

Service of Holy Communion

December 20, 2020 Advent 4

9:45 AM SPECIAL MUSIC

presented by Don Irwin, Steinway Artist

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Don Irwin

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.
Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,

we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God.

Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ.

Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, † comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG “Emmanuel”

Verse

Emmanuel Emmanuel

His name is called Emmanuel

God with us revealed in us

His name is called Emmanuel

(repeat twice)

“Jesus Name Above All Names”

Verse 1

Jesus name above all names
 Beautiful Savior glorious Lord
 Emmanuel God is with us
 Blessed Redeemer living Word

Verse 2

Jesus loving Shepherd
 Vine of the branches Son of God
 Prince of Peace Wonderful Counselor
 Lord of the universe Light of the world

CCLI Song # 21291
 Naida Hearn
 CCLI License # 11534117

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.



LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

As the candle is lighted, this prayer is said.

We praise you, O God, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may sing of your advent among us in the Word made flesh. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

Holden Evening Prayer - The Magnificat

Marty Haugen

1. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in
 2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up - lift - ed the hum-ble of

B^b F E^b B^b B^b/D E^b

you, You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life
 heart, You have filled the hun - gry with wondrous things, and left the wealth-y no

Cm⁷ F B^b B^b7 E^b Cm⁷ B^b/F F⁷

through. Great and might-y are you, O Ho - ly One, strong is your kind-ness
 part. Great and might-y are you, O Faith-ful One, strong is your jus - tice,

E^b/B^b B^b F/A Gm Dm E^b B^b Cm F⁷

ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the weak and low-ly one, hum-bling the proud of heart
 stong your love, As you prom-ised to Sar-ah and A-bra-ham, kind-ness for - ev - er more.

1. F⁷

12 B^b F/A Gm Dm E^b B^b Cm⁷

2. F⁷ B^b F E^b B^b B^b/D E^b

My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in

you, You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and

Cm⁷ F B^b B^b7 E^b Cm⁷

blessed me all my life through, and blessed me all my life through

rit. B^b/F F⁷ E^b/B^b B^b B^b/F F⁷ E^b/B^b B^b

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

THE WORD

FIRST READING: *2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16*

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: *Romans 16:25-27*

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made

known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Be Born in Me” Bernie Herms & Nichole Nordeman Kristin Lipscomb, Soloist

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 1:26-38*

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the first chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

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

SERMON

When I was in eighth grade, one of my classmates was suddenly absent from school day after day. I did not really know her, but she was in some of my classes and I wondered what had happened to her. Eventually, the gossip reached me: Jane had gotten pregnant. I was shocked. We were all thirteen, maybe fourteen years old at the time, and I’m not sure I fully understood how pregnancy came about. I had some idea, but... Until then, I hadn’t realized a thirteen year old girl could get pregnant.

Jane came from a rough part of town, was rather loud and a bit aggressive. I mostly avoided her so as not to get in the middle of anything. When her pregnancy was

mentioned in the halls, there were audible gasps, as eyes widened and mouths fell open. A teenager pregnant at our school, one of our own classmates! Jane came to school a few times when her belly was large with child, but afterwards she more or less disappeared from our lives.

Had I been in her shoes, I would not have returned to school if I could help it. The pregnancy was a stain on her character. All those stares directed her way, the whispers behind her back, the assumptions that she had allowed a boy to 'do things' to her. Now, so many years later, I wonder if it was that simple. She was only thirteen, after all; how much responsibility could fall at her feet? Maybe she and the boy were both just innocents who went too far; maybe the boy was older and took advantage; maybe he had promised her love and she was too lonely, too neglected and sad to resist that promise. Maybe she'd needed an escape from her daily life and thought he was that escape. I don't know, but I think of her now with more compassion and concern than I did back then.

One of the problems of teen pregnancy is that the girl who gives birth to a newborn, is still a child herself. Except now, she is also a mother, called upon to love and nurture her own child, to watch over and guide and protect him or her. No one has more influence on a young child's sense of self, their sense of wellbeing, than the child's mother. If her love is warm and real, if her care is steady and ever-present, the child will likely grow up confident, able to strive for worthy things and give of himself, able to trust the basic goodness of life. When Jane was pregnant she still needed a mother herself. She had so much more growing and learning to do. How would she ever manage to mother a baby?

We don't know what sort of home Mary came from in Nazareth; we don't know anything about her family, whether they were wealthy or poor, whether her father had a good job and her mother was attentive and gentle, or not. When the angel, Gabriel, spoke to Mary, told her she was pregnant, Mary would not have been much older than Jane. What would her family think when they learned she was with child? What would her fiancé, Joseph think? What would the neighbors say? Would she have to face all those stares and whispers?

I can just imagine if Jane had tried to tell us all that she had not been with a boy, that the Holy Spirit of God had made her pregnant. What laughter, what scorn, what expressions of disgust would have followed, because Jane was not anyone special. She had dark skin, lived in the poor section of town, and rode the bus to school. No one I knew would have believed the Holy Spirit had had anything to do with her, other than scold her for getting in that situation.

Was it like that for Mary? Did she tell her parents, her grandparents, about the angel Gabriel? If so, did they think she was lying? Did they tell her she should be ashamed of herself? Being chosen as the mother of God, the mother of Jesus, is an honor certainty, but not an easy obligation to fulfill.

Thank goodness, God sent Gabriel to explain things to Joseph – Matthew's gospel tells us that. Joseph must have been a wonderful man. He was not someone of privilege or status, but he had a good heart and an honest mind. Think of the hot anger

anyone would feel upon learning his betrothed was pregnant without his involvement. Most people would be shocked, then deeply hurt, and then furious. Maybe Joseph felt those things, but even before Gabriel spoke to him, he planned to separate from Mary quietly, so as not to bring shame – or worse – down on her.

That, in itself, is pretty amazing. But there's still more to Joseph, He set aside his own hurt and pride to listen to Gabriel. When Gabriel told him, "take Mary as your wife...the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit," Joseph trusted the message and the messenger. Did he have doubts? Did the explanation sound unbelievable to him? Maybe. But he moved forward with his plans to wed Mary anyway. I can't imagine what he said to his parents or his buddies when they learned his fiancé was pregnant. Perhaps Joseph was the silent type who offered no excuses, no reasons, but simply carried on with his duties. A good man, no different from ordinary, good men of today.

The world was in turmoil in those days – as it is today. A census was being taken (like in our nation this year); people had to travel to their home area to be counted. Roman controlled that part of the world, and Mary and Joseph's people – the Jews – were often despised or ignored by those in power. Would they find the safety necessary to raise a child? Would they have the resources and support to provide for their baby? Would a teenage girl be ready to become a mother?

God takes a lot of risks to be with us, to walk alongside us. God chooses ordinary people to become God's intimate family, to reveal God's unending love to the world. Mary and Joseph, not unlike Jane and her boyfriend, suddenly found themselves in a difficult spot. Yet God loved them for their willingness to carry on; God loved that little unplanned baby – both Mary's baby and Jane's baby. God cheered to see their bodies develop in the womb. God cut through the fear, past the shame, and with all the angels in heaven, rejoiced that this child – the baby Jesus and Jane's baby – this child was coming into the world.

The birth of babies is a chance for God to love the world anew – to befriend the lonely, to lift up the burdened, to smile into the faces of those teenage mothers with delight and utter trust. All the things Mary, Joseph, and Jane endured – the sneers and whispers, the jokes and crude gestures – was worth it to be a servant of God, to receive and love a child sent from God, to live as a mother, a father, despite the odds.

God shows up in the most unlikely people. I never would have thought, in junior high, that Jane was a servant of God, but maybe she was. No doubt she was dearly loved by God, as were Mary and Joseph. Be alert and aware, then, in these last days before Jesus is born. Be on the lookout for God to visit you, to encourage you, to shine with joy on you in people you would never have expected to be the bearers of good news. That is so often God's way.

HYMN OF THE DAY *"While We Are Waiting Come"*

Verse 1

While we are waiting come

While we are waiting come

Jesus our Lord Emmanuel
While we are waiting come

Verse 2

With pow'r and glory come
With pow'r and glory come
Jesus our Lord Emmanuel
While we are waiting come

Verse 3

Come Savior quickly come
Come Savior quickly come
Jesus our Lord Emmanuel
While we are waiting come

CCLI Song # 27525
Claire Cloninger | Don Cason
CCLI License # 11534117

THE NICENE CREED

With the whole Church let us confess our faith.

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths, for St. John Cassian Romanian Orthodox church, for Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church, for Temple Beth El, and for the Turkish Rainbow House, and for the Sikh Center. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Listen as your gathered people raise their praise and their concerns to you...

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We are grateful for the bold actions of female leaders in our own time, especially Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Bishop Sue Briner. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

THE DOXOLOGY to the tune of “*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*”

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

praise him, all creatures here below;

praise him above, ye heav'nly host;

praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray.

Amen.

(Please have the bread and wine/juice ready for Holy Communion)

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (SETTING 1)

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
 Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
 Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
 It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

It is indeed right, our du - ty and our joy,
 that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,
 al - mighty and merciful God, through our Sav - ior Je - sus Christ.
 You comforted your people with the promise of the Re - deem - er,
 through whom you will also make all things new
 in the day when he comes to judge the world in righ - teous-ness.
 And so, with all the choirs of an - gels,
 with the church on earth and the hosts of heav - en,
 we praise your name and join their un - end - ing hymn:

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
 pow - er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na in the high - est. Blessed is he who comes in the
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

God who, in the beginning, made order out of chaos bringing forth creation; who blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child, who led Israel from slavery into freedom, who through the prophets foretold the coming of a suffering servant, and who made Mary mother of a Son to be called Emmanuel – God, most high, who has redeemed us through Jesus Christ, our Lord – we remember...

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Come, eat and drink.

Take the bread and eat, this is the body of Christ, given for you. (*please consume the bread*)

Take the cup and drink, this is the blood of Christ, shed for you. (*please drink from the cup*)

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

The body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice. In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are glad to welcome Don Irwin today as guest musician, and we thank him for his artistry that adds so much to our worship. It is always good to see you, and to hear you, Don.

Thursday is Christmas Eve. If you are yearning to sing some Christmas carols, join me on Christmas Eve day at noon, here at Shepherd King, on the front porch. We will sing some carols for the neighborhood.

Christmas worship on Thursday will be livestreamed over Facebook at 4pm.

Next Sunday, December 27, we will worship with Zion Lutheran here in San Antonio. Links to their service will be sent to our members, as well as posted on our website and Facebook page.

Thank you all for worshipping with Shepherd King this morning.

BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, † now and forever.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *“Joy to the World”*

accompanied by Don Irwin

- 1 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.

- 3 No more let sin and sorrow 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.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

POSTLUDE

Don Irwin

From sundaysandseasons.com.

Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS018007. New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Revised Common Lectionary, Copyright © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts, admin Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission.

"Permission to reprint, podcast, and / or stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE with license #A-715748. All rights reserved." Please include your own license number.