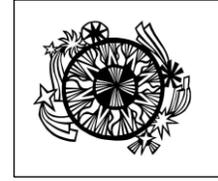


*Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church*

*Sunday, January 3, 2021*  
*Second Sunday of Christmas*



*Prelude*

Angels, from the Realms of Glory (public domain)

Lisa Dake

*Welcome*

*Call to Worship*

We gather together today in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

*Call to Confession*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who was in the beginning, who makes a dwelling among us, who covers us with justice and mercy. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Prayer of Confession* (please join in confessing our sins)

**God of goodness and lovingkindness, we confess that we have sinned against You and our neighbors. We have turned away from Your invitation to new life. We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden. In Your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins, those we know and those known only to You, for the sake of the one who came to live among us, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

*Silent and Individual Prayers of Confession*

*Declaration of Forgiveness*

Hear the good news of peace and salvation! God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work, but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people. With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace. **Amen.**

*Prayer of the Day* (please join in prayer)

**Almighty God, You have filled all the earth with the light of Your incarnate Word. By Your grace empower us to reflect Your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

*Readings and Psalm*

- **Jeremiah 31:7-14** *Joy at the gathering of God's scattered flock*
- **Psalm 147:12-20** *Worship the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion.*
- **Ephesians 1:3-14** *The will of God made known in Christ*

**The Holy Gospel according to John 1:1-18:**

*John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.*

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified to him and cried out, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because He was before me.'") <sup>16</sup>From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**

**Sermon**

**Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as we continue our Christmas celebration. Amen.**

I love to talk. You may have noticed this about me. It usually isn't too difficult for me to strike up a conversation with anyone about anything.

I don't talk just to hear my voice or just to be heard. I like to communicate with people. It doesn't matter if it's just a small comment about the weather or finding out where someone is from or where they are going. I look at it as an opportunity to meet a new friend, whether I will ever see them again in my life or not.

My son takes after me. Shortly after he married, I was at a store with my daughter-in-law and I struck up a conversation with a random person in the check-out lane. After making our purchases and heading out to the vehicle, my daughter-in-law said to me, "Now I know where your son gets it from! He randomly strikes up conversations with people he doesn't even know!"

I come from a family of talkers. There was never a quiet moment in our home. Six children and my parents. My mom loved to talk, too. My father, though, was more on the quiet side. I think I inherited just a *teensy bit* of that trait.

I don't think there is anyone in our family that likes to talk more than my number three sister, Mickey. Oh, and I love her. (I have to say that about all of my family members when I talk about them in a sermon - just in case they are listening!)

Just give me the short version. That was – and still is – the line I have to say to Mickey when she starts telling me a story. Just give me the short version. That girl can go on and on and on when telling a story! She loves to give details whether they are relevant or not. Whether I know who or what she is talking about or not. And even though I request the “short version”, it isn't always a given that I will hear the short version because sometimes her short versions can still take an hour to tell! Oh, and I love her!

Stories are important in our life. This was the form of communication long before anyone learned how to read and write. Stories have been handed down from generation to generation.

Whether they are short stories or long stories, stories teach. We learn facts and learn about people and places and things through stories. We interpret their meaning and can often get a better understanding of ourselves. Stories can shape our very lives. Stories make a connection between the teller and the hearer.

The more one hears a story, the more one is apt to remember the details. However, repetitive story-sharing can be difficult for some. We get so familiar with the story that we tend to gloss over the details. We often lack the patience to listen closely to a story again and again and again.

Yet, there *are* stories that we long to hear again and again and again.

Take, for instance, the story of Jesus' birth.

You may wonder why I'm talking about Jesus' birth when Christmas is over, right? Well, the Christmas season *isn't* over yet. Not until January 6<sup>th</sup>, Epiphany, the day the Wise Men visited baby Jesus in Bethlehem. *Then* the Christmas season is over and we move into the season after Epiphany.

Since it's still the Christmas season and our gospel lends toward this topic, I still want to talk about Jesus' birth today. I still want to tell you *HIS* story!

The stories of Jesus' birth and life vary in the four gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A couple of weeks ago I shared how the beginning portions of each of the gospels vary from one another.

At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, we hear the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew then tells of Joseph's visit from the angel foretelling Jesus' birth. Matthew then jumps to the story of the Wise Men's visit to see Baby Jesus who was already born in Bethlehem. Did you know that Matthew's gospel is the *only one* that includes the story of the Wise Men? While *that* is unique, we don't hear any of the familiar details.

The gospel of Mark begins with the words, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark doesn’t share a story of Jesus’ birth. Jesus just kind of appears and gets baptized by John.

In the gospel of Luke, which a majority of us probably heard on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, a lot of build-up occurs even before we get to that miraculous birth. Luke goes into great detail in *preparing* the story for us. Luke’s would be considered the long version of Jesus’ birth.

In our gospel reading from John 1 today, we hear the “short version” of the Christmas story. It is one verse, verse 14, where John says, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

As I mentioned a few weeks ago, John assumed readers knew the basic facts about Jesus. His stories about Jesus’ life are much different compared to Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s. We don’t hear all the details. We don’t get in-depth elements as one might expect or assume to hear.

Maybe John’s version doesn’t include Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the angels, or even *mention* a baby. But John’s version *still* tells the story: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us...” John *still* tells us that God sent God’s only Son, Jesus, into the world.

Whether it’s the short version of the Christmas story as we heard today in one verse or the longer version of the Christmas story that we heard a week ago, I’m just overjoyed to *share* the story of Jesus’ birth again, one more time, before this Christmas season is over. To give us hope and peace and joy and love - to carry us through this New Year.

This is one more time we get to hear the story of the most wonderful gift God gave us. A Savior. Born in Bethlehem. The Word made flesh who lived among us. Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

### **Moment of Reflection**

Ponder, for a moment, how the words shared today may reflect upon your life.

### **Hymn**

I Love to Tell the Story (public domain)

Lisa Dake

### **Prayers of the People**

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Redeeming God, You gather together Your people from the farthest parts of the earth. Protect Your church from stumbling. Let it not be overcome by sorrow, division, or despair. Make us radiant with goodness, that we might live always to the praise of Your glory. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You bring together heaven and earth. All creation testifies to Your splendor. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in delicate balance, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands, deserts to rainforests. Show us new ways to live in harmony with the world around us. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

(4)

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm's way and those risking danger for the sake of others. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You bring consolation to those who weep. Embrace those who feel far-off, excluded, or defeated. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Sustain the weak and weary. Refresh those who labor under the weight of pain or sickness, *especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices at this time....* Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You come to us in the beauty of darkness and of light. Bring justice and reconciliation to communities divided by oppression and misuse of power. Guide us to speak holy words of advocacy and truth. Help us to honor Your image in one another. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You turn our mourning into joy. We give thanks for those who have died in faith. With all the saints, give us our inheritance in Christ. In the fullness of time, gather us all together in Your mercy. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to You, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

### **Our Lord's Prayer**

*Now let us join our voices in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us...*

**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**

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

### **Offertory Prayer** *(please join in prayer)*

**Gracious God, You came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth.**

**Nourish us at Your banquet table, that with all who welcome Your birth we may proclaim  
Your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

O Come, All Ye Faithful (public domain)

Lisa Dake

**Sources:**

[www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org)

<https://sundaysandseasons.com>

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