

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Midweek Advent 3
December 17, 2025
Sermon by Pastor Dan Patuz
Glory to God in the highest!

There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified! ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: ¹¹ Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He 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 Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.”

----Luke 2:8-14

If you had to choose only two of your favorite Christmas carols and songs, which would you pick? To choose but two might be difficult because there are many wonderful Christmas carols and hymn. Here are the two I chose: “Joy to the World” and “O Holy Night”. However, I am positive that my number one selection would change if I could have heard the song the angels sung over fields near Bethlehem that very first Christmas Eve. Can you imagine how beautiful the singing of the angels must have been? Did they harmonize? Did they sing for many minutes? But not only was the quality of their singing heavenly but also the message of their song was wonderful and wondrous for the shepherds and also for you and me. **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.”**

Imagine the scene. It was evening out in the fields near Bethlehem, perhaps the same fields where a thousand years earlier David watched his flocks. Maybe some of the shepherds were half asleep. But as Luke reports, **“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified!” But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord.”**

The angels are lovingly concerned about us humans. The good news about the birth of Jesus made the angels sing for joy. Notice the angel called the newborn child with three titles – Savior, Christ, Lord. Christ was born. The Old Testament Hebrew name for Christ in our English language is Messiah. God had promised that the Messiah, the Christ would come. But when would that be? Let an hour glass illustrate. The glass is wide at top but then narrows down. God would not have used an hour glass, not a month glass or a year glass, not even a century glass but a millennia glass. The glass is very broad at first but it will narrow down to the time when the Messiah would be born. About 4000 years before the first Christmas, God promised Eve that one of her descendants would be born and overcome Satan and sin. Around the year 2500 BC the timer narrows down more as Noah and his son Shem would be ancestors of the Messiah. Then 500 years later in 2000 BC Abraham was told he would be an ancestor. But the time was not right yet. In 1500 BC Moses was told that a great prophet would be coming. The time still was not right but the timer was narrowing down. King David in the year 1000 BC was told that from his family the Messiah would come. But it was not yet the time. More descriptions were given about the Messiah. About 750 BC the Lord through Isaiah spoke of the virgin birth of Jesus, that He would be Emmanuel which means ‘God With Us.’ and that he would suffer for our sins and rise again. The prophet Micah added that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. The timer was narrowing.

Angels must have been wondering when all this would happen. Thousands of years had come; thousands of years had gone by. But as the Book of Galatians says, **“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law...”** The sands of time had all passed through God’s timer. Christ was born. The greatest event in all of history was unfolding – angels spoke of it, shepherds heard the news. It was a time for joyful singing.

Notice another title spoken by the angels about who was born. This was the Lord, the Second Person in the Trinity. The Nicene Creed speaks of Jesus as true God but **“who was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became fully human.”** The Christmas carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” referring to the child of Bethlehem puts it this way, **“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity! Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel.”** The angels broke out with a joyful hymn.

The angels said also that this little child born that day in Bethlehem was the Savior. That title is so meaningful. Savior from what? Taxes that were being issued by Caesar Augustus? Savior from all sickness? Savior from the evil that people might do to us? None of these! Savior from something worse! Savior from sin and hell itself. And as you know because of sin you and I deserve to end up in hell. This is what the angel Gabriel told Joseph, "Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." The Nicene Creed says, "For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven."

In the front yard of a house with Christmas decorations was a very nice nativity scene. Joseph and Mary and the Baby Jesus, shepherds and angels, but then in the background was a cross. The front of our church at Christmas time is similar. Up high is the nativity scene, but then as your glance lowers, you see the cross.

About 33 years later the baby Jesus is a full grown man. About 6-7 miles away from Bethlehem was a place called Calvary. From the cradle to the cross! Those little baby hands would be adult hands and would be pierced by nails. It would be from swaddling clothes to a crown of thorns It would be from the face of a baby to a face that would be spit upon. It would be from His back as an infant to a back that was whipped and bleeding! He would suffer the punishment of our sins. The hymn "What Child Is This?" puts it this way,

**Why lies He in such mean estate Where oxen now are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, the cross He'll bear for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Mary**

The full grown body of this little baby would someday be laid in a grave, but then would rise triumphantly on Easter morning with the victory won for those shepherds and for all of us over sin, death, and hell.

The child of Bethlehem brought about peace between God and mankind. And the angels rejoiced and sang! **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.**" Sometimes we hear the statement, "I made my peace with God." Actually, God is the one that made peace with us. He did it through Jesus, the Prince of Peace. And this peace is meant for all.

Let's go back to the hour glass illustration. Remember how in the Old Testament things continued to narrow down to the Jewish people and then to Jesus. But immediately thereafter things broaden out to people of every nationality, race, and culture. Christmas is for all people.

Joy to the World The Lord has come.