

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

Matthew tells us the story today of God's great gift of Jesus, while the world around us is deeply into the Christmas gift-giving season. As the season of Advent comes to a close, we bring gifts ourselves this morning, gifts for the church to use in God's name for the healing and hope of the world. Let us gather God's tithes and our offerings

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

One Small Child
Melody Davis, Piano

Meece/Wolaver

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Gracious God, we give you joyful thanks and praise. You faithfully provide for our needs, always remembering your covenant. By sending your Son Jesus to be our Savior, you have given us new life. Let our gratitude overflow in gifts and offerings that uplift the ministries of this church so that people will be blessed indeed. Through Christ, we pray. Amen

A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

CAROL 140 *Once in Royal David's City*

Michele Pappas (verse 1); Sanctuary Choir (verse 2); Congregation (verses 3-4)

INTRODUCTION

The Festival of Lessons and Carols is a service of Scripture and song that dates to the late 19th century. In this service, we will listen to nine Scripture lessons which recount the fall into sin, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. So, now, a festival of lessons and carols.

THE FIRST LESSON (Sean Turner)

Genesis 3: 8-24

Adam and Eve learn that paradise is lost.

Adam and Eve heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And God answered, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

To the woman God said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

And to the man God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

ANTHEM

The Apple Tree
Sean Turner, Soloist and Sanctuary Choir

Kay Lee Scott

THE SECOND LESSON (*Evelyn Parker*)

Isaiah 11: 1-9

The peaceful kingdom is foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

CAROL 88 *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* (verses 1-4)

THE THIRD LESSON (*Melody Davis*)

Mark 1: 1-8

John the Baptist proclaims the coming of the Lord's Messiah.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist,

and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

ANTHEM

*Prepare
Sanctuary Choir*

Joseph Martin

THE FOURTH LESSON (*Charlotte Turner*)

Luke 1: 26-38

The birth of Jesus is foretold to Mary

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

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

CAROL 99 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God*

THE FIFTH LESSON (*Helen Randolph*)

Luke 2: 1-7

Luke tells of the birth of the Christ child.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

ANTHEM

*Celtic Christmas Lullaby
Jackie Akin, Flute and Sanctuary Choir*

Joel Ramey

THE SIXTH LESSON (*Michele Pappas*)

Luke 2: 8-16

Angels tell shepherds of the birth.

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a

sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

ANTHEM

Glory, Glory, Glory
Sanctuary Choir

Mark Hayes

THE SEVENTH LESSON (*Judy Moreland*)

Matthew 2: 1-11

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

CAROL 151 *We Three Kings*

THE EIGHTH LESSON (*Katie Karlen*)

Luke 2: 22-35

Simeon recognizes the infant Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise.

22 When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), 24 and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." 33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed--and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

ANTHEM

Mary and Joseph Came to the Temple
Katie Karlen, Soloist and Sanctuary Choir

GTG 148

THE NINTH LESSON (*Bruce Turner*)

John 1: 1-14

John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14 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.

ANTHEM

Who Would Think That What Was Needed
Sanctuary Choir

GTG 138

AFFIRMATION

We have heard the Word of the Lord read and proclaimed, the very Word that gives strength to our faith. Embracing that strength, please join your voices together as we affirm what we believe. We believe in God, who is love, whose love is manifest in all Creation, in our lives, and in all people. We follow Christ, who embodied God's love. In his life and ministry, his death and resurrection, and his granting to us of his Spirit, he filled us with that love as well. We live by the Spirit, the presence of God's love in us. In that love we participate in the Church, Body of Christ, in loving God by loving our neighbors through our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service. Love is a gift from God. We thank God, and ask God's blessings, that we may love in the name of Christ and the power of the Spirit, to God's glory. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Scripture says: See here, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors and I will save the lame and gather the outcasts; and I will change their misery into praise, and their honor shall be worldwide. Let us:

God our holy and unshakeable friend, we seek your abundant and overflowing joy for the people of planet earth. We there is conflict, terrorism and war, bless all those who work for peace and reconciliation. Bring your peace and joy, we pray. Where there is exploitation of the weka and the poor, bless those who work for freedom. Bring your mercy and joy, we pray. Where there are refugee camps, prison compounds, and ethnic discrimination, bless those who work for justice and liberty. Bring your rescue and joy, we pray. Where there is addictions affecting mind, body, spirit, relationships, bless those who provide programs for rehabilitation. Bring your hope and joy, we pray. Where there is hunger, malnutrition, disease, and despair, bless the agencies that bring compassion and practical help. Bring your hope and joy, we pray. Where there are the lonely, the suffering and the sorrowing, bless the merciful who are lovingly there for them. Bring you abundant grace and joy, we pray. For all within and beyond these walls whose names, circumstances, joy and concerns we have lifted, we pray...**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 debts, as we forgive**

our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

THE DISMISSAL AND BENEDICTION

May we be people of joy.

Let joy live in our hearts and share the joy of Christ with all we meet.

Share joy by seeing the good in each other.

Share joy by remembering good times and hoping for good times to come.

Share joy by praying for our world.

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

As we go out in to the wonder of God's creation,
may we share joy, peace and hope with those we meet. Amen

CLOSING CAROL 145 *What Child is This?*