



Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and they shall call His name Immanuel. + *Matthew 1:23a*

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 20, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We stand at the threshold not only of an old and familiar story but also that of an old yet familiar mystery, the greatest mystery ever told. It doesn't appear on any list of greatest novels or plays written by earthly authors. It is the mystery of God. More specifically, it is the mystery of His love for the salvation of the world.

But as we prepare to review the mystery of God—the Son of God becoming incarnate in our human flesh and born of the Virgin Mary—the greater mystery is that He, Jesus, looks over your shoulder now in the retelling and hearing of Christmas. The greater mystery is that you not only know the old, familiar story but also that you believe it. And believing brings about the best mystery of all—that your sins are forgiven, that you have a new, eternal life, and that you are forever a child—a son, a daughter—born of God.

The Gospel—the wisdom and mystery of God—is no longer a secret. For it is told by your own mouth singing of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ Jesus, +Pastor Griebenaw

Pastor's phone: 760-679-3699

Pastor's email: pastor@gracelutheranelcentro.org



The Annunciation by Orazio Gentileschi, circa 1623, Public Domain

Christmas Week Services

**Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service**

Thursday, December 24
5:30pm on the Patio

**Christmas Day
Divine Service**

Friday, December 25
9:00am on the Patio

Both services also will be streamed live on Facebook

✠ DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING THREE ✠

HYMN OF INVOCATION: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 357, sts. 1–4

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
2 O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, Who or - d'rest
3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy
4 O come, Thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, Free them from
cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly
all things might - i - ly; To us the path of
tribes on Si - nai's height In an - cient times didst
Sa - tan's tyr - an - ny That trust Thy might - y
ex - ile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
knowl - edge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
give the Law In cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
pow'r to save, And give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.
Refrain
Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el
Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Text and tune: Public domain

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

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

LSB 184

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

C Amen.

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

[Hebrews 10:22]

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 124:8

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalms 32:5

Kneel (or remain standing) – Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

P Almighty God, our maker and redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C O most merciful God, who has given Your only-begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

P Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

Mark 16:16; John 1:12

C Amen.

Stand

SERVICE OF THE WORD

INTROIT

Psalm 19:1, 4c, 5-6; antiphon: Isaiah 45:8a, b

The pastor and congregation chant responsively. The antiphon is chanted by the pastor before and after the psalm.



(Antiphon) Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down | righteousness;*
let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may | bear fruit.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His | handiwork.*
In them He has set a tent | for the sun,

**which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his | chamber,*
and, like a strong man, runs its | course with joy.**

Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the | end of them,*
and there is nothing hidden | from its heat.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

The antiphon is repeated.

The Advent Candles are lit.

KYRIE

Mark 10:47



C Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

The Gloria in Excelsis is omitted during Advent.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.



P Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



C A - men.

Sit

OLD TESTAMENT READING

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

P The Old Testament Reading is from Second Samuel, chapter seven.

¹Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ²the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” ³And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, ⁵“Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build Me a house to dwell 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 for My dwelling. ⁷In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges 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, that you should 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 dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men 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. . . . ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

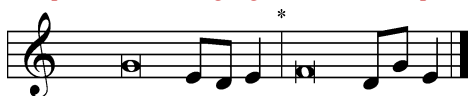
P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL

Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.

The pastor and congregation chant responsively.



Rejoice greatly, O daughter of | Zion.*

Shout aloud, O daughter of Je- | rusalem.

Behold, your King is com- | ing to you;*

righteous and having sal- | vation.

Blessèd is He who comes in the name | of the LORD.*

From the house of the LORD we | bless You.

EPISTLE READING

Romans 16:25–27

P The Epistle is from Romans, chapter 16.

²⁵Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

ALLELUIA & VERSE



C Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

Alleluia. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and they shall call His name Immanuel. Alleluia.

Matthew 1:23a



C Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 1:26–38

P The Holy Gospel according to Saint John, the first chapter.



C Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name 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 father David, ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵And the angel answered 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 called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God."

³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



C Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

NICENE CREED

C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life **✝** of the world to come. Amen.

Sit



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,
 2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,
 3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;
 4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



With wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:
 All gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or - thee;
 "To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.
 In Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,
 Thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
 "My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."
 And Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy, Glo - ri - a!
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!

Text and tune: Public domain

SERMON

Rev. Griebenaw

After the Sermon the pastor may say:

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
 keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippains 4:7

C Amen.

Stand

OFFERTORY

Psalm 51:10-12



C Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -



new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -



way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it



from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -



tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

Kneel (or remain standing)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(1 Timothy 2:1-4)

P In peace let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For Matthew and Michael, for all pastors in Christ, for all servants of the Church, and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For Donald, for all public servants, for the government and those who protect us, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For . . . [*additional bids for prayer may be inserted here*] . . . let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

The prayers then continue:

P For the faithful who have gone before us and are with Christ, let us give thanks to the Lord:

C **Alleluia.**

P Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Silence for individual prayer may follow.

P Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord:

C **To You, O Lord.**

The live-stream service concludes with the following:

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

- P** Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we are bold to pray:
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.

CONCLUDING COLLECT

- P** Let us pray.
Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon ourselves the armor of light now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the Last Day, when He shall come again in glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
C **Amen.**

Stand

BENEDICTION

Numbers 6:24-26

P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make
His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace. S
C A-men, a-men, a - men.

The Divine Service will continue with the Lord's Supper for those present at the church. Please sing and/or read aloud the closing hymn in your home and, if possible, please come by the church for Holy Communion between 10:30am and 11:30am, parking by the concrete ramp along Holt Avenue.

CLOSING HYMN: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 357, sts. 1, 5-7



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
5 O come, Thou Key of Da - vid, come, And o - pen
6 O come, Thou Day - spring from on high, And cheer us
7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind In one the



cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly
wide our heav'n - ly home; Make safe the way that
by Thy draw - ing nigh; Dis - perse the gloom - y
hearts of all man - kind; Bid Thou our sad di -



ex - ile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
leads on high, And close the path to mis - er - y.
clouds of night, And death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
vi - sions cease, And be Thy - self our King of Peace.



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el



Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Text and tune: Public domain

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠
(TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY)

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR

Brothers and Sisters,

We are almost there! Christmas is mere days away! Leo has been asking, “Is it Christmas yet?” And, when I tell him, “Not yet,” he starts telling me, quite matter-of fact, “*No. It is Christmas!*” LOL!

One of the things I look forward to every year is our “Cookies, Carols, and Crafts” event—when I get to make my Cookie Monster Cookie Dough for you and play “Martha Stewart” in our church kitchen, baking the cookies that you decorated while we play games and sing carols and have fun!

Well, I’m not going to give up on this event because I’m still going to bake some cookies (though without “Wonkavision” from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* you won’t be tasting them). And I’m doubling-down on playing “Martha Stewart” by hosting my own cooking show this Wednesday night, December 23 (in-lieu of the final Midweek Advent Service).

So this Wednesday night you can join me either on “Zoom” *or* on Facebook for the first-ever “Cooking Cookies in the Cleric’s Kitchen” show!

We’ll begin the “broadcast” at 7:00pm and wrap up around 8:00pm or so. And, yes, that is a lampshade on my head in the picture . . . I don’t have a chef’s hat so I tried to improvise. This is probably telling of the kind of production quality you can expect (LOL!).



Now, if you’re going to cook cookies at the same time as me, be sure to get the dough ready at least two hours beforehand since it needs to cool in the refrigerator. The ingredients you’ll need are:

- ¾ Cup Butter
- 1 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- 1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 2½ Cups All Purpose Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 2 Eggs

You’ll mix the butter and sugar in a large bowl using a fork (or a potato masher if you have one). Then add the eggs and the vanilla and continue to blend. Lastly, add the flour, baking powder, and salt and finish mixing (I usually resort to using my hands at this point to really mix the dough well). Chill the dough in the refrigerator for at least one (1) hour before baking.

To make the cookies, preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit. While the oven warms, roll out the dough to about ¼ inch thickness. Place the cut cookies on your baking sheet and cook them in the oven for about 6-8 minutes per batch. Let the cookies cool after baking and then enjoy! ☺

Even though we aren’t having a Midweek Advent Service, we’re still having our **Advent Bible Study** on “Zoom” this **Tuesday at Noon (ending by 1:00pm)**. I really hope you’ll join me this week. To join the study on your computer, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7603525715> or to join by phone, call either “669-900-9128” or “346-248-7799” and enter 7603525715# (the password is “12345”).

Lastly, please continue to mail your tithes and offerings to the church's post office box: Grace Evangelical-Lutheran Church, PO Box 1530, El Centro, CA 92244-1530.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
+Pastor Griebenaw