



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Christmas Eve • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • December 24, 2024



*For unto us a child is born.*

*Unto us a son is given.*

### **Collect for Christmas Eve**

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Readings for Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 9:1-7

Palm 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14

Welcome to everyone on this glorious evening. We gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. It is a great evening here in Cloudcroft and we are delighted to have many of our summer people here with us tonight. The community of Epiphany changes but the spirit of this place seems to stay the same. We are a worshipping group together and individually. We pray that God will bless this night as we spend it together and give us the most Holy Christmas.

Our readings for this service are familiar and the birth narrative from the gospel of Luke is the bell ringer for this service. The story is complete with all the color and holy light possible. On Sunday, Frank encouraged us to read the first three chapters of Luke to prepare us for this evening. Each detail has been examined and studied until there cannot be any possible unturned bit to preach. Our desire in all scripture is to let it get into our head and heart and keep us in the love our God. And we can find in these readings tonight just the message we need to hear.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as we open this new liturgical year may it fill us with the beautiful truth of your plan of love for your people. May all the world be open to hearing this true story. Let us seek you and rejoice in the treasures we find. From that beginning may we move to come closer to you and give ourselves to worship. We pray that the response in our lives will be positive, and we will be filled with eagerness to serve you.

Bless us with this commitment.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Luke 2: 9. "And behold an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel of the Lord said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"

" Glory to God in the highest."

On a cold night some shepherds were out tending the flock of sheep that likely belonged to the Temple authorities for their sacrifices. Suddenly there appeared to them an angel of the Lord and the "Glory of the Lord." This angel brought them Good News. In other words, the angel preached the gospel to these shepherds who were way outside the social boundary. As a class they were thought of as a group with a bad reputation. This poor angel preacher had a job to do to get his message across to these undesirables. But the good news was compelling enough to touch their needs. Then came the singers with a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God. We could stand to have this army of peacekeepers march in line to bring us this news today. The world needs peace.

"So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that had come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

To seek God in our lives, it is necessary "to Go." These shepherds did just that. When they got to the stall there were no more angels. What they saw was the baby Jesus and this encounter was for them just as meaningful as any encounter with the Lord Jesus. They were the first to see "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Way before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem the prophet Isaiah had told us of the coming one. "For unto us a Child Is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon his shoulders and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This wonderful prophecy of the birth of the Messiah reminds Israel that the victory of the coming Messiah would be a man. This was not of necessity as the Messiah could have been an angel or God. This Messiah was to be both a man and God. This qualified him to be our Savior and High Priest. The Son is given. These repetitions of Isaiah are interesting as this made Jesus fully God and fully human. He then is the second person of the Holy Trinity and adding humanity to his deity. Jesus was fully man and could stand in the place of sinful man and take the punishment that we deserve. And as for being fully God his sacrifice for us would be insufficient if Jesus is not fully God and fully Man, we are lost in sin.

Ultimately Jesus will come to be the king of kings and rule the world. We are still waiting for this promise. We await his glory to come and it will be Wonderful and this Counselor will be our guide in our lives. We are promised that his reign will last forever and there will be no end. In Handel's Hallelujah chorus of the Messiah, he had it right, "He shall reign forever and ever."

Now in our epistle reading we get the instructions on just how to live this life we have been given by the grace of God. This Good News gospel that comes to all men comes to us through the grace of God and we are free to receive it. This Lord Jesus who we celebrate tonight is the one who brings this grace to us. We should be living in the hope of the return of Jesus. This return will be as glorious for Christians as the blessedness of this night.

This message has three parts. This is the second. First, we come to God as the shepherds did. Then we receive him and begin to share the word.

"He gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself His own special people, zealous for good words." This Savior who is born this night is the one who brought us out of slavery to sin. We are therefore set free to live without sin and to live our lives in righteousness for the lives of others.

This is the proclamation of the grace we have received in our lives. We are to take that condition and share it with others to the glory of God.

We can therefore, on this night begin to sing a new song to God. It must be true that God loves a worshiping voice and praise from his people. He has done extraordinary things for us and our praise is welcome.

We sing that the LORD is great. This praise should be everlasting in our hearts. We bring praise and come into His courts.

We sing that the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad. We sing that this world may be glad, and that peace and justice is coming. In the time of Jesus, the judgements of the courts were not so welcome. Greed and bribery were part of the system. In this system the righteous were sometimes overruled and treated badly. But we sing that the world may be glad for the reign of Jesus means equity for all. On this night we sing to the glory of God and his Son's birth. This is the third part of God's message. We are entrusted to go now ourselves and tell others of the Good News.

Let there be praise from the whole earth and Glory in the highest.

Amen.

Pastor Fred



## **Prayer List - 12/24/24**

Church of St. Clement, Anglican, El Paso  
Revs. Bill Cobb, Rick Milliorn, Eduardo Gonzalez,  
Michael Sheehan,  
Deacon Don Morrill, Deacon Courtney Brown,

Bishop Steven and. Tricia

### **Those who need your healing care and strength:**

Frank & Carolyn Wilson  
Ellie  
David Brinkley  
Donya Conine; Wayne Conine Jr.  
Hannah & Evelyn Conine  
Sean Lofland  
Mary Espinosa  
Chip & Alyssa Taylor and baby  
Julius  
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendez  
Baby, Naomi Jade Dircherl and her  
family  
Gage

### **Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa  
Creed Napier, US Air Force,  
J.W. Grove, US Navy  
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-  
McChord,  
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong  
Wyatt Green, US Navy

### **We pray for our Epiphany family:**

Martha Vance  
Patrick Zima  
Thomas Zima  
Becca & Doug Price  
Debbie and Scooter Roof  
Jim and Mary Ann Russ

**Old Testament Reading**

**Isaiah 9:1-7**

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Psalms 96**

- 1 O sing unto the LORD a new song; \*  
sing unto the LORD, all the whole earth.
- 2 Sing unto the LORD, and praise his name; \*  
tell of his salvation from day to day.

- 3 Declare his honor to the nations, \*  
and his wonders to all people.
- 4 For the LORD is great, and highly to be  
praised; \*  
he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are  
but idols; \*  
but it is the LORD that made the heavens.
- 6 Glory and majesty are before him; \*  
power and honor are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe unto the LORD, O you families of the  
people; \*  
ascribe unto the LORD worship and power.
- 8 Ascribe unto the LORD the honor due unto  
his name; \*  
bring presents, and come into his courts.
- 9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; \*  
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
- 10 Tell it out among the nations, "The LORD is  
King; \*  
it is he who has made the world so firm that it  
cannot be moved; he shall judge the  
people righteously."
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be  
glad; \*  
let the sea make a noise, and all that is therein
- 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it; \*  
then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice  
before the LORD.
- 13 For he comes, for he comes to judge the earth; \*  
and with righteousness to judge the world,  
and the people with his truth.

**New Testament Lesson**  
**Titus 2:11-14**

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

**The Holy Gospel**  
**Luke 2:1-14**

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there

was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

