

Confession and Absolution

377 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing

- 1 On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
 News of great joy, news of great mirth,
 News of our merciful King's birth.
- 2 Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
 When from our sin He set us free,
 All for to gain our liberty?
- 3 When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place,
When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place;
 Angels and men with joy may sing,
 All for to see the newborn King.
- 4 All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night,
All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
 "Glory to God and peace to men
 Now and forevermore. Amen."

Text: English
Text: Public domain

Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Exhortation

203

- P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C **who made heaven and earth.**
P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
C **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.**
P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, and call upon Him in prayer and praise, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Kneel/Stand

Confession of Sins

LSB 203

- C** Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Absolution

LSB 203

- P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

*Stand***Service of the Word****Introit***Jeremiah 31:15–17; antiphon: Hosea 11:1*

- P** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.
- C** Thus says the LORD: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.
- P** Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.”
- C** Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears,
- P** for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.
- C** There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.”
- C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- P** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Kyrie

LSB 204

- C** Lord, have mercy;
Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy.

Gloria in Excelsis

LSB 204

- C** 1 To God on high be glory
And peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven
Proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father;
Your holy name, we sing—
Our thanks for Your great glory,
Lord God, our heav'nly King.
- 2 To You, O sole-begotten,
The Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior,
You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus;
Receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in pow'r are seated
At God's right hand on high—
- 3 For You alone are holy;
You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever,
Be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit
Alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory.

“Amen!” our glad reply.

Text: Stephen P. Starke

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray.

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 63:7–14

⁷I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD,
the praises of the LORD,
according to all that the LORD has granted us,
and the great goodness to the house of Israel
that he has granted them according to his compassion,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸For he said, “Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely.”
And he became their Savior.

⁹In all their affliction he was afflicted,
and the angel of his presence saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

¹⁰But they rebelled
and grieved his Holy Spirit;
therefore he turned to be their enemy,
and himself fought against them.

¹¹Then he remembered the days of old,
of Moses and his people.

Where is he who brought them up out of the sea
with the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them
his Holy Spirit,

¹²who caused his glorious arm
to go at the right hand of Moses,
who divided the waters before them
to make for himself an everlasting name,

¹³who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in the desert,
they did not stumble.

¹⁴Like livestock that go down into the valley,
the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.

So you led your people,
to make for yourself a glorious name.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle*Galatians 4:4–7*

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

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Alleluia and Verse**Alleluia***LSB 205*

C Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Verse*LSB 205*

C These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia*LSB 205*

C Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Holy Gospel*Matthew 2:13–23*

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the second chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹³When [the wise men] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

Apostles’ Creed

C 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.**

Sit

389 Let All Together Praise Our God

- 1 Let all together praise our God
Before His glorious throne;
Today He opens heav'n again
To give us His own Son,
To give us His own Son.
- 2 He leaves His heav'nly Father's throne,
Is born an infant small,
And in a manger, poor and lone,
Lies in a humble stall,
Lies in a humble stall.
- 3 Within an earthborn form He hides
His all-creating light;
To serve us all He humbly cloaks
The splendor of His might,
The splendor of His might.
- 4 He undertakes a great exchange,
Puts on our human frame,
And in return gives us His realm,
His glory, and His name,
His glory, and His name.
- 5 He is a servant, I a lord:
How great a mystery!
How strong the tender Christ Child's love!
No truer friend than He,
No truer friend than He.
- 6 He is the key and He the door
To blessèd paradise;
The angel bars the way no more.
To God our praises rise,
To God our praises rise.
- △ 7 Your grace in lowliness revealed,
Lord Jesus, we adore
And praise to God the Father yield
And Spirit evermore;
We praise You evermore.

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Sermon

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Christmas is fading quickly into history. While the stores are quick to get Christmas merchandise out in September, they are ready to be done with Christmas by Christmas Day. Lowes started marking down their Christmas lights about the first week of December. Menards started their “Dutch Auction” of Christmas lights on December 14, increasing the discount percentage every three or four days. Some in Harvel quit lighting their Christmas lights on Christmas night. I’ve known folks who put up their Christmas tree in late October and take it down on Christmas Day. And there are others who leave their Christmas Decorations up until at least Epiphany. And with an Open House planned for January 8, my decorations won’t come down until January 9.

The world is always in a big hurry to get on to the next big thing. Christmas is huge for retailers, some selling up to 9% more in the fourth quarter than each of the other three. For much of the world, the true meaning of Christmas is lost, replaced by commercialism and consumerism. Many don’t understand the true significance of Jesus’s Birth.

Before we get to why Christmas is so very important to Christians, note how God chooses the right time in His perfect wisdom. Jesus was born of Mary when the world had a common lingua franca, language of business, Greek, Israel hoped for a savior, and Rome had roads which allowed the Good News of Jesus to spread across the whole known world of the time.

Why is it so important that Jesus be born of a woman, born under the law? Jesus had to be true man to take mankind’s sins upon himself and pay the full atonement price. Jesus had to be true God to live a perfectly obedient life. Without being perfect, Jesus could not be our substitute. Had Jesus sinned, Jesus’s death would have been like any other sinner’s death. Animal sacrifices for sins did not reconcile God’s People to God as they and we so desperately need. Without God initiating our salvation, without God sending His Holy Spirit to work faith in us, we are enemies of God, sinners from the moment of our conception, unable to come to God. So, God comes to us. God comes to us in His Word and Sacraments. God chooses us to come to the waters of Baptism, to become His sons and daughters. God adopts us into a special relationship with Him, one in which you can call Him Father. God chose you! Yes you! Even you! Even me!

Luther explains in the Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer “With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.” The All-powerful God who created and sustains the universe wants you to be in a special relationship with Him. Yes you! Even you! Even me! God wants you to call upon Him in every need, pray, praise and give thanks. God wasn’t content to leave you in your sin. God isn’t content to leave you in your sin. God will never be content to leave you in your sin. God gives you His Holy Spirit to intercede for you. The Holy Spirit calls you to repent, to turn from your sins, and turn back to God. God comes to be a part of you in the Lord’s Supper when you eat Jesus’s body and drink Jesus’s blood, truly present in, with and under the elements of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Because Jesus was truly man, He knows your struggles. He knows what it means to be tired, hungry, thirsty, cold, and hot. Jesus knows betrayal, having been betrayed into the hands of the Sanhedrin and betrayed by Peter who denied Jesus three times. Jesus knows loneliness, being abandoned by those closest to Him. Jesus pain and suffering; He suffered the pain and agony of being beaten and scourged. His hands and feet were nailed to a cross, suffering the most scandalous, humiliating punishment known to man unjustly, as He was without sin. God’s people Israel, His own people, executed the most hideous miscarriage of justice ever seen. Even though Jesus healed the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the sick, the religious authorities deemed it necessary that He die. John (11:49-52) writes “⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

When Jesus died on the cross, Jesus took the punishment that you deserve for your sins. Matthew writes (27:46) “⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” God the Father turned his back on His only begotten Son, applying the punishment you deserve. For the times when you turned to someone or something other than God for all good things and in times of need. For the times when you misused the name of the Lord your God. For

the times when you chose not to worship or the times you turned a deaf ear to God's Word. For times when you didn't love your neighbor as yourself, either failing to protect your neighbor's reputation or worldly goods. For times when you misused God's good gifts, be it those in authority over us or the gift of your body or the gift of possessions or reputation. Even though we think that our sins are not that bad, especially when compared to others, even the most minor sin means that we deserve nothing but temporal and eternal punishment. Our sins enslave us. Our sins lead us to sin more and more. But God is not content to leave you in your sins. God sent Jesus to be born under the law to fulfill the Law. Jesus's life, death and resurrection saves you from your sins. Jesus's life, death and resurrection sets you free from your sins. Free from your sins, God calls you to be His son or daughter, His Heir, to inherit His eternal kingdom.

Unlike the world, Christmas remains with Christians throughout the year. While you may take your Christmas Tree down earlier or later, the Baby Jesus remains in your heart and mind. Jesus humbled Himself to take on human flesh. Jesus fulfilled the Law and set you free. You are no longer a slave to sin. Jesus is the all-availing sacrifice for your sins. You are God's chosen one, His son or daughter. You are set free from sin to walk in Jesus's Righteousness. You walk in the good works that God creates for you, not in a vain attempt to become righteous before God, but in response to being righteous before God. You live in the Kingdom of God, both here in time and there in eternity. You look forward to the time (Revelation 21:4) when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Amen.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

Stand

Prayer of the Church

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For humble hearts, that we would acknowledge the great wonder of our almighty God sending His Son to be born of the virgin Mary, under the Law, working already for our salvation on the day of His circumcision; and that God would receive our heartfelt thanks for the righteousness and forgiveness of sins we have obtained through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For steadfast faith, that we would ever be thankful for the lovingkindness God has shown to us in Christ, and never forget His benefits or lose sight of His promises, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For preservation from prejudice, that we would firmly believe from God's Word that we are all one in Christ; for a deep appreciation of our distinctive callings, that we would recognize the beauty of God's diverse creation and our specific place within it; and that we would not resent what God has called us to be and to do, but rejoice to serve as He has ordained, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our leaders, including our president, governor, Congress, legislators, judges and magistrates, that our God would give them the wisdom and courage to act with integrity on behalf of all people, especially those least able to defend themselves, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those in need who cry out to God, [*especially _____*], that our Father would remember them, bless and keep them by His grace, lift up His countenance upon them, and give them peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all the children of God invited to the table of His Son here today, that He would give us His Holy Spirit to discern Christ's body and blood and come with joyful and repentant hearts; and

that He would strengthen us by this blessed communion to love Him above all and to love one another in His name, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gracious Father, in Your steadfast love You have put off the day of Jesus' return until the perfect time, when the number of Your elect is complete. Keep Your people watchful, vigilant and awake with Your gift of faith until that day; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Offering

Lord's Prayer

C 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.

Post-Communion Collect

A Let us pray.
 Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, so that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus

LSB 212

A Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
 The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
 The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen.

387 Joy to the World

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.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
 Let men their songs employ,
 While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 Repeat the sounding joy,

- Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sins and sorrows 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.
- 4 He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

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