



CHRISTMAS EVE
December 24, 2023

SONG 1 | O Come All Ye Faithful by Traditional

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! *Selah* Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah* Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed! For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

WELCOME | Announcements (No New Year's Eve & New Time Next Year)

ENDING ADVENT |

This evening, we find ourselves at the end, the end of another cycle of Advent. Our nearly month-long journey led us to weave our story into the stories of anticipation and arrival told by prophets young and old, ancient and modern, familiar and obscure. The apocalyptic images revealing the end and ours. The end of all that takes life from us and keeps us fighting others for it. An end that is a beginning, a mending and restoring to our beginning, to life with God, whole and holy. A life enlightened.

This evening, we remember that our lives today are lived in the full, complete(ed) light of the visions unveiled. Much like our wreath with each candle now ablaze, we see in the stories of our faith, **Hope: a force that allows us to leave what is and live for what will be.** We see in the pictures painted **Peace: not a place to arrive, but the path, the way of arriving.** We see in sacred scriptures **Joy: an energy incomplete until others are brought into it, until what we have is shared by all.** We see in the images of the end: **Love, which is our beginning, and our end, the fullness, completion, and perfection of the image in which we were made.**

This evening, on Christmas' eve, we end Advent, not because we have finished our journey but because "It is finished." In the arrival, life, death, and life again and forever of Jesus, the ruler of this world is cast out, the end's beginning is now.

Jesus answered...Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out...when I am lifted up from the earth...(John 12:30-32)

This evening, alongside friends and family in faith, gathered to speak together the proclamation of promise and sing the praises of presence so that we might in here and out there serve one another, neighbor and enemy with humble strength; we are reminded how we begin to live at the end, to an end that is far more than we ask or imagine...that is everything and more that has been revealed in Jesus our Christ, who not only moved into the neighborhood, but into us:

to his saints...God chose to make known...the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

In the stories, scriptures, songs, and silence that follow, may we clearly see a vision of the life we are (re)born into because Jesus was born, died, and lives forever. And, as the prophets of old dared to dream, *may such vision compel us to live the life we see in Him* until all can see what we've received.

Pray with me.

ADVENT STORY | “King of All Kings” (slides follow JSB)

[INVITE DEEDRA & KIDS TO THE STAGE STEPS & READ & PRAY]

Having arrived at the end of our arriving stories and the completion of the revelation's end, we light a candle not bound in the cyclical journey, but standing within it, above it, and shining far beyond it.

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING | Lily Pace

The true light, which enlightens 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 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.

[WHILE LIGHTING THE CANDLE, SAY:]

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:9-14)

Hymn/Carol | What Child Is This by Traditional

SCRIPTURE READING | Revelation 21:9b-11, 22-26

One of the Seven Angels...spoke to me: “Come here. I’ll show you the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb.” He took me away in the Spirit to an enormous, high mountain and showed me Holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God, resplendent in the bright glory of God. The City shimmered like a precious gem, light-filled, pulsing light...But there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God—the Sovereign-Strong—and the Lamb are the Temple. The City

doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! The nations will walk in its light and earth's kings bring in their splendor. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. They'll bring the glory and honor of the nations into the City.

SONG #3 | Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

REFLECT, COLLECT & COMMUNION

Our lives are a response to what has been given: a life broken so that ours might be made whole. A life poured out, that ours might be lived full. **Make your way to receive the symbols of what Jesus offers and remain standing.**

Sometimes, especially on days like this day, our first response to what we receive should be silence.

(Brief) REFLECTION |

But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him. (Habakkuk 2:20)

The silence of this night, is because God is with us. Let that sink in for a moment.

COLLECT | *The Nativity of Our Lord*

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Through the body, blood, and life everlasting of Jesus, amen.

SONG #4 | Silent Night by Traditional

Have Cohen & Lily light candles while Jeremy turns off the house lights

SONG #5 | Creator of the Stars of Night by Paul Demer Arr.

BENEDICTION | 1 Peter 4:7-11

Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and *he'll* get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encore to the end of time. Oh, yes!