

Christmas Day At-Home Worship – Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, New Hope, MN

*Please consider using this resource on Christmas Day to join in worship with your family (or alone). Pray these prayers, read scripture together, read the devotion, and sing some Christmas hymns as part of your Christmas Day celebration.*

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, you gave us your only Son to take on our human nature and to illumine the world with your light. By your grace adopt us as your children and enlighten us with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Opening Hymn – “Joy to the World”**

1) Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her king;  
let every heart prepare him room  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

3) No more let sin and sorrow grow  
nor thorns infest the ground;  
he comes to make his blessings flow  
far as the curse is found,  
far as the curse is found,  
far as, far as the curse is found.

2) Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

4) He rules the world with truth and grace  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

**Gospel Reading – John 1:1-14**

<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.

**Christmas Day Devotion** by Pastor Jason R. Wahlstrom

Believe it or not, this gospel reading is John's Christmas story. It may not seem like it, especially compared to the Christmas story we all know and love, mainly from Luke. It is in Luke's gospel that we hear the well-known story of Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem for the census. We hear about how there is no room in the inn. We hear about how Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. We hear about the shepherds out in the field being sung to by angels and then travelling into town to see what the angels were talking

about. We hear about the shepherds telling Mary and Joseph what the angels had told them and Mary treasuring all those words and pondering them in her heart. All of that comes from Luke's gospel, and doesn't actually appear in the other three gospels. Matthew's gospel is where we hear about the wise men who would arrive later. Mark's gospel doesn't include a Christmas story at all.

But John gives us this. It is a poetic theological interpretation of the birth of Jesus. It is as if John realized that his readers would have already known the Christmas story. Why waste the papyrus on repeating that? Instead, John decided to interpret it. John decided to give his readers a deeper understanding of who Jesus was and why his birth mattered. And he does a pretty good job of that, I think. John begins with the same words that begin the whole bible: "In the beginning". This was likely intentional, as John is making the argument that the word, or Jesus, was present with God from the very beginning, even before the creation. And this word was actually God. What John wants us to understand is that this baby born on Christmas, the one we hear about in Luke's Christmas story, is God, the creator of the universe. John wants us to realize just how important and life-changing this birth really is. Because if God has been born in this baby Jesus, then God has done something that God had never done before.

We hear at the end of this passage that the Word became flesh and lived among us. Pastor and scholar Eugene Peterson, in his Bible translation, *The Message*, translates this verse, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." I love this translation as it really gets at what God is doing with this birth. God has moved into our neighborhood. God is no longer (if God ever was) up in heaven, separated from us. Instead, any separation between God and humanity that we may have previously perceived is gone. God has entered our neighborhood, which means God has entered our lives. This is really what Christmas is all about. God has made Godself known to us and close to us in the birth of Jesus. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

*Pray as a family or individual for the church, the world, and all who are in need. Be sure to add petitions for the church, political leaders, the earth, those who are sick, those who are grieving, and those who have died. If you wish, take turns praying, ending each petition: **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.** End by saying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Closing Hymn – "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (Refrain after each verse: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!)**

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:

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:

3) Sing, choirs of angels,  
Sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God...  
in...the...highest:

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: