

**Redeemer Lutheran Church of Leisure World and
St. Theodore of Canterbury Episcopal Church
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***Celebration, Worship, and Communion Service
First Sunday of Christmas
December 31, 2023***

PRELUDE

played by organist

PIANO DUETS

Cedric Elmer and Sharon Heck

“O Christmas Tree”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING HYMN

LBW [Green Book] # 40

“What Child is This?”

GREETING

P Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, the Word made flesh, our life and our salvation.

C **Amen.**

P Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

C **God of life, you promise good news of great joy for all people, and call us to be messengers of your peace. We confess that too often we hoard our joy, our resources, and our security. We nurture conflict and build barriers. We neglect the needs of our neighbors and ignore the groaning of creation. Have mercy on us. Where we are self-centered, open our hearts. Where we are reluctant, give us courage. Where we are cynical, restore our trust. Renew us with your grace and give us again the hope of eternal life in you. Amen.**

P Hear the good news: We are children of God and heirs of God's promises through the outpour of the Holy Spirit. In + Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed. Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth shall know the salvation of God.

C **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

C Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED

INTRODUCTION

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world. Our readings today also include the last story of the early childhood of Jesus—the holy family's visit to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover when Jesus was twelve.

The First Lesson is from Isaiah chapter 61 verses 10 to chapter 62 verse 3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.

²The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God

PSALM: Psalm 148

The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.

²Praise the LORD, all you angels;
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.

³Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.

⁴Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.

⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created,

⁶who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not pass away.

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

⁸fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;

⁹mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;

¹⁰wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds;

¹¹sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;

¹²young men and maidens,
old and young together.

¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and
heaven.

¹⁴The LORD has raised up strength for the people
and praise for all faithful servants,

the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!

The Second Lesson is from Galatians chapter 4 verses 4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

1 Time Before the Gospel

1 Time after the Gospel

Holy Gospel for First Sunday of Christmas, December 31, 2023

The first twenty verses of Luke 2 (Last Sunday's Gospel reading) tell of Joseph's and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, and the story of the shepherds. In the final thirty-one verses of this chapter, Luke continues the narrative from the baby's eighth day when the holy family took their child to the temple and received blessings from Simeon and Anna. Then Luke skips over most of the next twelve years of Jesus' life as he concludes this chronicle of Jesus' earliest years, telling about the family's annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe the Passover Feast.

Luke 2: ²¹After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²²When 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"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now 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. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

²⁷Guided 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, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then 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 ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty- four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

⁴¹Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the

boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know

it. ⁴⁴Assuming 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. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search

for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the

teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard

him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When 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." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you

searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's

house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he

went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

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

L The Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ

SERMON

Bishop Murray Finck

“The Boy, My Boy... the Only-Begotten Son”

CHOIR ANTHEM

“The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy”

APOSTLES’ CREED

L I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

L ... Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

OFFERTORY

“That Boy-child of Mary”

OFFERING PRAYER

P God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

C Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

THE LORD'S PRAYER

LBW [Green Book] Page 71

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

Communion Distribution (The Congregation is invited to come forward by the ushers to receive Communion. If you are unable to come to the altar, Communion will be brought to you in the pew. All baptized and believing Christians are invited to the table. Anyone with any questions can speak to the Pastor. The inside circle of glasses contains grape juice.)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

C God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING

P God bless you and keep you, + Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

C Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

LBW [Green Book] # 70

“Go Tell it On the Mountain”

DISMISSAL

P Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

played by organist

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Worship Coordinator: Jerry Brady (714) 534-2673

Organist: Sharon Heck

Flowers are given by: *Poinsettias*.

THOSE WHO SERVE TODAY

President: Bishop Murray Finck

Communion Assistant Carmen Leslie

Reader / Prayer Leader: Nancy Anderson

Financial Team: Wendy Alfageme and Phyllis Makey

THIS WEEK

Monday: New Year's Day

Sunday: 10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

EPIPHANY CELEBRATION

Redeemer Finance: November Offering through December 24, 2023

Budgeted Monthly Expense \$8,341.00

Offering \$12,493.00

Needed to meet expenses -\$4,152.00

We received a very generous one-time gift from one of our members this month. We truly appreciate your kindness to the Church.

Because of this, we have covered our budgeted monthly expenses [hence, the negative balance] but we are still in need of covering our YEARLY budget. Year-end gifts are greatly appreciated and needed.

CHURCH COUNCIL

President Jerry Brady, **Vice-President** Wendy Alfageme, **Secretary** Nancy Anderson, **Treasurer** Phyllis Mackey, **Finance Chair** Kay Pushman

Members at Large: Sandy Langdale, Carmen Leslie, Betty Lucero, Sylvia Makus, Michael Vanvales, and Anne Walshe

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Jean, Kathy, Wendy, Beverly, Dena, Nancy, Evelyn, Shirlene, Jerry, Dondi, Carol, Mickey, Evelyn, Gloria, Christa, Alice, Barbara, Cedric, Lucy, Karen, Kelly, Raymond, Dick, Marilyn, Brian, Carl, Jessica, Carol, Rose, Ken, Sandra, Elaine, Carmen, Barbara, Betty, Nancy, Phyllis, Sylvia, Gil, Flo, Eileen, Erich, Leslie, Linda, Ronnie, Kay, Violet, Linda, Ron, Collette, Lisa, Patty, Barbara, Joan, Dee, Susan, Anita, Norma, Lathy, Juanita, Clarence, Debbie, Joan, Anne, Doris, Linda, Bruce, Alma, Martha, Marianne, Robert, Laura, Jim, Loretta, Ray, Patty, Delrie, Bill, Betty, Lorna, M. Teresa, Joan, Mike, Frankie, Donna, Ernie, Eileen, Darlene, Sharon, Danota, Lynne, Ethan, Kurt, Brinly, McCall, Kathy, Nayleen, Nicole, Donald, Maria, Andy, Owen, Tom, Anastasia, Claire, Fran, Chris, Kyle, Michele, Bill, Wes, Sam, Kolt, Maeve, Brigid, Joanna, Dale, Karla, Sands, Gloria, Tom, Rosalia, and Wendy.

Please contact the church to add people to the prayer list.

Please pray for our Bishop David Nagler, (ELCA) and Bishop John Taylor (ECUSA), the victims of the Ukrainian/Russian and Israel/Hamas conflicts, and victims and families of all violence and natural disasters.

Gracious God, none who trust in your Son can be separated from your love. Give to those who live alone peace and contentment in their solitude, hope and fulfillment in their love of you, and joy and companionship in their relations with others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Announcements

- ✝ Welcome everyone this morning, and especially to our guests and visitors.
- ✝ Thank you to Bishop Murray Finck for Presiding for today's Service. He continues exploring with the congregation an in-depth understanding of the nativity, infancy, and childhood of Jesus. Today is Part Five of a Six-Part series. We are honored that Bishop Finck is with us to celebrate.
- ✝ There is a Bake Sale Fundraiser **TODAY**, December 31, at our coffee hour. Freewill donations are requested as there will be no set prices. A perfect place to purchase homemade goodies for your New Year's celebrations.
- ✝ We are again trying to plan an acceptance of new members! Bishop Finck has agreed to accept new members for us so please speak to him. We need to plan a date so please pick up a member's form from the entryway and return it as soon as possible.
- ✝ At this time, we are encouraging people to consider wearing a mask again, especially in Church, due to the spike in Covid-19 cases. Initial symptoms are headache and fever. Please consult with your doctor if you are experiencing these or other symptoms. We continue to have masks available in the entryway for your use. We need to join together to keep everyone safe and healthy.
- ✝ Please take a moment and fill out the attendance slip found in the rack in the pews. Please place it in the offertory plate. Thank you!
- ✝ The NEW Flower Chart is available for sign-ups in the entryway. One bouquet is \$15.00. Both are \$30.00. Please include any dedication for your flower request when signing up or include a note beforehand if there is a dedication.
- ✝ Printed copies of our current newsletter are available in the entryway. It is online on our website at: www.redeemerasealbeach.com. It is sent out via email, if we have your email address. If you are not receiving it, please let us know so we can confirm your address.