

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Greatest Gift  
Christmas Eve  
Isaiah 9:2-7

**Prelude:** "The First Noel" by Richard and Jay Hendry with Byeong Uk Kim

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Music Ministry:** "Angels We Have Heard on High" by Rob Noyes

**Call to Worship**

Jesus, Son of the living God, splendor of the Father, eternal light.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, King of glory, sun of justice, son of the virgin Mary.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, everlasting Lord, Prince of Peace.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, our help and our refuge.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, God of peace, friend of all, source of life and of holiness.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, brother of the poor, goodness without measure, unending wisdom.

**Lord, we praise you!**

Jesus, good shepherd, true light, our way and our life.

**Lord, we praise you! Amen**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Be near us, Lord Jesus, we ask you to stay  
close by us forever and love us, we pray.

Immanuel, we invite you to draw near and dwell with us.

Surround us with your tender, caring presence,

that what we say and do in worship  
might prepare us to live forever with you in heaven.  
In your powerful name we pray. Amen.

### **Advent Candle Lighting**

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world;  
the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."  
**We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.**

*[Candle Lighter]*

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.  
For the darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
—Isaiah 60:1-3, NRSV

Come, Lord Jesus, our light, and our salvation.  
**Let us walk in the light of the Lord**

### **Opening Hymn #153: "Joy to the World" (V 1, 2, 4)**

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
let earth receive its King;  
let every heart prepare him room  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:  
let us our songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,

and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

### **Call to Confession**

#### **Prayer of Confession**

Holy God, you sent a star  
to guide the Magi to the child Jesus.  
We confess that we have not followed the light of your Word.  
We have not searched for signs of your love in the world  
or trusted your good news to be good.  
We have failed to praise your Son's birth  
and refused his peace on earth.  
We have expected little  
and hoped for less.  
Forgive our doubt  
and renew in us all fine desires,  
that we may watch and wait  
and once more hear the glad story of our Savior,  
Jesus Christ, the Lord. Amen.

#### **Assurance of Pardon**

God has caused light to shine in our hearts,  
the light that is knowledge of the glory of God  
in the face of Jesus Christ.

#### **Music Ministry: "O Holy Night" by Rob Noyes**

#### **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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.

#### **Music Ministry: "Angel Celebration" by Choir**

#### **Puppets Ministry: "Gloria"**

#### **Music Ministry: "In the Stable" by Choir**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**Isaiah 9:2-7**

- <sup>2</sup> 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.
- <sup>3</sup> 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.
- <sup>4</sup> 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.
- <sup>5</sup> For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
 and every garment rolled in blood  
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- <sup>6</sup> 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.
- <sup>7</sup> 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.

**Music Ministry: "Lullaby" by Choir with Byeong Uk Kim on flute**

**Sermon**

For weeks now we have been celebrating the coming of Christmas with people all around us each and every day. We have seen the signs that say Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays. On many shop windows we are reminded that 'It is the most wonderful time

of the year'. And it is true that for many retailers this is indeed the most wonderful time of the year. However, for many others Christmas may not hold that same sense of wonder. When we are young it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of Christmas with all of the parties, the food and the gifts, but as an adult, there are all the challenges socially and economically of the parties, the food and especially the gifts.

This year with the rising costs of everything there are many families that will feel the Christmas stretch of their budgets. Things which were easily bought in years previous will require thought and sacrifice this year. In Ottawa this year they are expecting 14,000 people to require a Christmas meal from one of the shelters which usually did roughly 4,000 meals.

Christmas post covid has been changed in many ways from the celebration and holiday it was, people are still facing challenges in both cost and ease of travel and the return to family gatherings that use to have such happiness.

Yet through all of the realities and challenges of life in this world, God will still find ways to put the joy and the peace of this season into the hearts of His people.

Christmas is a season where we should remember all of the wonderful gifts that God has given us in this world; the sun and its light, the moon and its beauty, and this earth itself. A planet full of blessings for the people of God, air which we can breathe, water which we can drink, plants and animals that sustain us. We should remember the wondrous gift of life that we have each day, every waking breath is a gift from God, a gift of our flesh, our breath, and our memories. Every moment that we have on this planet is a Gift from God, our joys, our sorrows, our victories and our challenges, our loves, our friends and even our enemies are all gifts from God in this life, these things all help us find how we are to walk in the light of the Lord in this world, helping us to grow in our knowledge and obedience of the Lord, reminding us what it means to be both human and a child of God. Finally, Christmas calls for us to recall the most wonderful gift the world has ever received, the gift of the Word of the Lord becoming flesh and being sent to save us, to heal us and to bring us joy, to bring us back into relationship with God.

The prophet Isaiah, roughly 700 years before the birth of Christ prophesied the birth of Jesus when he said,

**Isaiah 9:6**

**'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.'**

This is perhaps one of the most magnificent descriptions of the long-awaited Messiah that the people of Judah could have been given and we see examples of Jesus as each of these all throughout the scriptures.

James 1:5 tells us that Jesus is indeed the wonderful counsellor,

**James 1:5**

**<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.'**

Colossians 1:15-16 shows us that Jesus is mighty God,

**Colossians 1:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.'**

In Romans 8:16-17 we see him as the everlasting father,

**Romans 8:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.'**

And in Philippians 4:6-7 we are reminded that regardless of what is going on in this world, Jesus is indeed our prince of peace,

**Philippians 4:6-7**

**<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'**

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, our Redeemer was born to us as prophesized by Isaiah, and this is what we celebrate during the Christmas season. Which is why there is no better place to celebrate the coming of Christ than in His house on Christmas Eve. Here in God's house, we recognize that there is no greater gift that you can receive on Christmas than salvation, there is no greater gift than Jesus.

Salvation came to earth at Christmas, Christ is the reason we have Christmas, and, on this eve, we should remember that Christ came as a tiny babe, he came to bring us salvation and return us into relationship with God, and he came with the fullness of God's love for God's people.

Our God, the creator of the universe loved us so much that he willingly came into our world. When he did so, he did not come as an all-powerful being, or a monstrous creature, instead he came into this world as one of the most helpless beings imaginable, he came as an infant. That infant was indeed sent to bring salvation to God's people, to help them repent from their sinful nature and return to a relationship with God. The book of Acts tells us that:

**Acts 3:26**

**26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”**

One of the great mysteries of our faith is how God came in the flesh to mankind. It is a marvelous, mysterious, magnificent, and majestic event that no one can really explain. John Phillips, a biblical scholar once said that ‘The great mystery of the manger is that God should be able to translate deity into humanity without discarding the deity or distorting the humanity.’ Jesus Christ was indeed fully man and fully God.

So, it is a fact that our God entered the world as a babe in a manger. But why was it that the God of heaven should come to earth in the form of a human infant? God is God and he could have come to earth in any form He wished. God could have come down from the heavens in all of his Glory and yet he chose to make himself known to mankind through the form of this infant.

In the book of Hebrews 5:8-10 it teaches us that,

**Hebrews 5:8**

**<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, <sup>10</sup> being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.**

Jesus, the son of God learned obedience through his suffering. This does not in any way mean that Jesus did not already know obedience to God, or that his human flesh was anything less than perfect. In fact, it was in his obedience and perfection that he walks perfectly always with the father. Instead, it teaches us that Jesus left his throne in Heaven and put on humanity, He walked among us and experienced all of the frail and sinful nature of mankind. As he walked among us here on earth, he knew what it meant to be human, he suffered hunger, exhaustion, pain, sweat and temptation, all of the things that each of us suffer every day that we walk upon this earth. Jesus learned what it was to walk upon the earth as a human being, and through his perfect obedience to God, through his ability to resist all temptation and sin he became the lamb of God, the one who is slain for the sin of all mankind. Through his birth as that innocent babe, Jesus Christ became the pure and innocent lamb who was slain for our sins.

We know that Jesus came into this world as that pure and innocent babe, but as he lived here on earth he grew in wisdom and stature. We know that as a young boy he sat in the temple and amazed the teachers there with his knowledge and understanding of the Lord’s scripture and teachings. He grew into a man, a man who was dedicated into sharing the good news of the Father with many who the teachers of the time considered unworthy. Just look at how the angels described the birth of Jesus in the book of Luke.

**Luke 2:11**

**<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

That innocent babe was Christ the Lord, and there are many others who recognized this.

John the Baptist, a man who many flocked to as a prophet and teacher told all gathered that

**John 1:29**

**<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

The great apostle Paul said that everything he has is in Christ the Lord,

**Philippians 3:8**

**<sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**

Peter taught us that

**Acts 2:36**

**Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."**

Even the Roman centurion, the one who had kept watch over Jesus at his crucifixion said,

**Matthew 27:54**

**<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"**

And finally, the demons themselves, Legion, the ones who deny God actively recognize him,

**Mark 5:7**

**<sup>7</sup> And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."**

This evening we celebrate that God came to us as that innocent babe and that the innocent babe grew into our Saviour, the one who saved us from the debt of death that we owe because of our sins. On the night that Jesus Christ was born, an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds in the region and proclaimed to them,

**Luke 2:10**

**<sup>10</sup> 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.**

However, the path to that great joy was not a simple one. In his time upon the earth, the innocent son of God faced many trials and tribulations. For the Son of God these events began almost immediately, as a baby there was a jealous king who was trying to have him



killed. As a young man he was ridiculed and berated by the people of his hometown. He became a wandering teacher, moving from place to place, bringing the good news of the Lord while often weary, hungry, and seeking shelter. In the end he was hated, accused, denied, and betrayed by one of his own disciples. Finally on that fateful day he was spat upon, beaten, scourged with a whip, a crown of thorns was placed upon his head, nailed to a cross and died. His body was removed and placed in an empty tomb.

The story does not end there. Three days after his burial, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. In the book of Matthew, we are told:

**Matthew 28:9**

**<sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.**

This may seem like an incredibly normal greeting; Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and he simply says hello. However, the Greek word that is here is 'Chairete' which literally translates as 'Joy be to you'.

The good news of great joy that the angels had spoken of at his birth was echoed here 30 years later after his death and resurrection. Joy to the world was being proclaimed by the Lord himself and now two thousand years later we still echo this theme of Christ birth every Christmas season. "Be of good cheer, we bring you good news of great joy!" God gave us the greatest gift we could ever receive, His Son, our Savior upon this day.

It is easy for us to get so caught up in this season and all of its modern interpretations that we might forget that this is the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas is a time meant to celebrate this wondrous mystery of the birth of that babe. The day upon which God sent his only son, the Lamb of God, to die for our sins so that we could once again be called the children of God. Jesus, who had all of the power and majesty of God, gave it all up to become a tiny babe, born of a virgin, suffered upon this world as a man, and died for each of us personally. That humble babe in that manger, we celebrate at Christmas, is our Saviour.

**Isaiah 9:6**

**'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.'**

'For unto us a child is born, a son is given', As a child of humans, Jesus is born; but as the son of God, notice that he was given to us. John 3:16, perhaps the most well-known verse in the bible teaches us that,

**John 3:16**

**<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**

God gave his son to us for our salvation, to save us. John Stott in the Cross of Christ wrote about how Jesus Christ, in his death upon the cross paid the debt of those who believe in him in full.

**“God’s love must be wonderful beyond comprehension. God could quite justly have abandoned us to our fate. He could have left us alone to reap the fruit of our wrongdoing and to perish in our sins. It is what we deserved. But he did not. Because he loved us, he came after us in Christ. He pursued us even to the desolate anguish of the cross, where he bore our sin, guilt, judgment, and death... It is more than love. Its proper name is ‘grace,’ which is love to the undeserving. God himself in his Son has borne the penalty for our law-breaking.” - John Stott**

That tiny babe gave himself up for you and I. Jesus Christ stepped down from his throne of Glory in the heavens to carry the debt of our sin upon His innocent flesh. And He did this for only one reason; God loves us, every one of us.

Many of us will have had struggles this year. Some of those struggles might have been financial struggles, with the costs of everything exploding lately, or with the loss of a job, or change of a job. Some of us may have had physical struggles with our health, through injury or illness. Some of us may have had emotional struggles, loss of family, or friendships, stresses involved in moves, job changes, or other events. Some of us may have gone through spiritual struggles, trying to understand the scripture, trying to understand our own sin and how we can repent, trying to figure out our faith. This year has been a struggle for each and every one of us in some way, at some point. However, tonight, Christmas Eve and the season of Advent is a reminder that God loves you! No matter what struggle you have faced this year, God is with you, working in the midst of your struggles.

Jesus Christ came into this world, so that you could have salvation. So that you could be granted eternal life and be part of God’s family in His eternal kingdom. Jesus came to this earth so that through him the Holy Spirit can live within each of his followers. So, no matter what challenges, tribulations, difficulties, or temptations we face, we need to know that we are never alone, God is with us, and we are loved by Him. You are indeed loved by the very creator of the heavens and the earth.

On Christmas Day we will celebrate the truth that God came into this world as a humble and helpless infant. He did not come in absolute glory, but instead in the humble form of humanity. He took on all of the frailty and sinfulness of human flesh. God came into this world to save us. He became as we are so that he could become the blameless lamb to be slain for our sins. He who knew no sin, became sin, so that you and I might be saved. God came into this world in the very fullness of His love; because we do not deserve his mercy, yet he gives it to each of us through His grace. And because of the grace of God, our sins and darkness are washed away by his blood and light.

That is what we celebrate in the Christmas season. It is a Merry Christmas because Christ was born. Salvation was given to each of his faithful because of the grace of God alone. We did nothing to deserve our salvation, yet we have been saved because of God's love for us, we have been called to be his children and we will live in his Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love for all of eternity in His eternal kingdom.

Let us Pray,

**Our Immanuel**

We thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,  
that you are the Word  
and living image of the eternal Father,  
our Immanuel.

You took on yourself our human nature,  
and you support and protect your Christendom  
against your enemy, the devil.

Give us the light of your holy Word.

Forgive us our sins and give us eternal life.

Be our mediator and intercessor,  
and plead for us.

Hear and help us as you have promised:

“Come to me, all who labor  
and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest.”

Have mercy on us.

Pray for us before your everlasting Father,  
sanctify and rule in us with your Holy Spirit.

Protect us against all treachery and terror,  
and the lies and murder of the devil

so that with pure and joyful hearts

we may serve you;

with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

you live and reign

forever and ever.

Amen.

*Source: Die pommersche Kirchen-Ordnung und Agenda, p. 284. Translated for A Collection of Prayers.*

**Music Ministry: “One Small Child” by Edgar de Paz**

## **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

### **Offertory Prayer**

#### **(Congregant Prepared)**

**Music Ministry: "Christmas Hallelujah" by Glenda Gould and Jeff Earl**

### **Pastoral Prayer**

God of all grace,  
 you who have sent your Son to be our Redeemer,  
 to give light in our darkness,  
 pardon for our sins,  
 and hope in our turmoil,  
 accept now our hearty thanks  
 for your Word (and for this sacrament).  
 We have met our Savior here;  
 we know your promises are true,  
 and our hearts have been nourished.  
 Send us forth to live obediently  
 until we gather here again in his name. Amen

### **Benediction**

The joy of the angels,  
 the eagerness of the shepherds,  
 the perseverance of the Magi,  
 the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
 and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.  
 And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

**Closing**

**Candle Lighting and hymn #154: "Silent Night"**

Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.