

This, This

What Child **IS** This?



"This, This..."

Sunday after Christmas

December 28, 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.

Please silence your cellphones

Welcome to Worship

P We have been on a journey of discovery this Advent and Christmas. As our series comes to a close, we ask one more time, “What Child IS This?” One thing is sure, “this, this...” reverberates into our time, our lives, our world as we continue to work for the protection of every child, everywhere.

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 The Magi see the reverberation of Light and are drawn to it. They, too, were looking for a new world order—one of true peace and compassion. The subsequent story of the flight of the Holy Family as refugees, running from threat of extinction by an insecure tyrant, is much too real in all of human history. Even in the return home, the child of Mary and Joseph would know the heartache of oppression that would shape his ministry—a ministry of proclaiming that God continues to be with us, that we are called to be with one another, even and especially in the midst of hard times.

R1 We light these candles for those who need it most.

R2 For all who need more Hope.

R1 For all who yearn for Peace.

R2 For all whose Joy lays dormant.

R1 For all who need the salve of Love.

R2 For all of who need this Child of Possibility.

R1 Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this:
“How do the messages of this child reverberate into our time,
our lives, our world?”

R2 What child IS this?
This, this, is Christ the King
who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love 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 the desire for justice.

All **Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us the true gifts we must bring to our moment,
as we seek a better kin-dom on this earth.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives. Amen.**

God does not delegate divine intervention to a messenger or angel. God's own presence brings salvation. The prophet and all who read these words join in celebrating God's gracious deeds. God trusts that God's people will not act falsely.

A Reading from Isaiah, the 63rd chapter

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,
because of all that the LORD has done for us

and the great favor to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸ For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not act deceitfully,"

and he became their savior

⁹ in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel

but his presence that saved them;

in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them;

he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Isaiah 63:7-9

L The Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God!

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. Matthew, the 1st chapter.

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

“Advent calls us to wrestle honestly with this truth: troubles don’t disappear just because Jesus arrived. The world is still harsh and riddled with injustice.” The story today reminds us that Jesus and his family became refugees as they fled from the dictator’s blood-thirsty desire to remain in power. But Nikondeha goes on to say this: “Only a God who knows and shares our pain can ultimately transform it.” God-is-with-us even now. Hear the ongoing story .

After Jesus’ birth—which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod—astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written:

““And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.””

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star’s appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me—so that I may go and offer homage, too.”

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I have called my Own.”

Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and lamenting loudly:
it was Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
for they were no more.”

After Herod’s death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

Matthew 2:1-12

P The Gospel of our Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

[You may be Seated](#)

Children's Sermon & Noisy Offering

Message

Pr. Gordon Young

Hymn of the Day

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

♪ **Song — Go Tell it on the Mountain** ♪

Refrain

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

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

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

**Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Refrain**

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.



WA Holy Living One, Child of Wanderings, Spirit of Refuge,
we come to you today weary of the repetitious history of oppression,
weary of a too-long arc of justice,
yearning for the day when humanity will be humane.
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 We gather at the manger one last time this year,
where we know the lullaby and lament are sung
side-by-side and year-after-year.

Again, we plead for your presence to break into our lives
and show us the light of hope, peace, joy, and love.
And we ask for the courage to stay in the scene of unfolding justice,
preparing the way for your reign of right relationships. Amen

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

! !
! *Sharing the **Peace** of Christ* !
! !

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

P Christ become **Peace** 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 a Holy Family on the run?
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 love 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

🎵 **Song — The First Noel** 🎵

*The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.*

**They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.**

**This star drew near to the northwest,
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay
right over the place where Jesus lay.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.**

♪ Song — Infant Holy, Infant Lowly ♪

**Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!**

**Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!**

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

♪ Song — I Wonder As I Wander ♪

**I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die
For poor ord'n'ry people like you and I
I wonder out under the sky**

**When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall
Came wise men and famers and shepherds and all
And high from the heavens a star's light did fall
The promise of the ages it then did recall**

**If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
A star in the sky or a bird on a wing
Or all of God's angels in heaven to sing
He surely could have had it 'cause He was the King**

**I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die
For poor ornery people like you and I
I wonder out under the sky
I wander out under the sky**

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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 Truth, the Way, and the Life.

All **What child IS this?**

WA This is the one whose love is the measure
of true companionship.

All **What child IS this?**

WA This, this is the “King of Kings”
whose grace is the measure of real leadership.

Benediction & Sending

P May the Sovereign of Love,
the Child of Grace,
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 Christ the Savior is born!
Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

All Thanks be to God.



Front Cover:

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Readings for next Sunday,
January 4th
Epiphany of Our Lord

First Reading:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm:

Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14

Second Reading:

Ephesians 3:1-12

Gospel:

Matthew 2:1-12

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