

*A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas*

*Christ Church Parish (Episcopal)*

**December 31, 2023 – 10:30 a.m.**

**Opening Voluntary**    *Sing We Now of Christmas*    Douglas E. Wagner

**Entrance Hymn 93**    *Angels from the Realms of Glory*

**Bidding Prayers and Introductions**

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, and especially in this county of Middlesex and diocese of Virginia.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

*All*    **Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

May the almighty God bless us with his grace;  
Christ give us the joys of everlasting life,  
and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may  
the Spirit of Love bring us all. *Amen.*

**The First Lesson is taken from the book of Genesis Chapter 3, Verses  
8-15 & 17-19 – *The Fall.***

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,  
cursed are you among all animals  
and among all wild creatures;  
upon your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

And to the man he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,  
and have eaten of the tree  
about which I commanded you,

'You shall not eat of it',  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread  
until you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return."

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol**      *Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree*

The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
laden with fruit and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell  
the glory which I now can see  
in Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long this have sought,  
and pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
tis found in Christ the apple tree.

Fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
it keeps my dying faith alive;  
which makes my soul in haste to be  
with Jesus Christ the apple tree.

*Anonymous text published by Joshua Smith in 1784*

**The Second Lesson is taken from the book of Genesis Chapter 22,  
Verses 15-18 – The promise to Abraham.**

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the

sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Anthem**                    *I Wonder as I Wander*

**The Third Lesson is taken from the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 9, Verses 2 & 6-7 – *The prophet foretells of the Messiah's birth.***

The people who walked in darkness  
    have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness--  
    on them light has shined.  
For a child has been born for us,  
    a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
    and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
    and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
    He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
    from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol** (Hymnal 84)            *Love Came Down at Christmas*

**The Fourth Lesson is taken from the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 11, Verses 1-4 & 6-9 – *The prophecy of the Messiah's kingdom of peace.***

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
    and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
    the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
    the spirit of counsel and might,  
    the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
    He shall not judge by what his eyes see,

or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol** (Hymn 89)      *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

**The Fifth Lesson is taken from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1, Verses 26-35 & 38 – *The Annunciation to Mary.***

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the

servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol** (Hymn 105)      *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*

**The Sixth Lesson is taken from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2, Verses 1-7 – St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol** (Hymn 78)      *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**The Seventh Lesson is taken from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2, Verses 8-16 – The shepherds go to the manger.**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before 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 see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

**Here ends the lesson.**

Carol (Hymn 109 stanzas 1 & 2)

*The First Nowell*

**The Eighth Lesson is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 2, Verses 1-11 – *The magi are led by the star to Jesus.***

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**Here ends the lesson.**

Carol (Hymn 128)

*We Three Kings*

**The Ninth Lesson is taken from the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, Verses 1-14 – *The Incarnation of the Word of God.***

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**Here ends the lesson.**

**Carol** (Hymn 82)        *Of the Father's Love Begotten*

**Prayer and Blessing** (*All remain standing.*)

*Officiant:* The Lord be with you.

**People:** *And also with you.*

*Officiant:* Let us pray.

O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your only son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him, when he shall come to be our judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Christ who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of the divine nature; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

**Carol** (Hymn 107)        *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*

**Dismissal**

*Deacon:* Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.

**People:** *Glory, thanks and praise to God.*

**Closing Voluntary** *Good Christians All, Rejoice and Sing!* Gilbert M. Martin