

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

Prelude

Welcome



“Come Home for Christmas”

Worship Series

Week 4

Sometimes when we are trying something new, or when we are facing a difficult decision, or when we want to celebrate something, or when we just feel lost and alone and uncertain about life, the universe and everything, we need a blessing. We don't always think of it that way, or word it like that. We say we need advice, or support, or companions, or someone to come along beside and lift us up again so we can see more than the tops of our shoes. We seek a blessing.

For many of us, we go home; we ask mom; we talk to dad, or brothers and sisters, close friends, those we grew up with, those who know us best. We want them alongside; we want to be in their presence. Somehow, we know that being there, being home, will make all things better. Maybe it won't be fixed, or solved, or wished away, but at least we won't be alone. We seek a blessing.

Mary, faced with an incomprehensible burden and gift, ran to Cousin Elizabeth's house, looking for someone who knew a little of what she was going through, looking for a place to hide until the reality of her condition could become something real. And she received a blessing. The prophet Micah spoke of a blessing coming to an unexpected place, an unassuming town. Yet by God's grace would become the means through which God would bless the whole world. Bethlehem, the little town of blessing. We seek a blessing.

We light these candles, the candle of hope, of peace, of joy and of today, love, as a sign that we know blessing and we know waiting for blessing to be felt and lived. We light these candles as a sign that we still seek a blessing. It's time to go home.

A Call to Worship

Dr. Derek C. Weber, Director of Preaching Ministries, Discipleship Ministries of the UMC

Come, joy, lighten our spirits.

Come, hope, lift us from despair.

Come, peace, ease our frantic worry.

Come, love, shine in all we do.

Come, Jesus, be born in us.

Come, Lord, set us free.

Come, God,

Rule in our hearts and teach us to sing with joy!

A Christmas Prayer

The book of hymns, 1966

By Laurence Hull Stookey

1989 UMC Publishing House

Eternal God, by the birth of Jesus Christ you gave yourself to the world.

Grant that, being born in our hearts,

He may save us from all our sins,

And restore within us the image

And likeness of our Creator,

To whom be everlasting praise and glory,

World with out end. Amen.

Praise Hymn #249

“There’s a Song is the Air”

Author: Josiah G. Holland (1872)

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1 There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
and a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire
while the beautiful sing,
for the manger of Bethlehem
cradles a King!

2 There's a tumult of joy
o'er the wonderful birth,
for the virgin's sweet boy
is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire
while the beautiful sing,
for the manger of Bethlehem
cradles a King!

3 In the light of that star
lie the ages impearled;
and that song from afar
has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame,
and the beautiful sing
in the homes of the nations
that Jesus is King!

4 We rejoice in the light,
and we echo the song
that comes down through the night
from the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely
evangel they bring,
and we greet in his cradle
our Savior and King!

We Hear God’s Word

Gospel Reading..... Luke 1:39-55 (NRSV)

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be[a] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

Mary's Song of Praise

46 And Mary[b] said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

50 His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

Children's Message

Faith Hymn #234 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

O Come, All Ye Faithful: Words *John F Wade 1743 trans. By Frederick Oakely, 1841* **Music:** *John F Wade 1743 harm from Collections of Motets or Antiphons, 1792* © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #736621-A. All rights reserved. "Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736621-A. All rights reserved

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.

Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,

lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;

Son of the Father, begotten, not created;

(Refrain)

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;

O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

(Refrain)

4. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,

leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;

we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;

(Refrain)

Meditation

ADVENT PRAYER

(inspired by Luke 1:39-45, Amos 5:24, Isaiah 57:7)

Lord our God,
you have revealed yourself as One
who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
In a world that looks away from injustice,
You cast your eyes on the destitute, the poor, and the wronged;
You have called us to follow you,
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release for the captives
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed
and to proclaim the time of your blessing.

Be present with your church, Lord,
as we respond to your call.
Open our eyes to the downtrodden.
Fill us with compassion for the plight of the alien,
the refugee, and the immigrant.
Lead us into ministries that help orphans and widows.
Give us courage to block the paths of the ungodly
who exploit the poor.

Set us free from pious exercises
that prevent us from the true worship you choose:
Sharing bread with the hungry,
Sharing homes with the homeless,
Sharing clothes with the naked,
Sharing hearts with our own kin.

So may your justice roll down like waters,
your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
Lead our footsteps to stand with the poor,
that we might stand with you.

Have mercy, O God:
Scatter the proud,
Put down the mighty,
Lift up the lowly,
Fill up the hungry,
And send the rich away empty-handed.

Our Father...

Departing Hymn # 251 “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Adapter: John W. Work Jr. (1907)

Publication Date: 1989

Tune Information

Adapter and Arranger: William Farley Smith (1986)

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Refrain:

**Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born.**

**1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens
there shown a holy light. (Refrain)**

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled,
when lo! above the earth,
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed the Savior's birth. (Refrain)**

**3 Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)**

A Loving Benediction

Be people of love.

Let love live in your heart and share the love of Christ with all you meet. by loving your community.

Share love by loving those you do not know.

Share love by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share love.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share love, joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. Amen.