

The Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
St. Luke 2:1-14
December 24th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Glory to God in the Highest!

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Heaven there is A LOT of singing. Whenever there is a description of Heaven that is one of the things that the residents of Heaven are doing is singing. This is why we sing in our services, it is practice for when we get to Heaven. In Heaven there will be no weak voices, no off-key singers. Everyone will sing in perfect harmony.

Tonight, we do a lot of singing in our service. It is one of the ways that Christians celebrate. Our singing does not mirror the singing of the world. The singing of the world is focused on the singer. Our singing is focused on the One Whom we worship and adore. We worship and adore the baby born this night, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger. Our singing tonight is always and only focused on the Christ child. Just as it was for the angels of Heaven.

The angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds as they were watching their flocks by night. The angel preached the first sermon about the Lord + Jesus Christ to shepherds watching their sheep. We are told that it was night. Tradition states that the baby + Jesus was born at midnight. But, whatever time of night, the shepherds are the first to hear that the Savior + Jesus Christ was born for them and all the world.

They were even given a sign in which they could identify this miraculous baby: "You will find a Babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And then there was singing! This is the response of Heaven to the Good News of a Savior being born for mankind. The heavenly host—the whole company of Heaven—sang out in joyous song, with loud voices, "Glory to God in the Highest!"

The angels of Heaven were not just giving glory to God the Father seated on the throne of Heaven, but they were singing of the glory of God Who exchanged His throne in Heaven for the lowly throne of a manger. God had done what was impossible for mankind. He became human. But, He was still fully God. He was now both God and man. He was God Who dwelled in the flesh of mankind. He came to dwell with us, to rescue us from our sins. This is the glory of God of which the angels sang.

No other false god could do this. Besides the fact that no other god exists beside the Triune God, all the false gods that unbelievers worship are separated from their worshipers. Only the Triune God deigns to dwell with His followers in such an intimate and close relationship. He desires to be with us. He desires to save us when we are unable. All the false gods in the world sit on their lofty thrones

and require their followers to follow certain rules to gain the false god's favor. Our loving God knows we are unable to keep His Law on account of the sin of Adam, which corrupted the whole human race. Therefore, He desires to come and dwell with us in our flesh.

This message deserves to be sung about. This is why one of the seasons with the most Lutheran hymns is Christmas. This is also why you will notice that the hymns we sing tonight and tomorrow morning all talk about what God has done for us. They talk about our God who now dwells with us in our flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil.

The angels sang to the shepherds of what God had done for them: He was born as a Babe to save mankind. By His redemption of mankind, He brings peace on earth to men who cling to Him in faith. He is worthy of our praise. He is worthy of the angels' praise. "Glory to God in the Highest!"

Is this not what we sing every Lord's Day? "Glory to God in the Highest!" We sing it every Sunday in the words of the Gloria in Excelsis. However, that song has been silent the entire season of Advent. As we reflected upon the coming of our Lord, we also reflected upon the reason for His coming, to redeem us from our sin. And so, we kept our voices silent in anticipation of the day of His coming. No extra music for the entire season of Advent. Our Lord was not yet here, so we could not sing out in jubilation. But now, our Lord has come! A Savior who is Christ the Lord. He is born in the city of David; in Bethlehem.

Now we sing out with exaltation! We now echo the song of the angels. Just as they sang out of the Glory of God on that first Christmas night, we now sing of what our Lord has done for us. Let the church bells ring, let the sound of music fill our ears, let our voices join in chorus of the great things our Lord + Jesus Christ has done for us. Let our voices sing of the beginning of those great things this night when He is born of the Virgin Mary. He takes His first steps toward redeeming the human race from sin, death and the power of the devil. He fulfills the first of the prophecies about His coming—the prophecy that was first given in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve, after they first sinned. A savior would be born for us and all mankind.

Let us praise God and sing, "Glory to God in the Highest!" For, this night our God comes to us to save us. And He will sustain us through this life by His Word and Sacraments, and carry us to our eternal home in Heaven. There all the practicing for Heaven—the singing and liturgy which we do here—will finally be fulfilled. Our voices will join with the multitude of the heavenly hosts, and with all the saints of Heaven, and we will sing for all eternity of the Glory of God, Who came to dwell with us in order to save us. Glory be to God on High and on Earth peace and good will to man. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.