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Worship
December 27, 2020

**(View the videotaped version of the service at the Bethany Lutheran Church
Scottsdale site on YouTube and the link below)**

https://youtu.be/8c8r0t_qquM

GATHERING

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

OPENING HYMN *“Once in Royal David’s City”*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship is a time to learn the ways of God.

As God’s love is genuine, may our love toward one another be authentic.

Worship is a time to be caught up in the Spirit of God.

We call upon God to instill within us a spirit of generosity, hospitality, and hope.

Worship is a time to nurture peacefulness within and among ourselves.

We pray for a humbleness of heart and a willingness to forgive and receive forgiveness.

May this time of worship nurture us in the ways of God.

A BRIEF CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, if we believe we are not broken; we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We trust that your mercy is our forgiveness, your compassion our healing.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We live in the power of a forgiving God.

We live in the presence of Jesus the Christ ... we are forgiven, thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE “Angels We Have Heard on High”

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

We worship to open our hearts for God’s blessing.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

**I 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.
For 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.**

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

Second Reading

Psalm 148

**Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!**

**Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!**

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for he commanded and they were created.
He established them for ever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.**

**Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!**

**Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!**

**Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike,
old and young together!**

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the LORD!**

PSALM RESPONSE *"Praise In the Heights"*

GOSPEL READING

Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

Now 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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided 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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

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

There 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 for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At 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.

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

SERMON

1st Sunday After Christmas, Dec. 27th, 2020. "Eyes of Faith." Bethany

At first glance, this short story of Simeon and Anna at the presentation of Jesus, seems very anti-climatical coming as it does after the incarnation and birth of Jesus the Christ. Yet it is another step in Luke's Gospel in presenting those who understand who Jesus is. Simeon and Anna are at the beginning of a long line of disciples who respond to Jesus with eyes and ears of faith. Here we hear Simeon's words of faith as he responds to the baby Jesus as the long-awaited Savior of Israel. Once again, we see God doing something seemingly impossible. Simeon was an old man and knew that his time on earth was drawing to a close. For long years he had been serving the Lord in the Temple, and during those years Simeon grew in the belief that the Lord would allow him to see the Savior of Israel before he died. Oh, Simeon knew this wasn't a logical hope, but he believed that quiet, still voice that spoke to him and help him to hold firm in the faith that the Lord would grant him his prayer before he died.

What moved Simeon to go to Temple that day, who knows. With his age, it wasn't always easy to get to the Temple, yet serving in the Temple was so much a part of his life, rarely did he miss. What he didn't know of course was that Mary and Joseph would be bringing Jesus to be circumcised on the eighth day following his birth according to the Law and the rites of Israel. There must have been many baby boys there in the Temple that day, and how Simeon determined which child of which couple was

the long-awaited Messiah—the long-awaited Savior of Israel and the world—clearly it was the guidance of God that led Simeon to Mary, Joseph and Jesus. What great faith Simeon shows us here? He goes to Mary and Joseph and picks up the infant Jesus, and utters the prayer that long ago became part of the liturgy of the Church: “Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people. A light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.”

What joy! What hope! What faith! What love must have soared in the heart of Simeon. Here in his arms all the hopes, all the love and faith of the world; here in his arms rest the Messiah in this little child—this little infant Jesus. Here was God! Here was salvation. Simeon’s prayer reflects all that he sees—all that he sees through his eyes of faith as gazes upon the child Jesus. Without those eyes of faith, Jesus would have been just another crying child that day, and years later, Jesus would have been just another prophet from Judea without the eyes of faith; and he would have been just another rebel hung on a cross; just another footnote in the pages of history. But with Simeon and millions of others today, we see Jesus through the eyes of faith and know that Simeon’s hope—that our hope is not in vain. That indeed our prayers of hope are answered God has come to us in this child of Bethlehem. Hope and forgiveness are here amongst us now. If only more could see and hear what healing words God speaks to us through the words of Jesus.

As Simeon speaks, he does so directly to Mary and Joseph. He reveals that many will not understand Jesus to be God’s Messiah. Indeed pain and suffering will pierce Mary to the depths of her heart as she sees her Son denied, beaten, and finally killed on the cross by those in power who see in Him a threat to the established order; who see him as a threat to their religion, to their power; their wealth; their status.

In these times it appears that little has changed. We deal with the powerful who ignore the needs of the people; of those in power who would keep people fearful and divided, full of hate for one another rather than listen the suffering pleas from those in need. We live in a culture that sees compassion, caring for the poor, bringing hope to those who are broken in spirit, putting God before those in power as weaknesses rather than strengths. Yet there are millions whose lives have been changed—whose lives have been transformed by this Child of Bethlehem and they are the witnesses to the power of love and hope and faith that transforms lives and can transform the world, and they sing with Simeon the old song: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples.” Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY *“Love Has Captured the Night”*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*We believe in God,
Creator of the universe,
Giver of every good gift,*

Author of life itself.

*We believe in Jesus Christ,
who reminded us of the coming of God's kingdom,
who commanded us to care for those in need,
who taught us to store up treasures in heaven, not on earth,
and who gave us the example of self-giving love.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who inspires us to faithful stewardship of God's gifts and
that God has given us gifts to be shared freely and generously, in a spirit of love and joy.
We believe that faithful stewardship is an act of worship,
a means of praising God who has blessed us abundantly.
We believe that God has great things in store for us,
for it is in giving that we receive. AMEN*

(Allen & Sara Ewing-Merrill, 2004)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless our lives, lead us in your ways, gives us hearts for gratitude and service. Fill us with your grace, that what we desire is also what you desire. Grant us the understanding that our hearts' true desire is the love of you. May the love of Christ urge us on, may we walk by faith. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

*Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless those who govern. Bless the leaders of nations, countries, towns, and cities. Bless all those who lead in all manner of ways – social, political, and religious. Fill the hearts of all with your wisdom. Guide us in the way of justice and integrity for all. Guide us to walk by faith. Holy God, tend to those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. Tend to the tired, the dying, the poor and the hungry.
Help us to follow the love of Christ, a love which urges us on to seek and serve Christ in others. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.*

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for Bethany members on our prayer list. Give them the blessing of your presence amid their times of trial. We pray for our congregation in this time of suspended worship that we will still continue to be a committed community of faith seeking to be the light of Jesus in our community and world. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for our world in a time of pandemic and societal distress and change. Give our leaders wisdom, compassion, insight, and courage to lead in ways that serve all the people under their charge. We pray for doctors and nurses, EMT's, and all those on the frontline of healthcare amid this COVID-19 pandemic. Give them health, energy, compassion, and the strength to care for those struggling with illness and hospitalization. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Listen to each of us, Lord, as we come to you in a moment of silent prayer

Into your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church - 4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God of all blessing, giver of all good gifts; day by day you shower us with what we need to live and prosper. With glad and generous hearts and in a response of thanksgiving, we return a portion of our wealth. May what we give be a symbol of our gratitude and a blessing of your love for those who may be helped through our offering. AMEN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

SENDING

Benediction

People of God, look for Jesus!

Seek him as a treasure in this great wide world.

Seek him in the eyes of your loved ones and in the eyes of strangers.

May your heart burn within you as the Lord draws close to you this week.

CLOSING HYMN "Go Tell It On the Mountain"

DISMISSAL

P *Go in peace to live and serve in the way of the cross.*

C **Thanks be to God!**