the tune of the singing game...especially since the hymn was sung in the family. When the hymn began to be used in church services...Luther provided as a new tune the one used today.

PRAYER

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this saving gift. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORSHIP NOTES

THE FESTIVAL OF THE NATIVITY

Nativus is Latin for "birth". By the 4th century, the early Christian Church had set December 25th as the day to celebrate the birth of Christ. Along with Easter...it quickly became one of the major celebrations in the Church Year. It always included celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is seen in the word *Christmas*, which is simply short for "Christ's Mass".

THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS—TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

You are probably familiar with the carol *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. While that carol isn't religious...its title does capture the fact that on Christmas Day the Christian Church begins a twelve-day celebration.



Historically, the celebration of Christmas didn't begin until Christmas Eve. That was the night homes were decorated with trees and tinsel. (It is the secularization of Christmas and the desire to have a longer shopping season that has pushed the "beginning" of Christmas back into November.) Christmas Eve often consisted of a vigil...either at church or in the home...that was quiet and muted. Then...come Christmas Day...all Christians would gather in church as a joyous celebration began. Families would continue to worship (and, yes, give gifts) for twelve straight days. The celebration of Christmas would end with the Festival of the Epiphany...marking the appearance of the Wise Men.

Sunday, December 29th | 8:00a & 10:30a

The Gift of God: Our Substitute and Sacrifice

Already as a child, Jesus' saving work had begun. He would do more than simply be our substitute. Eventually...he would lay that perfect life down as our sacrifice for sin.



Sunday, January 5th | 8:00a & 10:30a

The Gift of God: A Gift for All People

Christmas ends on January 6th...known as Epiphany...*"the Gentile Christmas"*. On this day we commemorate the way God guided Gentiles to their salvation with a special star. On this Sunday when we celebrate Epiphany, you are re-minded that Jesus Christ...born a Jew...is gift for all people.



OPENING HYMN Angels from the Realms of Glory | 347:1,2,5

INVOCATION AND RESPONSES

from Psalm 98 and Galatians 4

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

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

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

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

When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman,
born under the law,
to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

The Lord, who gives every good and perfect gift, invites us to confess
our sins and receive his forgiveness:

**Holy God, I confess that I was born full of sin, the offspring of fallen
Adam. All I have to offer you is my selfish thoughts, my wicked
words, and my hateful actions. All I should receive from you is your**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei | 1059

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.

Text: Michael D. Schultz
Tune: Latin, 15th cent.
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Tune: Public domain

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.**

THE SACRAMENT

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 + 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 + 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."

**just anger, your eternal condemnation, and your sentence of death.
Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!**

The great gift of God's grace has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. Jesus was born without sin. He lived without sin. He died with our sin on the cross to give us his holiness, pardon, and life. He rose again to prove that all these gifts are ours. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord!

SONG OF PRAISE

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing | 350:1,2

Hymn Appreciation: Charles Wesley was the younger brother of Anglican clergyman, John Wesley. While John stuck largely to theology (and is generally credited as being the founder of the Methodist movement)...Charles stuck primarily to hymn writing. Charles penned "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*", which was first printed in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1739 (often regarded as the first Methodist hymnal). It quickly became extremely popular.

The tune associated with "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*" is titled MENDELSSOHN. It comes from the second chorus of Felix Mendelssohn's *Festgasang an die Kunstler*...written in 1840 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Johannes Gutenberg's invention of movable type. Mendelssohn did not think the tune appropriate for sacred text. He wrote that it was too "soldier-like" to convey Scriptural truth. Nevertheless...in 1855 Dr. Williams H. Cummings adapted the tune MENDELSSOHN to fit Wesley's text. The result is arguably the most popular Christmas hymn of all time.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

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.**

THE WORD

FIRST READING

Exodus 33:18-23;34:5-7

Since no one may see the glory of the holy God and live, the LORD invited Moses into his presence and proclaimed his name.

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

¹⁹And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

²¹Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²²When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

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.

CONNECT

We would kindly ask everyone to fill out a *Connect Card* now. If you are worshipping with us virtually, we kindly ask that you also fill out a digital *Connect Card*. What will be the “next steps” you can take as a response to the message you have heard today? You can also let us know how we can pray for you or ask for more information on one of the ministries or programs we are offering. Thank you!



OFFERING

If you're visiting today...we're glad to have you as our guest. Please don't feel any obligation to participate in this part of the service. In fact...we hope you'll consider this service our gift to you! This offering is an opportunity for those of us who are regular attenders to invest tangibly in what God is doing here. If you do wish to give an offering...please feel free to do so.

Giving Options:

- ◆ Scan the QR code to the right.
- ◆ give your gift [online](#).
- ◆ via text message: text “GIVE” to 877.492.5452 and follow the text instructions.



SERMON

Exodus 33-34

There's Glory in the Manger Hidden in the LORD – Heralded by the LORD

ATHANASIAN CREED

This statement of belief, together with the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, is held in common by all Christian churches. It was written to take a stand on God's Word against false teachings about the triune God and the person of Jesus Christ. Although it was not written by Athanasius, it is named after this defender of God's truth who lived in the 300s AD. On Christmas, when we celebrate God becoming human in Christ, we confess the second half of the creed. When it speaks of answering for our personal deeds at Christ's return, it is not promoting salvation by works. It is using language straight from the Bible (John 5:28-29). God judges and saves us through faith in Christ (Eph.2:8-9; Rom.3:23-24). Through this faith in Christ, God views us as righteous and our deeds as holy (John 15:1-5; Mt 25:31-46).

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.

⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR ANTHEM

Messiah

Long awaited, precious promise, Son of God and Son of Man. Heaven's glory in a manger has come to us in Bethlehem.

Refrain: Messiah, Messiah, a baby born to save us all. Messiah, Messiah, on our knees we fall.

All we longed for, all we needed, shining in a child's eyes. Hope forever, death defeated because of this one holy night. *Refrain*

O, come let us adore him, Christ the Lord. Long awaited, precious promise, coming back again. *Refrain*

SECOND READING*Romans 8:31-32**He who gave up his own Son for us all will graciously give us all things.*

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

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SONG OF PRAISENow Sing We, Now Rejoice | **363****GOSPEL***John 1:1-18**The Word became flesh and the glory of the Father's one and only Son dwelled among us, full of grace and truth.*

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 all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise be to you, O Christ!

HYMN OF THE DAY**O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is | 342**

Hymn Appreciation: The manger is not simply the place where Mary and Joseph went to deliver her firstborn...the familiar manger or creche. No, it is certainly that but more in the sense that it is not a far-off image but the very present reality of the Christ who comes to us in his flesh and blood under bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Now read through the words one more time and think of Gerhardt's wonderful hymn as not only a Christmas hymn but a communion hymn as well. And when you commune with his precious body and blood this holy season of our Savior's nativity...sing the song of joy the angel's sang for Christ is born in us today.