



OurSaviorBirmingham.com

HE COMES, BEARING *gifts*

THE GIFT OF LOVE





Welcome! Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. We are happy that you are here! In our service we gather before our almighty God to offer him our worship and praise. We also gather to strengthen ourselves through the study of God's holy and powerful Word. If you are a guest, please fill out a Connection card found in our entryway. You can place it in the offering plate or hand it to Pastor or an usher as you leave.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Bathrooms are located at the end of the hallway as you exit the sanctuary.

Children's Activity Sheets give activities and lessons pertaining to the Scripture lessons for today's service. Ask an usher at the door into the sanctuary. If your little one needs a moment, there is a speaker and window in our entryway that will allow you to see and hear the service.

Children's Church is a special place for younger children to hear a Bible story, sing some songs, learn a prayer, and do a craft. You can escort your child to our children's church just before the sermon as noted in the service folder. Children's Church is located in Room 3 and will be on your right as you exit the sanctuary.

Holy Communion will be celebrated as part of this morning's worship service. Here at Our Savior Lutheran Church, we practice "membership communion" and ask that only members come forward to receive the sacrament. On page 156 in the front of the hymnal, there is a "Personal Preparation for Holy Communion" you can use to prepare to receive Christ's true body and blood.

Free WIFI is available if you use an online Bible or Bible app on your phone or tablet. Look for the "OSLC_Guest" connection to get online!

Looking for more information? If you would like to learn more about Our Savior Lutheran Church, You can stay up to date and in the know by connecting with Our Savior online.

 [OurSaviorBirmingham.com](https://www.oursaviorbirmingham.com) | Video and audio sermons archives, calendar of events, and more!

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 Pastor@OurSaviorBirmingham.com | Pastor Kratz's email

Our Savior Lutheran Church is a member of a group of more than twelve hundred churches called Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or WELS. The WELS is a world-wide church body with congregations serving the United States, as well as Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and over 25 countries through world mission work.



BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and (†) give you peace.

Amen.

HYMN | #53 *To Shepherds as They Watched by Night* (verses 1,2,4,6)

~Please be seated



Blessing: This blessing has been spoken over God's people for over 3,500 years. It is known as the Aaronic blessing because the Lord first instructed Aaron, the first High Priest of the children of Israel, to share the promise of blessing: "So they will put my name on [them], and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:27).

In peace, Lord, you let your
 ser-vant now de-part ac-cord-ing to your word. For my
 eyes have seen your sal-va-tion which
 you have pre-pared for ev-'ry peo-ple, a
 light to light-en the Gen-tiles and the
 glo-ry of your peo-ple Is-ra-el.

PRAYER

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Lord has refreshed us with His Word. Let us head into this new week equipped for lives of service.

Our mission is to worship God, to spread his Word to our community and to all nations, and to nurture all believers to prepare them for lives of Christian service.

Song of Simeon: The “Nunc Dimittis” (“Now dismiss”) is also known as the “Song of Simeon.” Through God’s Word and Sacrament, we have seen Jesus Christ, and like Simeon we find divine peace and comfort through faith in the Savior.

TODAY’S WORSHIP

He Comes, Bearing Gifts: The Gift of Love

December 23, 2018

Love is rarely a gift. Typically, when you love someone, it is because you get something in return. You love your spouse in part because of the support and affection he shows to you. You love your favorite teacher because of what she gives you by making learning enjoyable. You love your dog because he is a loyal companion. In such cases, love is not a gift. It is something that is merited...deserved. Now, if you loved a spouse who always treated you like dirt, loved a teacher who taught you nothing, loved a dog that daily bit you, then your love would be a gift. If you love someone who gives you nothing in return, who makes your existence more difficult, then your love is a gift. You are showing undeserved love, which Scripture calls grace.

Love is rarely a gift. However, with God, his love is always a gift. God the Father looks at humanity and he sees us doing the evil we should not do. Just as bad, he sees us failing to do the good that we ought to do. Do we make God’s existence easier? No. Instead, God the Son took on human flesh and suffered and died to make atonement for our sins. Yet, he did so gladly. Why? Love! Love that is undeserved. The gift of love!

PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP

As you prepare to worship your Lord today, spend a few quiet moments in prayer before the service. Review the Scripture readings, the service notes, and pray this prayer:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

SERVING IN WORSHIP

Ushers: Bob Holbrook, Doug Vertein

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DIVINE SERVICE

ADVENT GATHERING RITE

INVOCATION

~Please stand

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son (†) and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

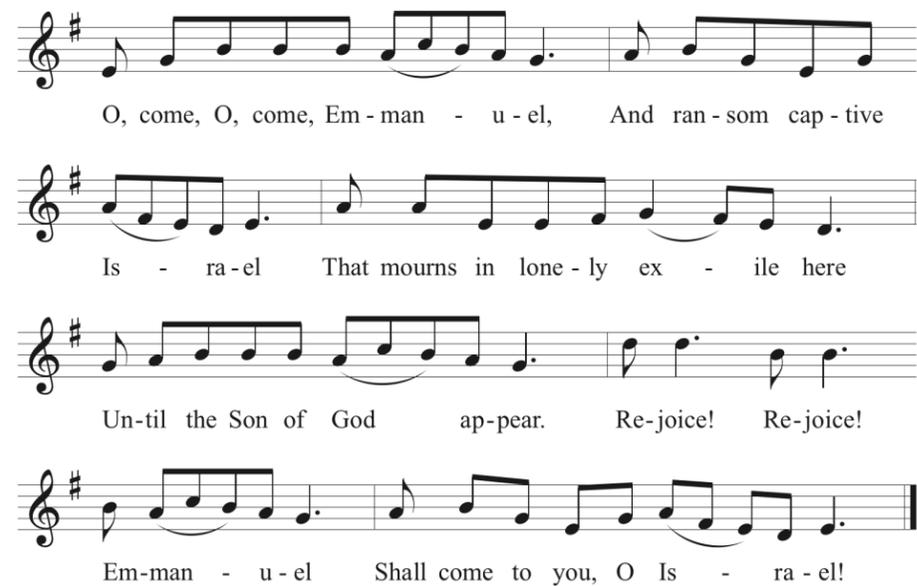
CONFESSION OF SINS AND LIGHTING RITE

When God created the world, he made the crown of his creation—the human race—in his image (Genesis 1:26). Perfect people lived in a perfect world in a perfect relationship with God.

But mankind rebelled against God, bringing sin into the world and death to all. God declared the wages of sin to be death (Romans 6:23). We too are guilty, and we confess our sinful thoughts, words, and actions.

Silence for personal confession and reflection

However, God—who is love—did not want to be separated from his children forever. He promised a Savior who would bear the punishment for sin, defeat the devil, and break the bonds of death.



O, come, O, come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive
 Is - ra - el That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 Un-til the Son of God ap-pear. Re-joice! Re-joice!
 Em-man - u - el Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

Invocation: This comes from the latin "invoco" which describes the act of calling upon or asking for help or support. As we begin our worship, we call on the name of the triune God, who is our ever-present help and strength and in whose name we were baptized. The sign of the cross then reminds worshipers of their baptisms.

The Confession and Forgiveness of Sins: The use of the keys (the power to forgive sins) is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners. See John 20:21-23.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Scriptures teach that the celebration of the Lord's Supper connects us intimately with Christ and with one another as Christians who are united around a common confession of faith. Our Savior Lutheran Church asks that only members come forward to receive the sacrament.

There is a Personal Preparation for Communion available on page 156 in the red hymnal.



WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat, this is my (t) body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my (t) blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

LAMB OF GOD | *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you
take a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world, have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you
take a-way the sin of the world, grant us your peace.
A - men. A - men. A - men.

~Please be seated

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son. Jesus, our Savior, has paid the ransom for your debt; your sins are forgiven. In view of God's mercy, today we light the *love* candle. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Galatians 4:4,5; 1 John 4:9;10

O, come, my Love, who gives to me Grace un - de - served, un -
end - ing, free. Help me to share this gift most rare
That all, God's hope and peace, may share. Re-joice! Re-joice!
Em-man - u - el Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

In the *love* of God we go to the world—to our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors. We regard no one from a worldly point of view. If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for us; in him we have become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Re-joice! Re-joice! Em-man - u-el Shall come to you, O Is - ra-el!

THE WORD

SALUTATION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

~Please be seated

high - est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Ho - san - na in the high - est.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, O Lord of heaven and earth. We praise and thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, and we remember the great acts of love through which he has ransomed us from sin, death, and the devil's power.

By his incarnation, he became one with us.

By his perfect life, he fulfilled your holy will.

By his innocent death, he overcame hell.

By his rising from the grave, he opened heaven.

Invited by your grace and instructed by your Word, we approach your table with repentant and joyful hearts. Strengthen us through Christ's body and blood, and preserve us in the true faith until we feast with him and all his ransomed people in glory everlasting.

Amen.

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Word: We sit at the feet of Jesus, like Mary did, to hear the Word (Luke 10:42). Here is time for meditating, strengthening, forgiveness, instruction, and response.

Salutation: This greeting has deep roots in Christian worship and marks the beginning of the Word and the Sacrament sections of the service.

Prayer of the Day: Following an ancient outline, the prayer of the day asks for one specific blessing. This prayer changes each Sunday, according to the Bible readings for that Sunday.

Prayer of Thanksgiving: Jesus took bread and "gave thanks." See Matthew 26:26

Lord's Prayer: The Lord's Prayer was given by our Savior to his Church in response to the disciples' request to be taught to pray. See Matthew 6:9-13. The conclusion to the prayer, also known as the Doxology, was a common conclusion to ancient prayers.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

PREFACE

~Please stand

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is good and right so to do.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who comes with his Father to make his home in human hearts, working repentance and faith by his Spirit until he comes again. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY | *Sanctus*

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly

Lord, God of pow-er, God of might: heav - en and

earth are full of your glo - ry,

ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord! Ho - san - na in the

Preface: The opening words of the communion liturgy mark the beginning of the Sacrament section of the service and lift the worshipers' hearts in praise. The opening sentences are among the oldest in the Christian liturgy.

Holy, Holy, Holy: "Sanctus" means "holy." Used possibly as early as the second century, this canticle was in wide use among Christians in worship by the fourteenth century. It incorporates elements of Isaiah 6:3 and Matthew 21:9.

FIRST READING | *Micah 5:2-5a (pg. 1445)*

The prophet foretold that God's love for his people would be demonstrated by a special birth that would take place in the little town of Bethlehem. The one who would be born was God's gift of love to us.

- ² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."
- ³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.
- ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
- ⁵ And he will be their peace.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Lord, in your mer-cy hear my prayer; your good-ness nev - er fails.

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The leader will introduce the refrain and sing the verses of the song.

The congregation is invited to join in singing the refrain as indicated.

Refrain.

Refrain.

*The Lord has long looked with favor Upon the chosen land;
To Jacob's heirs, the wealth of the earth Is lavished in their hand.
The captive chains of servitude Are loosed, the slaves are free;
And through God's grace, the bonds of sin Give way to liberty. **Refrain.***

*Restore to us salvation, Lord, Let your displeasure cease;
And still the pow'r of your own wrath With gentle winds of peace.
My humble heart the still small voice Of your great love attend;
The faithful, you from death redeem, the fearful you defend. **Refrain.***

*Your steadfast love and faithful ways Will meet us face to face;
The arm of justice, mercy sways; The righteous, truth embrace.
May wisdom dwell in human law, And justice, courts display;
Let righteous ways precede your steps, and guide us on our way. **Refrain.***

First Reading: The First Reading is typically taken from the Old Testament and occasionally from the Book of Acts. In it we learn of God's mighty words and deeds with the Old Testament Church, the people of Israel.

~Please stand

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

~Please be seated

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

OFFERING

This is the moment in our worship when members and friends of Our Savior Lutheran respond to God's good news with gifts to support his saving work of sharing the Gospel. If you are a guest with us today, please do not feel obligated to participate.

If you would like to help Our Savior with this important mission, there are several ways to make a tax-deductible contribution (the latter two provide options for either one-time or recurring gifts):

Place your offering in the plate

Use the "Tithe.ly" app on your phone (iOS or Android)

Click on "Give" at OurSaviorBirmingham.com on your phone or computer

Confession of Faith: Public confession is faith's response to God's saving Word. Christian's composed the Nicene Creed in the fourth century to defend the Bible's teachings that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are true God, equal to the Father in one eternal, undivided Trinity.

**The original text here reads "catholic," a word meaning "universal." The Church consists of all believers in heaven and earth, of every time in history.*

Prayer of the Church: The Lord invites our prayers and asks that Christians pray for many people and circumstances.

Offering: Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him.

The Gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 1.

Glory be to you, O Lord.

The Virgin Mary sings her song, praising the Lord for the love he showed to her, to the nation of Israel, and to the world.

³⁹At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

⁴⁶And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever,

even as he said to our fathers."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ.

~Please be seated

Second Reading: *The Second Reading is from the New Testament letters of the apostles or the Revelation to St. John. It stresses Christian faith and Christian living as a response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Children are invited to assemble at the front for a children's message.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

During the singing of the hymn, parents may choose to escort their young child(ren) to our children's church, where they will hear a Bible story, sing songs, learn a prayer, and do a craft.

HYMN OF THE DAY | #24 *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

My Soul
Glorifies
The Lord

Gospel: *The congregation stands for the reading of the Gospel. (In the past, soldiers put down their weapons and kings removed their crowns when the Gospel was read.) Christ—his life, his words of law and Gospel, his suffering and death, his resurrection, his ascension, his assignment to the Church, his promise to return—is the center of the Gospel. The faithful have waited for this moment, this reading. They stand in reverence. After hearing the Gospel, we respond with a joyful acclamation of praise.*