

ORDER FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD
A Service of Celebration and Covenantal Renewal

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

INVOCATION

—Elder Johnny Clark

CALL TO WORSHIP

FORTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—BETHLEHEM CANDLE

Isaiah 11:1-9

- 1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -
- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
- 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
- 5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
- 6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling ^[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
- 7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
- 9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

Lyric sheets of today's music can be obtained from the ushers upon request

PASTORAL PRAYER

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART I

—SCOTT ROLEY

WITNESSES TO HIS GLORY:

Experiencing Christmas in Word, Song, Art and Story
The Joy and Peace Jesus Came to Bring
Luke 2:8-18

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY:

Luke 2:8-14 *there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

- **The Need for Joy**— Have you ever noticed how many of our beloved Christmas carols and hymns highlight the absence of joy in the world into which Jesus was born?
"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight".
— *O Little Town of Bethlehem*
"Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till He appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary soul rejoices for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother and in His name all oppression shall cease".
—*O Holy Night*
"No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow, far as the curse is found."
— *Joy to the World*
- **The Nature of Joy**— What is the joy that Jesus alone can give us?
"Peace to men upon whom His favor rests"
This is a joy which comes from the assurance that God's favor and delight are permanently resting upon you. God is at peace with all who hope in his Son, Jesus.
This is a joy which comes from knowing that God is at work in your life to make you a healthy woman or man—a joy which rests in God's commitment to bring to completion this "good work" he has begun in you. Until our soul "finds its worth" in Jesus we will either live with delusion, denial or despair.

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 2

— SCOTTY SMITH

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR US :

Luke 2:15-16 *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.*

- Luke, a Gentile physician, goes out of his way to demonstrate how welcoming God's story of redemption is to **all** people groups: Ceremonially unclean Jewish Shepherds — Marginalized women and children — Notorious sinners - The disenfranchised poor and the disconnected rich — Despised Samaritans — Members of Herod's household and the Roman army - Lepers and Losers of every variety - Prodigal sons and daughters of the unrighteous and self-righteous varieties — The deceived and the demonized ... This is why Luke's genealogy is traced back to **Adam**, not just to Abraham. Jesus is indeed, one of us, and he has come for all of us. All of us are in need of the grace of God and all of us are within the reach of the grace of God.
- **Where are you in Luke's cast of characters? Do you see any evidence of God bringing his peace and joy to your life? How would you know?**

"A spiritually sound person fits the universal design. She functions properly: in the range of her relationships to God, others, nature, and self we can spot impressive manifestations of shalom. Of, following one line of New Testament usage, we might call them impressive manifestations of hygiene (Tit. 1:13; 2:8). Although it sounds as if it might have something to do with the brushing and flossing away of small particles of vice, spiritual hygiene is actually wholeness of spirit—that is, wholeness of what animates and characterizes us. Spiritual hygiene is the wholeness of resources, motive, purpose, and character typical of someone who fits snugly into God's broad design for shalom. A spiritually hygienic person is one who combines strengths and flexibilities, disciplines and freedoms, all working together from a renewable source of vitality. She longs for God and the beauty of God, for Christ and Christ-likeness, for the dynamite of the Holy Spirit and spiritual maturity. She longs for spiritual hygiene itself—and not just as a consolation prize when she cannot be rich and envied. She longs for other human beings; she wants to love them and to be loved by them. She hungers for social justice. She longs for nature, for its beauties and graces, for the sheer particularity of the way of a squirrel with a nut. As we might expect, her longings dim from season to season. When they do, she longs to long again.

She is a person of character consistency, a person who rings true wherever you tap her. She keeps promises. She weeps with those who weep and, perhaps more impressively, rejoices with those who rejoice. She does all these things in ways that express her own personality and culture but also a general 'mind of Christ' that is cross-culturally unmistakable." (Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., NOT the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin)

SONG OF REFLECTION

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 3

—SCOTTY SMITH

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THROUGH US:

Luke 2:17-18 *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.*

- "The shepherds of Luke 2 may symbolize all the ordinary people who have joyfully received the gospel and have become in various ways pastors to others." (Walter Leifeld)
- To whom is this good news of great joy being proclaimed in word and deed, through you?

"Jesus came to rescue a creation which was pervasively infected with the curse of sin—an infection not limited to the psychic territory populated by 'human hearts.' The curse of sin touches the natural realm, reaching into art and economics, affecting family relationships and educational endeavors, holding thrones and budgets in its grip...

Jesus died to save sinners—but he is also is the Lamb who serves as the lamp in the transformed City. As the Lamb of God he draws all of the goods, artifacts, and instruments of culture to himself; the kings of the earth will return their authority and power to the Lamb who sits upon the throne; Jesus is the one whose blood has purchased a multi-national community, composed of people from every tribe and tongue and nation. His redemptive ministry, as the ministry of the Lamb is cosmic in scope...

The God who declares here and now that it is 'well' with my soul is the same creating Lord who once looked at the whole world which he had made and proclaimed, 'This is good!' This God wants once again to say that things are 'well' with his entire creation—and he will someday do so when he announces, 'Behold, I ma93 ke all things new...It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end'" (Rev. 21:5-6) 'It is well with my soul' is only a first step, an initial fruit of God's redeeming activity. We must share in God's restless yearning for the renewal of the cosmos...

Our conviction—our sure hope—that the Lord will bring these things to pass in his own time should lead us to express our

discipleship boldly. Our present efforts as citizens of Zion will culminate in the final victory of the Lamb whose light will fill the city." (Richard Mouw, When the Kings Come Marching In)

RESPONSE

COMMISSIONING

—CHRISTMAS TEAM TO MEXICO

Mike & Mary Broach	James Martinez
Stephanie & Aaron Broach	Colin Plank
Taylor & Marie Morris	Mark Garner
Taylor, Caroline & Mallory Morris	Randy & Mary Ann Garner
Terri & Damon Seale	Wes, Jonathan, & Caleb Garner
Natalie & Austin Seale	

BENEDICTION



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. What had the most impact on you today from our time in God's Word and worship? What was encouraging, convicting and/or calling for more clarification?
2. How did this service help you understand the relationship between joy and peace? What is the joy Jesus came to bring? What is the peace he came to bring? What does it do to your heart to realize that, if you are a Christian, God's favor rests upon you permanently, and there is nothing you can do about it? What might a "healthier" you look like?
3. Did you see yourself in the film clip? What are the gifts God has given you to live in his story to his glory? What are the broken places in the community and culture into which you feel propelled by the gospel to live and love as a servant of Jesus?
4. Merry Christmas! ... And close with a good season of prayer for one another.