

Order of Service
Candlelight Service December 25, 2016

Introduction & John the Baptist

400 years had passed since Malachi spoke the word of the Lord, saying, "I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:5-6). Those who believed the promise of God were holding on to something that seemed long forgotten by nearly everyone.

Still, some anticipated the arrival of a Spirit-filled spokesman, who would prepare the people for the coming of the Lord...

When Herod was king of Judea, Zechariah (a Jewish priest) and his wife, Elizabeth, were obedient to God's commands and lived according to His Word. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple. He was chosen from among his priestly order to enter the sanctuary of the Lord, and to burn incense. A great crowd stood outside, praying.

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly (Luke 1:5-17).

So, the forerunning prophet was conceived, and the promised Messiah would soon follow...

Song

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Gabriel comes to Mary

Six months after John was conceived, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin named Mary. She was in Nazareth, a city in Galilee, and she was engaged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of the ancient king of Israel, David.

Gabriel came to Mary and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" Mary was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to understand what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Then Mary said, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit of God will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

Then the angel said, "Look and see that your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son, even though she should be too old for childbearing. In fact, she was called barren, and this is now the sixth month of her pregnancy. For nothing is impossible with God!"

Mary replied, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:26-38).

Song

What Child is this?

Angels & the Birth of Jesus

In the same region of Galilee, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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.

The angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:8-14)

During those same days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone had to obey, so Mary and Joseph began traveling even while she was pregnant. They went up from Nazareth in Galilee, to the region of Judea. Finally, they arrived in Bethlehem, which is the city of David. Joseph was of the house and lineage of David, so he was registered there with Mary, his fiancé. And while they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger – an animal-feeding trough (Luke 2:1-7).

There is nothing to which we may compare this self-imposed poverty of God the Son.

“The Ancient of days has become an infant. He who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, how lies in a manger. And He who cannot be touched, now lies in subject to the hands of men. He who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infant’s bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.” – John Chrysostom

Song

Angels We Have Heard On High

Simeon's Song & the Fullness of Time

When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. They came to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord. There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel – the promised Messiah – and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

God's Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ or Messiah. Simeon was in the temple when Joseph and Mary brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law. Simeon took Jesus up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:25-32).

The Apostle Paul also speaks of the salvation and peace that Jesus brought when He came into the world. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:4-7).

Song

Joy to the World

The Reason for Christ's first Advent

God's words have been sent to the ancient people of Israel, and the good news of peace has come ultimately through Jesus Christ. Who Jesus is and what He did was plain for all to see throughout Judea. First, John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Then God the Father testified that Jesus of Nazareth was His Son and He anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). After that, Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

The climax of Jesus' earthly ministry came when He was crucified upon a cross, but this was not the end of Jesus. God raised Him from the dead on the third day, and Jesus Himself appeared to hundreds of witnesses afterwards. Jesus was not merely a ghost or illusion; He ate, drank, walked, talked, and was touched by those who witnessed His resurrected appearances.

Jesus commanded all those who would trust and follow Him to preach this good news to others. He told them to tell people about Him – that He offers forgiveness of sin and that He is the appointed judge of all people everywhere. Jesus showed how all of the prophets of God throughout history have pointed to Him. In Christ there is grace, mercy, and life! (Acts 10:36-43)

"For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His Spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit, that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back." – John Chrysostom

**Explanation of Communion*

Song

In Christ Alone *(Communion elements distributed during song)*

Communion Text

The Apostle Paul said, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

**Communion elements ingested corporately*

Song

In Christ Alone (*Instrumental and/or last verse repeated*)

Family Prayer

**Family Prayer Time Explanation and Logistics*

Invite Deacons to the front, and instruct sections to their appropriate Deacon. Families may form a line down each aisle to wait for their opportunity to pray with a Deacon.

Song

How Many Kings (*Sing while deacons pray with families*)

Offering

Christmas Benevolence Fund

This is an offering that is distributed to those who have no connection to FBC, but request assistance through the church office. The portion to each individual is small, but requests are frequent.

Song

Oh, Come All Ye Faithful (begin singing during offering collection)

Candlelight Display

Invite congregation to stand, hold their candles, and prepare to pass the flame from one to another.

After the Offering, ushers will light candles beginning with the outside aisles.

**Candles to be distributed upon entry*

Light of the World

John 1:1-5, 9-13 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

**Congregation will raise their candles high for maximum illumination.*

Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Song

Go Tell it on the Mountain

Benediction

You, who know and love this Savior who brings His light and declares peace for all who trust in Him, go now – out into the darkness and let the light of Christ shine forth in brilliant display.

May the light of God be seen in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our actions – as we seek to glorify God and enjoy Him as our King, our Redeemer, and our Beloved.