

Sunday December 26, 2021
Why Are You Searching for Me?

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: God is telling a story in our lives.

People: It's quite a story-full of the promises God makes and our struggles to trust; full of mystery and angels with surprising news; full of hard endings and unexpected new beginnings.

Leader: Come, hear the story pay attention to the many and diverse messages in your heart in this place and time.

People: Let us join all creation in worshipping the God who tells the story full of grace and truth; who comes in Jesus, the Word made flesh, and makes our story holy.

Hymn #125: Angels We Have Heard on High
(Please see separate attachment for the score)

- 1) Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echo back their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

- 2) Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
which inspire your heavenly song. [Refrain]
- 3) Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee,
God, our world now entering. [Refrain]

- 4) See the babe in manger laid
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise. [Refrain]

Opening Prayer **Unison**

**We have waited for a long time
for your hope, your joy, your love
to shine in the darkness of this world, Almighty God.
Even now, in our gathering here, we await you.
In our hearts, we still hope that your light will blaze forth,
banishing the shadows of this world
and guiding all the people back to you.
Open our hearts, merciful God,
to the sparks of your presence still in this world.
Open our eyes,
that we might behold your presence in the least likely of places,
and among the least likely of people. Amen**

Prayer of Confession **Unison**

**Emmanuel, God with us,
kindle your spark within us,
that together we may shine forth your light,
we might banish the shadows of this world,
we might be the continuation of the Christmas miracle:
Emmanuel is in this world,
God is with us, now and evermore.
As we hesitate or simply do not allow this light to ignite through us by the
way we choose to share life, remind us Living Christ that you choose us.
Rekindle this love in our hearts here and now. Illumine our hearts,
gracious God, Amen.**

Moments for Reflection and Silence

Assurance of Pardon

God's light is not made and initiated by us on our terms. God's grace pours out among us endlessly as a beatitude endlessly streaming life through us. Today may we accept this gift offered to us and allow this light to shine through all seasons of our lives and in all circumstances.

Hymn #124: Away in a Manger

(Please see separate attachment for the score)

- 1) Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.
- 2) The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; protect me, I pray,
and stay by my side until night turns to day.
- 3) Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.

Passing of the Peace

Pastor: The Peace of Christ be with you

People: **And also with you!**

Reading

Jim Miers

Psalm 148 (NIV)

148:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

148:2 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

148:3 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

148:4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

148:5 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

148:6 God established them forever and ever; God fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

148:7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

148:8 fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

148:9 Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

148:13 Let us praise the name of the LORD, for God's name alone is exalted; God's glory is above earth and heaven.

Special Music *"Mary, Did you Know?"*

Keith Johnson

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:41-52 (NIV)

2:41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

2:42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

2:43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

2:44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

2:45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

2:46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

2:47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

2:48 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

2:49 He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

2:50 But they did not understand what he said to them.

2:51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Reflection: Why Are You Searching for Me?

Hymn #3: O Little Town of Bethlehem

(Please see separate attachment for the score)

- 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 wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King and peace to men on earth.

- 3) How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
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;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel! Amen.

Prayers of the People

Hymn #119 My Soul Gives Glory to My God (verses 1, 3 and 5)

**1) My soul gives glory to my God. My heart pours out its praise.
God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.**

**3) From age to age, to all who fear, such mercy love imparts,
dispensing justice far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.**

**5) Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,
remembering past promises with present faithfulness.**

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer **Unison**

Offering Invitation

Today we offer our gifts as a reminder to ourselves that the greatest gift of life is shared with us by our God with such overwhelming beauty and wonder all we can do here is graciously accept what's already given to us. Bless these our gifts as you bless us.

Offering and Dedication **Unison**

**Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy,
and gave us power to be your children.
Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us,
so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness
and walk in the way of peace and justice. Bless these our gifts we present
to you today. Amen.**

Benediction **Unison**

**We are each on journey. Its outcomes are undetermined. Its exact twists
and turns are unknown. How long what we deeply treasure lasts is not
knowable. What we can realize and embody in this lifetime is that we are
assured by the presence of our Living Christ that our life journey will yield
love, be blessed with hope, and be shaped by purpose rooted in our Sacred
Source. Peace we ask of thee oh God so we can continue being the
presence of Jesus Christ in this world.**