

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Christmas Eve
2020



Merry Christmas,

Joy to the World, the Lord has come!!

Let us be glad and rejoice for what God has done for us on this most Holy Night with the gift of God's beloved Son Jesus.

Our Christmas Eve service will be via Zoom at 7:00 pm. At 6:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Lutheran along with many other churches in Berks County will be ringing their church bells. You are invited to go outside with your family with

Luke 2:1-20

A reading from the 2nd chapter of Luke beginning at the first verse.

The Birth of Jesus

2 ¹⁻⁵ About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

⁶⁻⁷ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

An Event for Everyone

⁸⁻¹² There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

¹³⁻¹⁴ At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,

Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining it was the night of our dear Saviors birth.

O holy Night, the night when God choose to fulfill his promise to the Israelites and send them the one who would one day be their long awaited King

O Holy Night, the night when we usually gather together with all the candles burning, reminding us that the birth of this baby brings the light that will overcome the darkness

On this holy night, we come together to celebrate, to give thanks, and sing God's praises for the light that was about to enter our world on that very first Christmas eve.

That first Christmas eve when the shepherds near the quiet town of Bethlehem were just going about their business of tending to their flock when what appeared to be a star shining ever so brightly in the East caught their attention.

And then they heard the voice of an angel telling them to not be afraid for the voice is that of God's messenger, who has come to announce a great and joyful event that is taking place right now.

On this Holy Night, the Savior of the World has just been born in the town of Bethlehem. You are to go and find him. This is what you are to look for, a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”

And then the angelic messenger was joined by a huge angelic choir singing: *Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to all men and women on earth.*

And so on that Holy Night, the shepherds set out to look for the baby wrapped in a blanket lying in a manger.

And isn't that **who** we are all looking for tonight as we listen once again to the story of Jesus' birth, that sweet and innocent baby with his whole life ahead of him, who will one day rule God's kingdom here on Earth

But just as God surprised us with the long awaited King of Israel being born in a manger to a lowly peasant girl.

And just as God surprised us by trusting the lowly shepherds to share the good news of the baby's arrival. So too God will surprise us time and time again as this

story of God's gift of his Son unfolds.

But, this year as we come together in a new and different way, some people are reading this message and some of us are hearing me speak this message over Zoom. Some of us are frustrated and disappointed that it just doesn't feel the same, some of us are exhausted from having to use new tools that have replaced in person interactions, and some of us content to be worshipping from the warm of our own homes in your most comfortable chair.

But, in spite of our different perspectives and circumstances, on this Holy Night we all come searching for the same thing, that little innocent baby lying in the manger

And what we find year after year as we engage in this Christmas story is that this story is not the story of power and might and

majesty. This story is not a story of pageantry and privilege.

But this is our story about God, who choose to give up power and invincibility to become an infant for you

This is a story about God, who made the best out of lousy accommodations in a barn and used a manger as a bed for his beloved Son

This story is about God knowing the heart of an unwed teenage mother, who shows the world that in spite of the gossip that surrounded her, she was strong and determined to love and care for the child that she had conceived, carried and now gave birth to.

This is the story of God choosing to give the honor of delivering this message not to the educated, the elite or the powerful, but to the ones who would forever be remembered for without

question following God's call to go and find the baby.

We come together tonight searching for the baby who will grow up to be the Savior of the world.

For us, God humbled himself to have his Son born to a poor but faithful unwed teenage girl.

For us God humbled himself to have the lowly uneducated shepherds with a limited vocabulary be the ones to announce the arrival of the Messiah.

The good news of the miracle of Christmas is that God loves us so much that God comes **to us** and **for us** in places and in ways that surprise and astonish us. God came to us in the form of an innocent baby, so that we may know and experience God's unconditional love, God's never-ending mercy and God's amazing grace

God comes to us through people
who have been dismissed and
rejected by society's standards
And although at the time it
seemed to be just an ordinary
night as the shepherds settled
under the stars to watch their
flock by night

It was and will always be the
holiest of nights when the stars
were brightly shining.

The holiest night when the
angels were singing *Hosanna in
the Highest!*

The Holiest Night when God did
the unthinkable and became
man for the sake of the world.

Which on this holy night and on
every night is the good news
that changed everything for you
and for me and for ALL people
forever more

Oh Holy Night

Oh Night Divine

The Night when Christ was
born.

AMEN

Hymn
Silent Night

Silent night, Holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin, mother and child
Holy infant, tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, Holy night
Shepherds quake, at the sight
Glories stream from heaven above
Heavenly, hosts sing Hallelujah.
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.

Blessing

May
The love of God,
The light of Christ,
And the joy of the Holy Spirit
Abide with you on this Holy Night
and forever more.

AMEN