



Celebrating Christmas
with Luther

Based on Martin Luther's Christmas program and hymn for his
children, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

From Heaven Above

PROCESSIONAL (youth sing v. 1)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel | 110 vv. 1, 3, 6

Youth 1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive
Cong. 3. O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy tribes on
Cong. 6. O come, Thou Day - spring, Come and cheer Our spi - rits by Thine

Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here,
Si - nai's height In an - cient times didst give the law
Ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,

Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
In cloud and maj - es - ty and awe. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
And death's dark shad - ows put to flight.

man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

EXHORTATION

P Dearly beloved! We have come together in the presence of God our heavenly Father, to give Him thanks and praise for the gift of His Son, our meek and righteous King, who, by His death became our Savior from sin and eternal death. By His Holy Spirit may He enlighten, govern, and direct us that we may ever remain faithful to this righteous King and Savior, and not be offended by His humble form and despised Word, but, firmly believing in Him, obtain eternal salvation and the fullness of joy in heaven. To this end may God the Father grant us His grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

C Amen.

NARRATION

Every family has their Christmas traditions. Singing certain carols, eating certain foods, decorating at a certain time of year, and getting together with loved ones. Some things stay the same year after year, but some traditions, as the years go on, begin to change and grow as the family changes and grows.

Today we will join the Luther family, singing hymns that would have been familiar to them, hymns that were written during their time, or written by Martin Luther himself, especially “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.” Some hymns may be familiar to us, a part of our tradition, but some have been replaced with newer traditions. We will also hear Luther himself preach to us through excerpts from his sermons.

Our goal today isn't tradition for the sake of tradition. At Christmas, or any other time of year, we do certain things over and over because they are important and focus our attention on Christ. In looking in on the past, we can reflect on how the proclamation of what Christ's birth at Christmas means for us has remained the one important constant – not only for the past 500 years, but since the promise that the Christ would be born to a woman to save sinful man was first made.

LUKE 2:1-7

¹And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

“From heav’n above to earth I come
 To bear good news to ev’ry home;
 Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
 Whereof I now will say and sing:

NARRATION

It was Luther’s tradition to arrange a festival for his family every Christmas Eve. On these nights, many comforting words were sung and spoken. For one Christmas Eve, Luther composed this hymn for his children: ‘From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.’ It was his version of a children’s Christmas program, a play set to music. The first five verses are sung from the perspective of the angels to the shepherds, the next two lead us to the manger to the Christ-child, and in the last eight, we join the shepherds in greeting and praising our Lord who has come to save us.

LUKE 2:8-11

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

From Earth to Heaven

“To you this night is born a Child
 Of Mary, chosen Virgin mild;
 This little Child, of lowly birth,
 Shall be the joy of all the earth

‘Tis Christ, our God who far on high
 Hath heard your sad and bitter cry;
 Himself will your salvation be,
 Himself from sin will make you free.

NARRATION

The angels proclaimed joy that a Savior was born. But why was a Savior needed? Why did God need to become Man? The reason is that man tried to become God. Man tried to climb from earth to heaven

RESPONSIVE READING FROM GENESIS 3 & ROMANS 5

Y^{outh} ⁸ The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

C^{ong} ¹⁶ **And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”**

Y ⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

C ⁶ **So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.**

Y ¹⁷ Then to Adam [God] said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.

C ¹⁸ **Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”**

Y ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

C **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)**

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

“Here, from amidst the wrath, God’s grace and mercy, which sin and disobedience aroused, begins to shine forth. In the midst of the most serious of all threats, the Father’s heart breaks out. His heart is not so angry that he rejects the son for the sake of the sin. Instead He renders help, yes, He promises the victory against the enemy who has deceived and overcome the human nature.” ¹

C ¹⁴ **So the Lord God said to the serpent: ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:14–15)**

<p>1. Praise God the Lord, ye sons of men, Before His highest throne; Today He opens heav'n again And gives us His own Son, And gives us His own Son.</p>	<p>6. A wondrous change which He does make! He takes our flesh and blood, And He conceals for sinners' sake His majesty of God, His majesty of God.</p>
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8. For us He opens wide the door
Of paradise today;
The angel guards the gate no more.
To God our thanks we pay,
To God our thanks we pay.

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

“I will place enmity,’ declares God, ‘between your seed and her seed.’ It is as if He would say: You, Satan, have made yourself near to the woman and misled the man, wanting to be their chief and lord for the sake of sin. In return I will lie in wait in the same way as you, through this means and tool that you have used. I will take the woman and rouse a seed out of her, who shall trample your head underfoot. You have corrupted the human nature and subjected it to death on account of sin. Out of the very same flesh I will produce such a man, who shall trample you underfoot and lay you down with all your power and strength in return.”¹

C ¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

God’s Gift in Christ

HYMN (sung by youth)

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 4–5

“He brings those blessings, long ago
Prepared by God for all below,
Henceforth His kingdom open stands
To you, as to the angel bands.

“These are the tokens ye shall mark:
The swaddling-clothes and manger dark.
There ye shall find the Infant laid
By whom the heav’ns And earth were made.”

NARRATION

As the angels heralded the birth of God's promised gift, the Savior of the world, we might expect them to proclaim it to priests, kings, or dignitaries. Instead they sung to shepherds. We also might expect Jesus to be born in a palace, to royalty, wrapped in fine linens. But the angels gave the shepherds a different place to look:

LUKE 2:12-14

¹² And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

HYMN

Savior of the Nations, Come | 90 vv. 1-3

**1. Savior of the nations, come;
Virgin's Son, make here Thy home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.**

**2. Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman's Offspring, pure and fresh.**

**3. Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
Of the Virgin undefiled!
Though by all the world disowned,
Still to be in heav'n enthroned.**

ISAIAH 7:14-15

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. ¹⁵ Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

MICAH 5:2

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

“If Christ had arrived with trumpets and lain in a cradle of gold, his birth would have been a splendid affair. But it would not be a comfort to me. He was rather to lie in the lap of a poor maiden and be thought of little significance in the eyes of the world. Now I can come to him. Now he reveals himself to the miserable in order not to give any impression that he arrives with great power, splendor, wisdom, and aristocratic manners. But upon his return on that Day, when he will oppose the high and the mighty, it will be different. Now he comes to the poor, who need a Savior, but then he will come as a Judge against those who are persecuting him now.”²

Christ in God's Gifts

HYMN (sung by all)

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 6-7

**Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Follow the shepherds and draw near
To see the precious gift of God,
Who hath His only Son bestowed.**

**Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes!
Who is it in yon manger lies?
Who is this Child, so young and fair?
The blessed Christ-child lieth there.**

NARRATION

Like the shepherds, we too need to know where to find Christ. Martin Luther once said that the Gloria in Excelsis – Glory to God in the Highest – “did not grow, nor was it made on earth, but it came down from heaven.”³ Where once the angels sang the Gloria in Excelsis to herald the newborn Christ, we sing it every Sunday to herald Christ’s coming in Word and Sacrament. It is here where Christ is found today: not in impressive signs and wonders, but in the humble words of Scripture, the simple water in Baptism, and the ordinary elements of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper.

HYMN

All Glory Be to God on High | 35 v. 1

**1. All glory be to God on high, Who hath our race befriended!
To us no harm shall now come nigh, the strife at last is ended.
God showeth His good will to men,
And peace shall reign on earth again;
O thank Him for His goodness!**

1 JOHN 1:4

⁴And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

1 PETER 1:23

²³“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.

ROMANS 10:8

⁸“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:4-5

⁴And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

LUKE 2:15-18

¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

“For how paltry the Word is in our eyes when it is preached. Yet if we were also persuaded by it, then we would let that Word be higher and more valued than all of creation. We would be right in doing this though our reason will not allow itself to be moved by it...God is in the human mouth with the Word in which you hear nothing but only a poor mortal voice. Yet He must be therein if He should destroy and take away sin, death and hell in us. For the ability to do these things belongs to truly stupendous strength, yes, only to divine power. This can come to us in no other way but through the Word. That is why St. Paul also praised it so highly. He calls it the power of God that saves everyone who believes it...Therefore we shall hold external oral preaching in all honor and defend ourselves against the frivolous flighty spirits who throw it to the winds...They have invented their own ways to deal with God by their own thoughts. They think that they can climb up to the majesty in heaven without a bridge or ladder and hear a secret voice or revelation.”⁴

Heaven has Come to Earth

HYMN

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 8-9

Welcome to earth, Thou noble Guest, Ah, Lord, who hast created all,
Through whom the sinful world is blest! How weak art Thou, how poor and small,
Thou com'st to share my misery; That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed,
What can we render, Lord, to Thee! Where lowly cattle lately fed!

NARRATION

We rejoice as we welcome Christ to earth, because God promises that He will welcome us into heaven. We could not ascend to God, so God had to descend to us.

RESPONSIVE READING FROM HEBREWS 10:5-10 (QUOTING PSALM 40:6-8)

Y ⁵ Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

C “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.
⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’ ”

Y ⁸ Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

HYMN

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice | 135 vv. 2-4

2. Giv'n from on high to me;
I cannot rise to Thee.
O cheer my wearied spirit:
O pure and holy Child,
Through all Thy grace and merit,
Blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Draw me unto Thee!
Draw me unto Thee!

3. Now through His Son doth shine
The Father's grace divine.
Death over us hath reign-ed
Through sin and vanity;
The Son for us obtain-ed
Eternal joy on high.
May we praise Him there!
May we praise Him there!

**4. O where shall joy be found?
Where but on heav'nly ground?
Where now the angels singing
With all His saints unite,
Their sweetest praises bringing
In heav'nly joy and light.
May we praise Him there!
May we praise Him there!**

PSALM 14:3, 7

³ They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good, No, not one.
⁷ Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

PSALM 50:2

² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.

ISAIAH 9:2, 6

² The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.
⁶ For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

HYMN

Behold, a Branch is Growing | 121 vv. 2, 3, 5

**2. Isaiah hath foretold It
In words of promise sure,
And Mary's arms enfold It,
A Virgin meek and pure.
Through God's eternal will
This Child to her is given
At midnight calm and still.**

**3. The shepherds heard the story,
Proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of Glory,
Was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped
And in the manger found Him,
As angel heralds said.**

5. O Savior, Child of Mary,
Who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of Glory,
Who dost our weakness know,
Bring us at length, we pray,
To the bright courts of heaven
And to the endless day.

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

“The Son of God did not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore he descended from heaven into this humility and came to us in our flesh, laid himself into the womb of his mother and into the manger and went on to the cross. This was the ladder that he placed on earth so that we might ascend to God on it. This is the way you must take. If you depart from this way and try to speculate about the glory of the Divine Majesty—without this ladder—you will invent marvelous matters that transcend your horizon, but you will do so at very great harm to yourself.”⁵

Heaven in a Manger

HYMN

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 10–11

Were earth a thousand times as fair,	For velvets soft and silken stuff
Beset with gold and jewels rare,	Thou hast but hay and straw so rough,
It yet were far too poor to be	Whereon Thou, King, so rich and great,
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.	As ‘twere Thy heav’n, art throned in state.

NARRATION

It is an amazing mystery that the God and Creator of the universe chose to be born as any other human being. If God is King over all, why become subject to the law? If God is all powerful, why become a lowly Man? If God is the Creator of the universe, why become part of creation?

To undo our curse, God had to become true Man in order to be subject to the law, keep it, and die in our place. But in order to balance the scale against the sins of every human who has ever lived, God Himself had to die. Heaven came to earth in Christ so that man might go to heaven.

RESPONSIVE HYMN, READING OF JOHN 1, & THE NICENE CREED

HYMN

Of the Father's Love Begotten | 181 v. 1

**1. Of the Father's love begotten Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the Source, the Ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been, And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.**

Y ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

C **I believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one Substance with the Father, By Whom all things were made;**

HYMN

Of the Father's Love Begotten | 181 vv. 2

**2. At His word was all created; He commanded, it was done:
Earth and heav'n, and depths of ocean, In their three-fold order one;
All that grows beneath the shining Of the orbs of moon and sun,
Evermore and evermore.**

Y ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

C **Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.**

HYMN

Of the Father's Love Begotten | 181 v. 3

**3. He is found in human fashion Death and sorrow here to know
That the race of Adam's children, Doomed by Law to endless woe,
May not henceforth die and perish In the depths of hell below,
Evermore and evermore.**

Y ¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

C **He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.**

HYMN

Of the Father's Love Begotten | 181 v. 4

**4. O that birth forever blessed, When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bore the Savior of our race,
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer, First revealed His sacred face
Evermore and evermore.**

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

GALATIANS 4:4-5

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

PHILIPPIANS 2:7-8

⁷ [Christ] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Youth 1. A Boy is born in Beth - le - hem, Beth - le -
Youth 2. Our hu - man flesh doth He take on, doth He take
Cong. 3. When Mar - y Ga - briel's words re - ceived, Words re -
Cong. 4. From Vir - gin's womb doth He pro - ceed, doth He pro -

hem; Re - joice, there - fore, Je - ru - sa - lem!
 on, High Word of God the e - ter - nal Son. Al -
 ceived, With - in her was her Son con - ceived.
 ceed, No hu - man fa - ther doth He need.

al - le - lu - ia!
 le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 al - le - lu - ia!
 al - le - lu - ia!

Cong.

5. From serpent's wound immune was He, immune was He,
Yet shared He our humanity. Alleluia, alleluia!
6. 'Tis flesh like ours He's clothèd in, He's clothèd in,
Though free from man's primeval sin. Alleluia, alleluia!
7. Within the manger doth He lie, doth He lie,
Who reigns eternally on high. Alleluia, alleluia!

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

Since we must become God's children through faith in His Word, that Word needed to be revealed to us and become flesh. So He is a true man and He has dwelt with us. He shared with us every need and took on every human weakness and He poured out the divine majesty as Saint Paul says [Philippians 2]. But yet we have seen in His flesh the glory as great as that of the Father Himself, in all its fullness. He has made that glory known with Words and works...Through this glory and majesty resounding forth through the world, the Word becomes known. It is full of grace and truth. ⁶

Our Brother in the Manger & in Heaven

HYMN

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 12-13

Thus hath it pleased Thee to make plain
The truth to sinners poor and vain,
That this world's honor, wealth and might
Are naught and worthless in Thy sight.

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

NARRATION

This all happened so long ago and we may be tempted to view Christmas as just another tradition, but it is much more than that. Christmas is still for us today. Christ is still with us today. Christ took on all of our weaknesses so that He could give us His strength.

The same God who became true Man, is still our Brother. As our Brother, He knows us and can sympathize with our weaknesses. In His humble Word He continues to give us comfort and peace.

HYMN

To Shepherds as They Watched By Night | 154 vv. 3-6

(The youth will sing vv. 3-4 to the original folk tune sometimes attributed to Martin Luther for this hymn. The congregation will sing vv. 5-6 to the more modern melody that has become a part of our tradition.)

Youth 3. O then re - joice that through His Son God is
Youth 4. What harm can sin and death then do? The true

with sin - ners now at one; Made like your - selves of
 God now a - bides with you. Let hell and Sa - tan
 flesh and blood, Your Broth - er is th'e - ter - nal God.
 rage and chafe, Christ is your Broth - er - ye are safe.

Cong.

5. Not one He will or can forsake
 Who Him his confidence doth make.
 Let all his wiles the Tempter try,
 You may his utmost pow'rs defy.

Cong.

6. Ye shall and must at last prevail;
 God's own ye are, ye cannot fail.
 To God forever sing your praise
 With joy and patience all your days.

Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar
 M. Luther, 1483-1546
 Tr. R. Massie, 1800-87, alt.

ICH KOMM AUS FREMDEN LANDEN HER
 Kranzelied, German, 15th cent.

ISAIAH 53:3-4

³ He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
 And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
 He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows;
 Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

HEBREWS 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
 but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

HEBREWS 2:10-11

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in
 bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through
 sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all
 of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

1. We Christians may Rejoice today, When Christ was born to comfort and to save us.
Who thus believes No longer grieves, For none are lost who grasp the hope He gave us.
2. O wondrous joy That God most high Should take our flesh and thus our race should honor!
A Virgin mild Hath borne this Child; Such grace and glory God hath put upon her.
3. Sin brought us grief, But Christ relief, When down to earth He came for our salvation.
Since God with us Is dwelling thus, Who dares to speak the Christian's condemnation?
4. Then hither throng With happy song To Him whose birth and death are our assurance;
Through whom are we At last set free From sins and burdens that surpassed endurance.
5. Yea, let us praise Our God and raise Loud alleluias to the skies above us.
The bliss bestowed Today by God To ceaseless thankfulness and joy should move us.

MEDITATION FROM LUTHER

When one of several brothers becomes a great magnate, how happy the other brothers become! How gladdening they find this, as you see in Genesis when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. And this is indeed a natural joy. But why is it, then, that we also are not joyful and our hearts are not touched and we do not praise and thank God upon hearing that our God became our flesh and blood and now sits above at the right hand of God as Lord over all creatures? ⁷

LUKE 2:19–20

¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

From Heaven to Earth

NARRATION

Families have traditions at Christmas, but Christmas is more than just a tradition. Already almost immediately after the promise of the Seed of the woman – the promised Savior of the world – was given to Adam and Eve, we learn that their family could not help but praise and thank God. Genesis 4:26 says “Then men

began to call on the name of the Lord.” So too, did Luther’s family praise and thank God at Christmas, upon hearing that Christ was born for them. They repeated the Gospel in word and song. In repeating the Gospel, God is praised!

This a tradition that goes not from earth below to heaven, but like the angels, from heaven above to earth.

Our Christmas tradition is the same: Our hearts leap for joy, our lips cannot keep silent, we sing with joyful tongue the most ancient of all our Christmas songs, the message that heaven has come to earth in Christ, the song that the angels sang and the shepherds repeated:

C “**Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**”

OFFERING

PRAYER & BLESSING

P Almighty and merciful God, enlighten our hearts that we may ever find joy and comfort in the birth of Your dear Son, make known abroad Your loving-kindness, give You praise and glory, and with peace abiding in our hearts, be kept steadfast to the end; through the Same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives, and who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

P Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

P The grace of our Lord † Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **Amen.**

RECESSIONAL

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come | 123 vv. 14–15

My heart for very joy doth leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle-song:

Glory to God in highest heav’n,
Who unto us His Son hath giv’n!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

Program Notes

Thank you to all who participated in our Christmas program today:

HIGH SCHOOL NARRATORS

Jaden Sagedahl
Tate Sagedahl
Bryce Manthe
Blake Manthe
Shadaisa Stalberger
Anikka Bakke

YOUTH READERS

Brynn Stalberger
Kylie Manthe
Soren Bakke
Trygg Bakke
Rorik Schell

VOLUNTEERS

Scot Manthe
Carla Hendrix
Stacey Stalberger
Pastor Jeff Hendrix

This program was compiled by Rev. Jeff Hendrix and is based on Luther's Christmas program for his children, his hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come." It uses hymns from Luther or from Luther's time, as well as meditations from Luther himself, all to show the continuity of our faith. 2017, the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, affords a unique opportunity to reflect on what a 16th century Christmas program may have looked like, and how the faith confessed is still the same.

All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version. All hymns are from the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary.

LUTHER QUOTE SOURCES

¹ Martin Luther, commentary on Genesis 3:15

² Martin Luther, Sermon on the Nativity, 1530

³ Martin Luther in David Kind, "About Our Liturgy," 11

⁴ Martin Luther, Sermon on John 1 for Christmas Day – High Mass. In "Luther's Festival Sermons", tr. Joel Baseley, 134–135

⁵ Martin Luther, Lecture on Isaiah 9:6, 1543

⁶ Martin Luther, Sermon on John 1 for Christmas Day – High Mass. In "Luther's Festival Sermons", tr. Joel Baseley, 146–147

⁷ Martin Luther, Christmas Sermon, 1543