

Thankful for a Child

Season of Thanks: Part 5 “Thankful for a Child”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – December 24, 2022

Christmas Eve

Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

Greeting: He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever. And there will be no end to his kingdom. Praise the Lord! (Luke 1:32-33)

Prayer: O God our Father, you have brought us again to the glad season when we celebrate and give thanks for the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that his Spirit may be born anew in our hearts this day and may we joyfully welcome him to reign over us. Open our ears that we may hear again the angelic chorus of old. Open our lips that we, too, may sing with uplifted hearts. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Isaiah chapter 9 verses 2 through 7.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire. A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David’s throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this. (Isaiah 9:2-7 CEB+)

Our next reading for today comes from Titus chapter 2 verses 11 through 14.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It educates us so that we can live sensible, ethical, and godly lives right now by rejecting ungodly lives and the desires of this world. At the same time we wait for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of our great God and savior Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us in order to rescue us from every kind of lawless behavior, and cleanse a special people for himself who are eager to do good actions. (Titus 2:11-14 CEB+)

Our last reading for today comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20.

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom. Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told. (Luke 2:1-20 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We are here tonight to celebrate the birth of a child. We come together, thankful for this child called by many names. Wonderful Counselor. Prince of Peace. Our Emmanuel, our God with us. Jesus Christ is born. I give thanks because in him I am reminded of kindness and mercy. I am given hope. I know peace. I experience joy. I know I am loved. And in all those things I give thanks. Thanks that I know that God is with us. We celebrate because as we know we are loved, we may love. That as we come together, we come together to share in that love and to share in that joy, thankful for all that God has done and all that God has shown us. Though we have walked in darkness, we have seen a great light. A light that can never be extinguished. A light that shines in each and every one of us when we share the joy of our Savior's birth. And there are so many ways that we can share that joy. Be it a kind word, or a gift, or in a caring action. We show it in the way that we help one another. We show it in the way that we greet a stranger. And we carry it with us, not just on one night, not just on one morning beside the Christmas tree, but we let it be a reminder to carry it with us always. That we carry the joy in our hearts, thankful for a child who is our Emmanuel. Because that simple idea of God with us is so very powerful. Because it means that God is with us in all things. That God is with us in our celebrations. When we join together here in the church or when we are with our friends and families, with every celebration, God is with us. But with every heartache and every struggle again, God is with us. In every time of uncertainty and every moment of

hoping and praying, God is with us. That whenever we find peace in that still silence, God is with us. And we know it because of a child born and laid in a manger, to be our forever reminder of God's love. To be our constant reminder that we can love.

And so, on this most holy night, I celebrate that we have arrived at our destination. Through Advent, we went on a journey in a season of thanks to prepare our hearts. We showed our thankfulness for the hope that Christ instills in our lives, giving us a hope for today and a hope for tomorrow, a hope for all people, anywhere and everywhere. That we can give thanks for the hope that Christ has given us. In our journey we gave thanks for peace, because in Christ we may find peace in our lives. A peace that frees us from turmoil and strife. A peace that allows us to break bread together. A peace that lets our hearts rest easily, knowing God is with us. In this season of thanks, we showed our thankfulness for the joy that Christ gives us. A joy that we find as we celebrate his birth and celebrate his life and celebrate all that he is to us as our Emmanuel. And it is a joy that stirs in us this day as we sing his praises and glorify his name, that Christ will always be our joy. And in this season of thanks, we gave thanks for love. Because love came down on Christmas as a child born to free us from slavery to sin and death, to give us life everlasting because of God's great love. And that love is something that we may share freely because it has been offered freely to us. And through this season of thanks, we have let our hearts be prepared that we may celebrate the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love that we experience on Christmas because we are thankful for a child. So let us give our thanks and our praise, for Jesus Christ is born. Jesus Christ is born. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

***Prayer for Christmas:** Heavenly Father, salvation has been given to us, a child has been born to us. Your love is born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Your Spirit is upon us this very night. Help us to celebrate your son by loving and caring for each other, rejoicing in the grace that has been shown to us all. Bless us with your hope, your peace, your joy, and your love this night. Be with us now and forevermore. Amen.

Dismissal with Blessing: May the love of Christ our Lord rest in your hearts this evening as we go forth in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen and Merry Christmas!

Our Current Series – Season of Thanks

Our current series is a look at the ways that God is a part of our lives, and all that God can do. We will spend five weeks exploring the ways that God acts. In them, we will see the ways God responds to us and how we can respond to God.

November 27th – *Thankful for Hope* – Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

December 4th – *Thankful for Peace* – Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

December 13th – *Thankful for Joy* – Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

December 18th – *Thankful for Love* – Isaiah 7:10-16; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

December 24th – *Thankful for a Child* – Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gabel
Dalton McFarland	Ruth Ann Finley	Tom Finley	Laura Carlen
Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter
Jeremy Klinger	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr	Jane Williams
Alice Sherwood	Carol Miller	Kyle Lehman	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Connie Brown
Tim Schnaut	Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jesse Shute
Family of Ernestine Woods	Velena Dooley	Family of Heather Swim	Family of Susan Statler
Janet Dixon	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser
Larry Thompson	Nick & Leana Ochoa	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Kristen & Zach Morecraft
Greg Williams	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte

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