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The Mysteries of Christmas



“...to you is born this day
in the city of David a Savior,
who is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2:11

Affiliation: Church of the Lutheran Confession

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WELCOME: *To all who are present this evening, we offer a heart-felt welcome in Jesus' name.*

Tonight's Theme: *When the Bible uses the word "mystery" or "mysteries" it does so in a way that is different from how we use the word. A biblical mystery refers to that which we cannot guess or figure out. God Himself must reveal it to us.*

In regards to the birth of Jesus, there are several such mysteries, each revealed by God that we might come to know His love for us and the great salvation He accomplished through His Son. Tonight, as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we consider

The Mysteries of Christmas

ORDER OF WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER: *We ask the Lord's blessings on our worship.*

HYMN:

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful

**Oh, come, all ye faithful, triumphantly sing;
Come, see in the manger our Savior and King
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!**

**True Son of the Father, He comes from the skies;
To be born of a virgin He doth not despise.
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!**

**Hark, hark, to the angels all singing in heaven,
"To God in the highest all glory be given!"
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!**

To Thee, then, O Jesus, this day of Thy birth
Be glory and honor through heaven and earth,
True Godhead incarnate, omnipotent Word!
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Cong: (spoken) Amen.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Pastor: God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Congregation: If we say that we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

P: If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,

Cong: And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

P: If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Cong: If we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

P: Then let us confess to God the darkness of our sin and seek the light of His forgiving grace in Christ, our Savior.

Pastor & Congregation: Almighty God, who dwells in inaccessible light, we confess to You that we are sinful from birth and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Shine on us with Your grace and forgive our sins for the sake of Him who is the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

P: The God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. He is the true Light which gives light to everyone who comes into the world. In Him you are forgiven. At one time you were darkness; now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

Cong: Amen.

HYMN: *On Christmas Night All Christians Sing*

**On Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring;
On Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring:
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.**

**When sin departs before His grace,
then life and health come in its place;
When sin departs before His grace,
then life and health come in its place;
Angels and men with joy may sing,
all for to see the newborn King.**

**From out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night;
From out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God and peace to men,
now and forevermore. Amen."**

The Mystery of the Protevangel

(Genesis 3:1-15)

(ESV) Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (2) And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, (3) but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” (4) But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (7) Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (8) And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (9) But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (10) And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (11) He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (12) The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (13) Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (14) The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. (15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your

offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

HYMN:

Behold, A Branch Is Growing

**Behold, a Branch is growing
Of loveliest form and grace,
As prophets sung, foreknowing;
It springs from Jesse's race
And bears one little Flow'r
In midst of coldest winter,
At deepest midnight hour.**

**The shepherds heard the story,
Proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of Glory,
Was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped
And in the manger found Him,
As angel heralds said.**

**This Flower whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere.
True Man, yet very God;
From sin and death He saves us
And lightens every load.**

**O Savior, Child of Mary,
Who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of Glory.
Who dost our weakness know,
Bring us at length, we pray.
To the bright courts of heaven**

And to the endless day.

The Mystery of Substitution

(Genesis 22:1-14)

(ESV) After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." (2) He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (3) So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. (4) On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. (5) Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." (6) And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. (7) And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (8) Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. (9) When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. (11) But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." (12) He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (13) And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt

offering instead of his son. (14) So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

HYMN:

O Little Town of Bethlehem

**O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep And dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy darkness shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears Of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, The angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing To God the King,
And peace to men on earth.**

**How silently, how silently,
The wondrous Gift is giv'n!
So God imparts To human hearts
The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will Receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;**

**Cast out our sin And enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
Oh, come to us, Abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!**

The Mystery of the Virgin Birth
(Isaiah 7:1-14)

(ESV) In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. (2) When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. (3) And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. (4) And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. (5) Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, (6) "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," (7) thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. (8) For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. (9) And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.'" (10) Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, (11) "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." (12) But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put

the LORD to the test." (13) And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? (14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

HYMN:

A Great and Mighty Wonder

**A great and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure:
The virgin bears the Infant
With virgin honor pure!
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!**

**The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men.**

**Since all He comes to ransom,
By all be He adored,
The Infant born in Bethl'em,
The Savior and the Lord.
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men.**

**And idol forms shall perish,
And error shall decay,**

**And Christ shall wield His scepter,
Our Lord and God for aye.
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men.**

The Mystery of the Vicarious Atonement
(Isaiah 53:1-12)

(ESV) Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (2) For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. (8) By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? (9) And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of

the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

HYMN

Great Is This Godly Mystery

**Great is this godly mystery:
Our Lord, for all the world to see,
Descends to earth in humble birth
To set sin's pris'ners free.
He leaves behind His heav'nly throne
And for love's sake to us comes down,
Wrapped in the clothes of mortal woes,
That life might more abound.
He grasps not for equality
With the eternal Deity
But takes a name and mortal frame
Of weak humanity.**

**The virgin bore God's only Son,
Through whom creation's work was done,
As long foretold by men of old
By Spirit's inspiration.
Though God from all eternity,
This woman's Seed in infancy
Relies on her for warmth and food.
Divine fraternity!
"Glory to God!" the angels sing,
And to the shepherds good news bring:
To you, this day, on bed of hay,**

Lies Christ, your Savior King!

**This human body God prepared
That in His Son, two natures shared,
He might o'er throw our ev'ry foe
That we from hell be spared.
Thus, from the seed of Abraham,
The long-expected Savior came
This "wordless Word" - this Babe, our Lord -
Is God's Passover Lamb.
He will Himself endure the loss
And pay the wages of sin's cost.
These hands, these feet - so soft, so sweet -
Will hold Him to the cross.**

The Mystery of the Two Natures

(John 1:1-14)

(ESV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (7) He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. (8) He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. (9) The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (14) And 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.

HYMN

Joy to the World, the Lord is Come

**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.**

**Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**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,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.**

CHRISTMAS PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Congregation: Amen.

HYMN

Silent Night, Holy Night

**Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!**

**Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**