

JOY

What Child IS This?



"Son of Mary"

3rd Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2025



Ascension Lutheran Church
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Welcome to Worship...

Welcome to all God's guests, especially those who are here for the first time or who call yourselves "visitors" among the people of this community. It is at God's invitation, through worship, the Holy Spirit calls each of us to come to a place of **community, communion** and **commitment**. Each of us brings a different lens to worship, and yet, in a worshiping community, these differences become celebrations of diversity.

**Children are always welcome in worship services;
however please know the cry room at the back of the sanctuary is
available for parents who need to tend to their little ones.**

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Welcome to Worship

Please silence your cellphones

JOY

P This week in our Advent series of asking and answering the complex question “What Child IS This?”, we encounter another description of the Christ Child that will tell us much more about who he was destined to be.

All *What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

WA We often hear Jesus referred to as the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.” But this carol points out his identity over and over as the “Son of Mary.” This equally powerful description points to his being reared by a woman who, upon hearing she would bear a child, said “yes” to one of the most difficult and precarious situations she could face. And then she sings with joy a song of justice for the ages. She goes on to guide and help form this child who would tend to the suffering ones.

R1 We light this candle of Joy for those who need it most.

R2 For all whose despair feels endless.

R1 For all who find little joy in daily living.

R2 For all whose disappointment runs deep.

R1 Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this:
“How can we proclaim a deep joy “in spite of” hardship in our time?”

R2 What child IS this?
This, this, is the Son of Blessed Mary who reigns with joy forever.

All *This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!*

Prayer for This Day

P Let us pray:
Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment with an uncanny joy.

All **Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us how to praise you even when songs and carols feel empty.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Uplifts our hearts and lives. Amen.**

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

A Reading from Isaiah, the 35th chapter

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35:1-10

L Word of God, Word of **Joy**.

All Thanks be to God!

A Responsive Reading from Psalm 146

⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the LORD their God;

⁶ **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;**
who keeps promises forever;

⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.
The LORD sets the captive free.

⁸ **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;**
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD cares for the stranger;
the LORD sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.

¹⁰ **The LORD shall reign forever,
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!**

Psalm 146:5-10

Gospel Acclamation

Please stand in body or spirit.

Em - man - u - el, _____ Em - man - u - el, _____

_____ His name is called _____ Em - man - u - el: _____

_____ God with us, _____ re - vealed in us! _____

_____ His name is called _____ Em - man - u - el. _____

Gospel Reading

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st chapter.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

We all have witnessed people who “rise to the occasion,” who bring energy and commitment, even and especially in the midst of the most unsettling times. Without a doubt, Mary experienced the push and pull of war and resistance that shaped the villages of Galilee. The situation for women in the time of Jesus’ birth was more difficult than we might imagine. In the scripture today, we hear that Mary will be perceived as an unwed mother, something that could have ruined her future forever. But she believes in the mission that God is laying out for her, and her role in it. Hear now this remarkable account:

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among

women!” Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You’ll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus—‘Deliverance.’ His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.” With that, the angel left her.

Within a few days Mary set out and hurried to the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!”

Mary said:

“My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.
For you have looked with favor upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward all generations will call me blessed.
For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.
Your mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear you.

You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.

You have filled the hungry with good things,
while you have sent the rich away empty.

You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy—
the promise you made to our ancestors—
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Luke 1:26-56 (Inclusive Bible)

P The Gospel of our Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

You may be Seated

Children's Sermon & Noisy Offering

Message

Pr. Debra Jimenez

Hymn of the Day

Please stand in body or spirit.

Cantors:

the Magnificat

The Annunciation
Luke 1:26-38

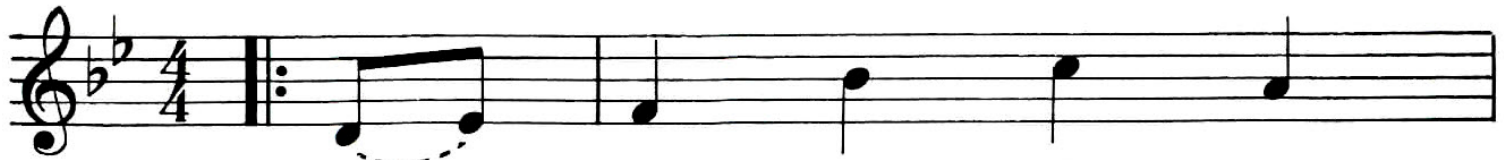
An angel went from God to a town called Nazareth,
to a woman whose name was Mary.

The angel said to her, “Rejoice, O highly favored, for God is with you.
You shall bear a child, and his name shall be Jesus,
the Chosen One of God Most High.”

And Mary said, “I am the servant of my God, I live to do His will.

The Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55



1.3. My — soul pro - claims your
2. You have cast the might - y



great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in
down from their thrones, and up lift - ed the hum - ble of



you,
heart, You have looked with love on your
You have filled the hun - gry with



ser-vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
won-drous things, and left the wealth-y no part.



Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
Great and might - y are you, O Faith-ful One,



strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more.
strong is your jus - tice strong your love,



How you fa - vor the weak — and low - ly one,
As you prom-ised to Sar-ah — and A - bra - ham,

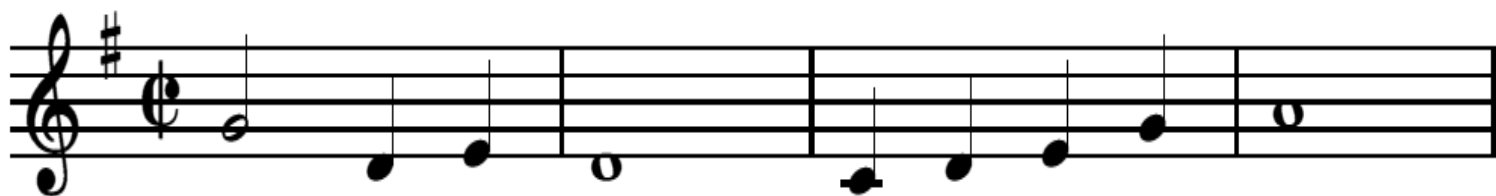


hum - bling the proud of heart.
kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

*Baptism of Cassandra Leeshea McEuen Barker
and Callie Jo Simpson*

Prayers of the People

WA In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kingdom embodied by the child who was the son of a strong and wise woman.



Great, Ho - ly One, sprea-ding time and space,



show us who you are in a hu - man face.

Solo

*Living one, how will you lead us?
“Not by scheming or by stealth, not with glamor, power and wealth,
but through Jesus, teacher, healer,
In a manger born, joy on Christmas morn.”*

All *Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.*

WA Holy Living One, Child of Joy, Spirit of Audacity,
we come to you today weary of the forces that make
joy such a difficult thing to hold,
weary of the effort it takes to birth something new
in a world bent on regressing away from wholeness for all people.
We know you are with us, for you came to our human story when we
needed your message so much.
We still do.

We ask, “what child is this that we follow,
and who are we in the scene of this unfolding story?”

All *Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.*

WA As the nativity begins to fill with the promise of new birth,
we again plead for your presence to break into our lives
and show us the light of joy.
And we ask for the courage to step into the scene,
preparing the way for fullness of possibility for all people. Amen.

All *Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.*

!
! *Sharing the Joy of Christ* !
!

*In our continued physical distancing out of love for the health of one another, we will
share the joy of our risen Lord by “speaking” that joy through sign language.*

P Christ become **Joy** with you.

All **And also with you.**

Offering

[You may be Seated](#)

*Offering plates are available at the entrance to receive your offerings.
We will lift them up in thanksgiving before the throne of grace.*

All *So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
 come peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
 let loving hearts enthrone him.*

Offertory Prayer

P What gifts are adequate for the Son of Mary, the Bringer of Joy?
Our theme song says, “so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come
peasant, king, to own him.”

Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and
gratitude, or if we are privileged with coffers of precious resources, we
give what we can. In this way we “take ownership” of our role in the
scene, in the unfolding story of Joy.

Let us pray:

Eternal God,
 you make the desert bloom
 and send springs of water to thirsty ground.

All **Receive these simple gifts of time, talent, and treasure
 and make us messengers of your mercy and love
 for all in need of your healing and justice.
We ask this through Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Confession and Assurance

P We are captive, exiled, O God because we have, each in our own way, chosen our own path, away from you.

All We are hungry for wisdom and knowledge, because we have, too often, substituted our judgement for yours.
We are lost, in need of guidance.

Come, Lord Jesus; forgive us and restore us.

Come, Lord Jesus; guide us and deliver us.

Come, Lord Jesus; teach us and renew us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

P God, our kind and loving Savior God, has stepped in and saved us.

All God gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people,
Washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit.
Our Savior Jesus poured out new life so generously.

P God's gift has restored our relationship with God
and given us back our lives.

And there's more life to come—an eternity of life!

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

All Amen

The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

P The Lord be with you.

All And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them up to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for all
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ’s offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

All *♪ ♪ Christ came to uplift us, by his life we give. ♪ ♪
Christ gave up his lifeblood, by his death we live.
Christ comes to us now, still, as we gather here.
Christ will come again, so, nothing shall we fear.*

P Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
so that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.
By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory
and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Amen.

All *♪ ♪ So, my friends and neighbors, now it’s up to us. ♪ ♪
May we welcome strangers, building faith and trust.
May we live like Jesus in our time and place
’Til this weary nation knows amazing grace.*

The Lord's Prayer

P Let us approach the throne of grace as we pray as Jesus taught us:

All 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.

The Invitation

P In this meal, righteousness and joy meet together.
Come, take your place at the table.

Note: the communion cups on the periphery of the tray contain red wine while the
cups in the center contain white grape juice.

Gluten Free wafers available –ask the communion attendant

Communion Songs

O Come, All Ye Faithful

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 The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest: *Refrain*
- 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: *Refrain*

Text: attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, sts. 1, 3-4; tr. unknown, st. 2

O Little Town of Bethlehem

- 1 O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
- 2 For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
- 3 How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming; but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.
- 4 O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

Jon Abel and Carl Cartee



Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you
and keep you in his grace.

All Amen

P Generous God,
in bread and cup you have revealed your glory
for all people to see together.

**All Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim
your good news of liberation and release,
brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.**

Stewardship of Life and Ministry Announcements

We ask, We Answer

[Please stand in body or spirit.](#)

WA As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer the question we came with.

All What child IS this?

WA This is the one born into a time when
unbridled joy was squelched by those in power.

All What child IS this?

WA This is the one whose birth would stir the world from slumber
and challenge us to know joy that comes from right relationships.

All

What child IS this?

WA

This, this is the “Son of Mary”
who shows us the song of life that is ours
when we stand up for the least.

Benediction & Sending

P

May the Womb of Life,
the Child of Joy,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

In the name of the Father,
And of the Son,
and of the ✝ Holy Spirit

All Amen

All

*This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!*

Dismissal

WA Go in joy. The Gift of Joy is near.

All Thanks be to God.

What Child IS This?

Readings for next Sunday,
December 21st
4th Sunday of Advent

Gospel:

Matthew 1:18-25 (Inclusive Bible)

Revised Common Lectionary

First Reading:

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm:

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Second Reading:

Romans 1:1-7

Gospel:

Matthew 1:18-25

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