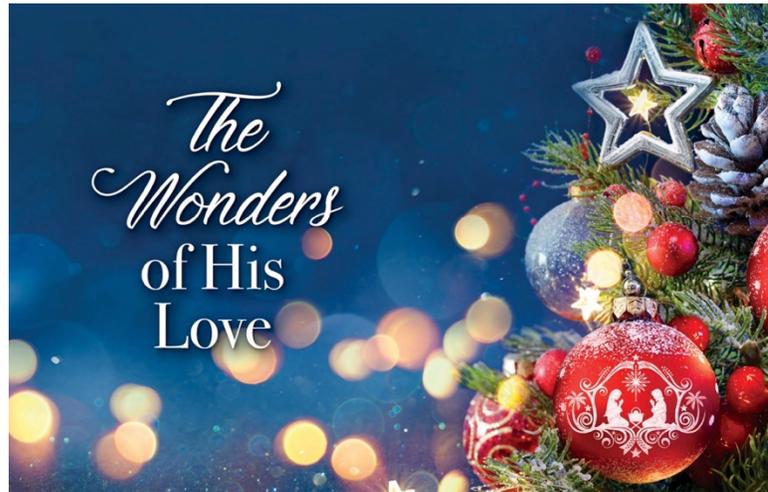


An Order of Worship for the Home

December 27, 2020
Guest Preacher
Rev. Michael Lange
Pres. CNH District, LCMS



This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: Merry Christmas! Our God is with us.

Reader 2: Our God is Immanuel. Merry Christmas!

Reader 1: We invite our God to lead our worship.

Reader 2: The Father, who gave his only begotten Son;

Reader 1: The Son, born as a human baby on Christmas;

Reader 2: The Spirit, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Together: Amen. Merry Christmas!

Psalm 111:1-3, 9-10

¹ Praise the Lord!

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

² Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them.

³ Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁹ He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!

Confession & Absolution

*Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith.
Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.*

Christian Confessing: Jesus, you came as light into darkness. I have to admit there's a lot of darkness in me. I know your light drives out the darkness, but sometimes I hide the dark secrets because I'm embarrassed. Other times, I keep some corners of my life in the dark because I secretly want to go back to them. Forgive me. Shine your light in me and drive the darkness away.

Christian Responding: The darkness always gives way to the light. Jesus is the light of the world, and he shines his light in your life. He's heard your prayer, and he answers with a resounding, "Yes!" You have received the gift of Jesus this Christmas, and you are born new by the work of God. You are a forgiven child of the Light.

Together: Amen.

Luke 2:22-40

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's

Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Galatians 4:4-7

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Message – Rev. Michael Lange, President of the CA-NV-HI District, LCMS God’s Cup, Full and Overflowing

Christmas... God’s Cup is full and in fact, it is overflowing. The time has come. Listen to our text for today about God’s Christmas cup, full and ready to overflow... ready to overflow with love, sacrifice, and hope; with identity, relationship, and purpose.

Let’s listen to Galatians chapter 4, beginning with verse 4:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...

That’s sacrificial love. Not a servant, not a messenger, not an angel, but his Son. God sent forth his Son, a loving sacrifice.

...born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law...

Christmas filled to the brim and overflowing means hope.

...so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons...

When you are a son, you have an identity in relationship. You are not a slave. You are not just a servant in the house. You are not a visitor. You are not just a friend. You are a son. You have relationship, an identity... a son, a daughter.

*...God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,
"Abba! Father!"*

Isn't that interesting? God sent the Spirit of his Son to cry in and through our hearts to his Father, "Daddy", "my dear beloved Father." It's an identity call isn't it? It's a relationship call, a call of competence and love.

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

An heir... an inheritor through God. That's purpose, my friends. That's Christmas in a cup filled to overflowing, with not only love, sacrifice, with not only hope, with not just identity and relation, but also with purpose. See, to be an heir, often times we think of what we receive, what we have a right to. But an heir has responsibility. You were born and reborn for this moment. Christmas in God's full cup to overflowing is what we have today.

Now, what is a full cup all about? I want to talk about that for just a little bit. When I was a kid, I guess we needed to be careful with our Scheckels. My Mom would often take the milk that we drank for dinner, or for lunch, or breakfast, and fill our cups half full. And if we wanted seconds we could have seconds... half full. As an adult, my wife often asked me for the first few years of marriage, "Why is it whenever you fill the glasses, you fill them half full? Why don't you fill them to the rim?" I realized this was just a habit from my past.

Really, what God's done is taken our lives and he has brought our lives with Christ, with the Christ of Christmas; with his love, sacrifice, with his hope; with his relationship and his identity; also with his purpose... and he has filled it to the brim, to the point of overflowing.

At the time in history that we are referring to in this passage... this time in history that is really a Luke 2, a Matthew 1, a John 1 reality, we are seeing that God has filled to the brim that cup that is his perfect, perfect time! He's filled it to the brim and it is ready to overflow. And it overflows in such a way that few notice, but - my goodness! - what a waterfall of opportunity and effect it has had throughout history.

Let's continue to look at this a little bit deeper. I would like to look at it as we find it also in the words from Luke chapter 2. Don't forget about the Christ of Christmas that stands at the center of who we are. The Christ of Christmas that gives us his sacrificial love, gives us his very hope, gives us his relationship and identity and gives us purpose just like the angel had purpose as he brought that message to Mary. As the angels brought that message to the shepherd, that message about the Christ of Christmas, the Christmas cup coming into the world, filled to the brim ready to overflow and what would that overflow be? See that cross behind me? That would be the overflow.

The overflow of that cross would ultimately hold the Christ who would say, "It is finished." In essence, "My cup was filled up with passion for my people and now I am poured out. I am poured out and I have overflowed over all people, for the sake, for the salvation, for the redeeming of the world... for the removal of shame, for the binding back together of relationship... for the connection, where the connection has been lost... for hope where hope seems unavailable... for those unknowing and unbelieving and unfulfilled... for those that would receive God's word that says to them, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'"

And the answer comes. "You were forsaken so the world would not be; so your cup of great love could be full and overflow, and the world would not know what it was like to be without my hand reaching to them - a hand of restoration, a hand of hope, a hand of purpose and identity and a hand of great love. A hand of identity and relationship."

Let's go to Luke 2, because I think Luke 2 binds us back together with this more than we would think. I would like to pick up not right at the beginning, but at about verse 6.

And while they were there, the time came...

There it is again. The cup is full. It's ready to overflow.

...the time came for her to give birth. (Luke 2:6)

And it wasn't just a normal birth. It was a birth that would overflow the very love of God.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

There's that fullness of time and there's that love. Her firstborn son was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger.

Whose love was it? No, I am not talking about Mary's love, although I am sure that she loved this firstborn child of hers intensely. I am talking about the Father's love for the world. That He would give the very essence of Himself in divinity to be born through sinful, fallen humanity - as good a woman as Mary was - to be born through fallen humanity into an imperfect world.

So imperfect that there wasn't even correct accommodations for her, especially for a woman about to give birth. And then, when she had to find a bed for her baby, she had Joseph improvise. And there was a feed trough and so she shewed Bessie, the cow, away. The sheep that was baying; you pushed him away and you got some clean hay and laid the baby there in the manger. And there in that manger lay the overflowing sacrificial love of God.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-11)

Hope! A Savior! One who makes a difference! Who redeems! Who pays the price! Who is Christ - the Chosen one, the anointed one and the Lord! One with Yahweh! One with this God - the Father! This all powerful one - *Elohim* of the Old Testament! That's hope. In that manger lay God's overflowing hope.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is
pleased!”*

*When the angels went away from them into heaven, the
shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem
and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has
made known to... (Luke 2: 12-15)*

To whom? To the world? Not yet. Not completely overflowing. Not in a torrent dripping all over humanity. Not yet. To shepherds. To us. People that had no idea that they would be brought into relationship. They had no idea of the identity that they were bestowed with; an identity to be the ones who would be the first receivers of this Good News coming to the world. They were the first receivers other than Mary & Joseph that would know the truth (other than a cow who watched or a sheep who b-a-a-aaaad). They would see and know the truth. And it came in a glorious fashion! And it bestowed on them a sense of relationship with the Almighty that they probably had never assumed, or even dreamed would be theirs.

Do you dream of the overflow of the Almighty? Overflow that bestows on you more than a warm feeling, but a sense of identity and relationship that says you are mine and you are important enough to know this important truth and to bear it? You are important enough to rejoice with me.

To whom do we tell our greatest joys? The ones whom we deeply love and value. Isn't that amazing! Ones whom God deeply loved and valued were chosen ones, in a sense, anointed ones... anointed for that purpose of receiving that Good News.

We would never be able to understand God's way of choosing who will be His chosen ones. The ones who receive that Good News and overflow it, and overflow it, and overflow it in several different cataracts, in floods, in all kinds of flowing from the mouth of God himself, that river of salvation, which will ultimately reach all of those whom God loves.

And whom does he love? God so loved the world...

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (Luke 2:16-20)

There was an overflow, a purpose. They returned glorifying and praising God. You can't glorify and praise God in a quiet way, just in your heart. It overflows! We understand from other translations that the shepherds told what they had been told. They shared with the world. It was overflowing from their glorifying and praising.

It was a testimony. They were the first witnesses of what had been seen. Was much paid attention too? We don't know... we don't know.

But the shepherds had been given this sense of purpose. Why? Because they weren't slaves or simply friends. They were trusted as chosen ones, as sons. At just the right time - sons of Israel, daughters of Israel, daughters of the most high, sons of the most high - for what purpose? To be the ones who glorified and praised God for what they had been told and what they had seen with their own eyes.

They were taking the purpose, the responsibility of heirs. And without thinking about it, that fullness – that Christmas cup that was now theirs – was overflowing from God through them, to everyone who heard.

In these texts and in our lives today (even in our covid lives) we are receivers of a fullness of time. God's perfect time flows in us and through us with the Spirit that calls out "Abba", "Abba", "Father" to God in praise of God to be heard by the world.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

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.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Blessing *(Isaiah 9:2)*

Reader 1: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light

Reader 2: Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shone.

Reader 1: Jesus is the Light of the world!

Reader 2: The Light has come into our world.

Reader 1: Now, Jesus goes with us into this world.

Reader 2: Walk in his presence. Walk in the Light.

Together: Merry Christmas and amen!

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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