Children's/Candlelight Service Christmas Eve, 2020
St. John's, Fox Lake, WI

OPENING HYMN: "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" #55, vv. 1 and 2.

THE INVOCATION: Pastor
CONG: Amen. (Spoken)

PSALM 96: Read responsively (in bulletin)

PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

"Now Sing We, Now Rejoice"

Songs of Christmas

I. Mary's Song of Praise – The Magnificat

Hymn: "Now Sing We, Now Rejoice" #34, vv. 1, 2 and 3.

NARRATION: Our worship this evening is based on the SONGS OF CHRISTMAS recorded for us in our God's Word. Our first song is Mary's song of praise known as ***"The Magnificat."*** We read in Luke 1:46-55:

> ***Then Mary said, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, because He has looked with favor on the humble state of His servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm. He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the aid of His servant Israel, remembering His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever."***

May praised God HER Savior. Mary also needed the Savior WE ALL need. The Savior God had promised long ago. Ever since Adam and Eve had DEFIED God and **fell** into sin in the Garden of Eden we have needed a Savior. And already way back then God **had promised** – God had GIVEN HIS WORD – that a Savior would come. Thousands of years later, through His prophet Jeremiah (23:5,6), God promised:

"Listen, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, who will reign wisely as king and establish justice and righteousness on earth. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. This is His name by which He will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

JUNIOR CHOIR: "Emmanuel Will Come"

NARRATION: NOW the time had ***"fully come."*** God was ready to send forth ***"His Son, born of a woman."*** In preparation for that God sent the angel Gabriel to a maiden in Nazareth – the maiden we know as Mary. We read in Luke 1:26-38:

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women." But (Mary) was greatly troubled by the statement and was wondering what kind of greeting this could be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God. Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end."

Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Listen, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age even though she was called barren, and this is her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible for God." Then Mary said, "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Recitation: (Recording of 3-4K)

Hymn: "Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We" #46, vv. 1, 2, and 3.

NARRATION: ***"Because He has looked with favor on the humble state of His servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me."*** So Mary sang in the Magnificat. GREAT THINGS indeed - and a BLESSED woman! Mary was to be the mother of the **eternal Son** of God born in the flesh. Through this HUMBLE DAUGHTER of David great David's greater Son would be born. **Through Mary** God would fulfill Isaiah's prophecy, ***"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son and name Him Immanuel."*** It was IN MARY'S SON that Isaiah rejoiced when he wrote, ***"For to us a Child is born. To us a Son is given. The authority to rule will rest on His shoulders. He will be named: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no limit to His authority and no end to the peace He brings."***

II. Zechariah's Song of Praise – The Benedictus

Hymn: "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child" #56, vv. 1 and 3.

NARRATION: Our second song of Christmas is **called** "The Benedictus." It was spoken by Zechariah, the husband of **Elizabeth**, the father of John the Baptist. When his son John was just **eight days** old Zechariah spoke these words, recorded for us in Luke 1:67-69:

> ***Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited us and prepared redemption for His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, just as He said long ago through the mouth of His holy prophets. He raised up salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, in order to show mercy to our fathers by remembering His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant deliverance to us from the hand of our enemies, so that we are able to serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, because you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of God's tender mercies, by which the Rising Sun from on high will visit us, to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."***

NARRATION: The Benedictus divides into **two verses**. In the FIRST verse Zechariah speaks NOT of his son John the Baptist but of MARY'S SON – the **soon to be born** Savior. Zechariah praises God **because** Jesus' birth is the FULFILLMENT of God's promises of old. Zechariah praises God **because** Jesus was born to ***"redeem"*** us – born to PAY THE PRICE to set us free from our sins and guilt, from death, the devil and hell – the PRICE of His own life sacrificed on the cross **to pay** for all our sins. That is ***"the good news of great joy"*** of Christmas. Jesus, GOD'S Son and MARY'S Son – is our Savior. **In Jesus** we have Gods forgiveness of all our sins. **In Jesus** we have God's promise of eternal life in heaven when we die. And as Zechariah ALSO MENTIONS – **in Jesus** we are now free to serve God. To serve God NOT IN FEAR but in **joy** – to **serve God** with LOVE and HEARTFELT THANKS.

Hymn: "Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising" #42, vv. 1, 2 and 5.

NARRATION: The SECOND VERSE of the **Benedictus** speaks of Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, and HIS WORK. John was called by God TO PREPARE the way for our Lord. To do that John had to **lead people** to recognize and confess their sins and their DESPERATE NEED for the Savior. So John forcefully preached God's HOLY LAW and UNCHANGING commandments. John bluntly called sin sin. **In no uncertain terms** John made clear that sin HAS ITS CONSEQUENCES – that sin condemns us to hell's eternal punishment - NO IFS, ands or buts about it. God demands **from each one** of us absolutely perfect obedience to ALL His commandments. God doesn't want JUST A PLACE in our lives – He claims first place ALL TO HIMSELF. God is looking for obedience – He doesn't accept EXCUSES. God never said, "**Do the best** you can" – but He has said, ***"Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."*** It's NOT FUN TO ADMIT that God really should send us to hell for the **way we've treated** Him – but it's TRUE.

But we need not despair! AS SURE AS we are sinners SO SURE is it that Jesus is our Savior. God sent John to ***"give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of God's tender mercies."*** Tonight we celebrate the BIRTH of our Savior. God's Son was born man to TAKE THE PLACE of **all** people under God's law. Jesus was born to live for us the **holy life** we owed God. Jesus was born this night to ONE DAY DIE on Calvary's cross and personally pay for the sins of the

whole world. The SINLESS Son of God would take the blame for our sins and be punished in our place. Jesus was born tonight to RISE TRIUMPHANT from the dead and give us eternal life in heaven. So we too sing with Zechariah, ***"Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited us and prepared redemption for His people."***

III. The Angels' Song of Praise – The Gloria in Excelsis

Hymn: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" #66, vv. 1, 3 and 4.

NARRATION: Hear now with HOLY – HUMBLE AWE and believing hearts St. Luke's account of our Savior's birth.

Recitation: Luke 2:1-7 (recording of grades 3-5)

Song: "Away in a Manger" (recording of S. School and Choirchimes)

NARRATION: The Christmas history continues and we hear in it the THIRD SONG of Christmas – the ANGELS' song of praise – **"The Gloria in Excelsis"**

Recitation: Luke 2:8-14 (recording of Grades 3K-2, all children v. 14)

Hymn: "Angels We Have Heard on High" #63, vv. 1 and 3.

Recitation: Luke 2:15-20 (recording of grades 3-5 and 6-8)

Hymn: "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt" #54, vv. 1, 3 and 4.

IV. Simeon's Song of Praise – The Nunc Dimittis

NARRATION: Our final song of Christmas is **"The Nunc Dimittis"** – first spoken by aged Simeon. We read in Luke 2:25-32:

> ***"Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the comfort of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the law, Simeon took Him into his arms and praised God. He said, "Lord, You now dismiss Your servant in peace, according to Your word, because my eyes have seen Your salvation, which***

You have prepared before the face of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

The story of Simeon actually takes us to 40 DAYS AFTER Christmas. That's a good way to end **this part** of our service. Christmas is not just ONE DAY – ONE NIGHT – ONCE A YEAR. God's Christmas gift of a Savior is FOR EVERY DAY of **our lives** – the WHOLE YEAR through. **God's gift** of Jesus is a gift that lasts a LIFETIME. It's the gift that guarantees us ETERNAL life in heaven. Treasure the OH-SO-FAMILIAR words of John 3:16:

Recitation: John 3:16 (recording by Sunday School)

NARRATION: With the gift of Jesus we CAN NOW LIVE **each day** in peace. TRUSTING in Jesus we can be confident that **for Jesus' sake** God has forgiven ALL our sins. Trusting in Jesus we have peace with God. **Rather** than AVOIDING or IGNORING God we can now joyfully live each day WITH God and FOR God and UNDER God. Clinging by faith to Jesus we can die **in peace** – the peace of knowing we are GOING STRAIGHT to heaven when we die. Our Savior tells us:

Recitation: John 14:1-3 (recording of grades 6-8)

Tonight – and my it be true EVERY DAY for us – we sing and rejoice – for we ***"have seen Your salvation, which You (Lord) have prepared before the face of all people"*** – and FOR ALL PEOPLE – our Lord Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem!

Song: "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (recording of grades 3K-8)

THE CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY (as the candles are being lit recording of the Choirchimes playing "Still, Still, Still")

"Once in Royal David's City" (#50, vv. 1, 2 and 3)

"What Child Is This" (#67, vv. 1 and 2)

"From Heaven Above" (#38, vv. 1, 2 and 13)

"Silent Night" (#60, vv. 1 through 3)

Prayer and Lord's Prayer (sung to "Away in a Manger" – words printed in the bulletin)

The Benediction

Closing Hymn: "Let Us All with Gladsome Voice" #64, vv. 1-4