

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Aitkin, Minnesota
January 2, 2022
Second Sunday after Christmas
ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the

grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Introit

Ps. 147:1, 5, 11–12; antiphon: John 1:14

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his | glory,*

glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of | grace and truth.

Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises | to our God;* for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is | fitting.

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power,* his understanding is beyond | measure.

But the LORD takes pleasure in those who | fear him,* in those who hope in his | steadfast love.

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!*

Praise your God, O | Zion!

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his | glory,*

glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of | grace and truth.

Collect of the Day

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, You have poured into our hearts the true Light of Your incarnate Word. Grant that this Light may

shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

© **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

1 Kings 3:4–15

The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so

that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

Ephesians 1:3–14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who

were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel

Luke 2:40–52

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went

down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

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

Sermon Text – Ephesians 1:3-14

Theme – “Praise Be to God”

Happy New Year! As we passed from one year to another, it is natural for us to think about the year gone by and think about the year that is ahead. While some may say about 2021, “Thank God it’s over!” because of some of the things that happened in the year just finished. Today and every day, with faith in our hearts, we can say with St. Paul these words from our text: **“Blessed be the God and Father or our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Ephesians 1:3) or as some translation have it: **“Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Despite all that may be behind us and ahead of us, we can praise the Lord. We can praise Him, for as our text reminds us, He has **“blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 1:3).

For one thing **“He chose us ... before the foundation of the world”** (Ephesians 1:4). It’s all because of His great love for us. Out of love, He came up with a plan for our salvation, a plan which He then carried out. To Adam and Eve, He promised a Savior (Genesis 3:15). That Savior was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and He was! That’s why we celebrate Christmas.

We say, “Praise be to God!” Praise be to Him for He blesses us in Christ. That truth stands in the face of everything we may be facing on this the first Sunday of the New Year. No matter how depressed we may be, we can remember that even before we were born God loved us. Even before the foundation of the world, He chose us to be His own.

There is no need for us to feel worthless or unloved. It isn't true. God was willing to send His very own Son to pay the price for our sin. He made the sacrifice necessary so that we could be considered **"holy and blameless in [God's] sight."**

We know that we are sinners. There are many things that God commands us to do that we don't do. There are just as many things that God tells us not to do that we do. We worry. We get angry. We hurt others. We can be pretty selfish at times. Some of the sins we commit are so awful, we don't want to think about them, much less talk about them. Yet, God says that in Christ we are **"holy and blameless before him"** (Ephesians 1:4).

What a way to start the New Year – cleansed of our sins. No matter how dirty and guilty we may feel – God says to us in Jesus Christ, "Your sins are forgiven. You are blameless. You are holy."

We need to hear that again and again throughout this New Year. In Christ we are holy and blameless. Praise be to God!

He has chosen us to be His children. With that comes some wonderful privileges, including the privilege of prayer.

Later on in this chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul offers up a prayer for the Ephesians. It is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Paul thanks God for the Christians at Ephesus. Paul gives thanks for their faith and love. God the One responsible that that. He is the One who works faith in people's hearts. He is the One who makes it possible for people to love.

Today and every day, I give thanks to God for the faith that He has worked in the hearts of the people of this congregation. I give thanks also for the ways He enables us to love one another.

Paul's words of thanks and praise are followed by words asking God for the blessings of wisdom and revelation so that the people of Ephesus might know God better.

God comes to us through His Word and we are not going to understand that Word on our own. God is the One who must give us understanding. God must open the eyes of our hearts so **“that we may know the hope to which He has called [us], the riches of His glorious inheritance”** (Ephesians 1:18 NIV).

Today, we praise God for helping us to see the blessings that He gives to us in Christ. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is Immanuel – God with us. He is our Savior for He became One of us. He came to live and die and rise again so that our sins can be forgiven and so that we can have the assurance that one day we will receive **“His glorious inheritance”** in heaven (Ephesians 1:18).

We can remember that throughout this New Year. We don't know what is in store for us, but we do know that God loves us and He will continue to love us until the end. So we say, “Praise be to God!” AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

Lord of hosts, preserve Your Church and look favorably on her ministers. Give them delight in this joyful season and restful reflection on the mystery of Your incarnation, that they may preach Your Word boldly and faithfully.

Heavenly Father, Your Son diligently heard the Word of God and grew in wisdom and stature, submissive to His earthly parents and always about Your business and in Your house. Keep the families of Your Church abiding in Your Word, eager to be found among Your Word and Sacraments and always treasuring Your divine wisdom and favor.

Heavenly Father, uphold and strengthen our president; all public servants; and those who protect us in every good deed.

Heavenly Father, give patience and endurance to all who are sick or in any need, [*especially _____*,] and heal them according to Your will. Receive our thanksgiving for every blessing and kindness You have shown to Your people in Christ [*especially _____*]. Give comfort and hope to all who mourn [*especially _____*].

Lord God, heavenly Father, in mercy You have established the Christian home among us. We implore You, rule and direct our hearts to be good examples to children and those subject to us, that we may not offend them by word or deed but faithfully teach them to love Your Church and hear Your blessed Word. Give them Your Spirit and grace, that this seed may bring forth good fruit and our homelife may advance Your glory, honor and praise as well

as our own improvement and welfare, giving offense to no one; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the same Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

- C **Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver
us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the
glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

- P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to
you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you
peace.
- C **Amen**

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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