

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord  
St. Luke 2:1-14  
December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Glory to God in the Highest!

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Sermon Text:**

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased.’”

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, after the *Kyrie* in the Divine Service the rubric reads, “Then shall the *Gloria in Excelsis* be chanted, except in penitential seasons, when it shall be omitted.” The season of Advent is one of the two penitential seasons. And because the rubric is a “shall” rubric, and not a “may” rubric, it is required that we observe the rule. “Shall” rubrics being required and “may” rubrics being optional. Therefore, in accordance with the rubric, that is, the rule, we omitted the *Gloria in Excelsis* during the penitential season of Advent. But upon further examination, since Advent is the season that begins the Church’s year, it means that the *Gloria in Excelsis* waits in expectation to be sung and heard.

Advent itself is a season of waiting. What do we wait for? We wait for the coming of the Christ. The *Gloria in Excelsis* waited to be sung until the Christ Child appears on this Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. On this Feast Day we echo the song of the angels in heaven. They appeared unto the shepherds abiding in the fields by night keeping watch over their flocks by night. The angels are the first ones to announce the birth of the Savior to the world. Only shepherds get to hear the announcement that is meant for the whole world. But now that that message has gone out into the whole world, we join our voices with the whole world and sing the song of the angels. The Pastor sings, “Glory be to God on high” and we join our voices to the angel choir which proclaimed on the night of the Lord’s birth that there would be peace on the earth among men of goodwill.

As we have seen throughout the Advent season, the angels have been busy announcing the birth of our Savior into our flesh. The angel Gabriel came to Zacharias while he was offering incense in the temple at the hour of prayer, and proclaimed that he and his wife Elisabeth would give birth to the Forerunner of the Christ. The angel Gabriel again came to the Blessed Virgin Mary and announced that she, the highly favored one, would bear in her womb the Son of God—the holy One of the Lord God. She would bear in her womb the Lord God incarnate. Just as we heard in the Lesson read today, this Child is called “Immanuel,” that is, “God with us.”

Having announced the births of the Forerunner and the Christ, the angels do not stop there announcing our Savior's birth. For as we read in the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, the Blessed Virgin Mary, after being away at her relative Elisabeth's house for three months, returns and is found to be with Child. St. Joseph, a righteous man, and not wanting to publicly humiliate St. Mary, determined in his mind to put her away secretly. He was going to annul the betrothment. What happens then? While St. Joseph is sleeping an angel of the Lord comes to him and tells him that the Baby in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary was indeed the Son of God. He would be the Savior of the world. Therefore, St. Joseph need not fear to take St. Mary as his wife. And the next day, he brought her into his house, but did not have marital relations with her until after the birth of the Lord + Jesus.

Today, we have the fourth instance of angels coming and announcing the birth of the Savior. Zacharias heard from an angel (and by extension so did his wife Elisabeth) about the birth of our Lord and Savior. St. Mary heard from an angel that she would be the Mother of God, the mother of the Lord God incarnate in our flesh. St. Joseph heard from an angel that his betrothed wife would give birth to the Redeemer of the world. And now, on the night of the Lord's birth into our flesh, shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night are visited by an angel. They are told that in the city of King David, in Bethlehem, they would find the Savior of the world, wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

This angel is then joined by the whole host of the heavenly realm, myriads upon myriads of angels, proclaiming in that cold, dark night, that the earth would receive peace. Glory to God in the highest indeed! The Lord God is deserving of all glory, laud, and honor because He has taken upon Himself our flesh in order that He might redeem us from sin and death. He has come to free mankind from the prison house of the devil. He has come to bring light and life to all those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Our Lord God is truly worthy of all praise and honor. He is truly worthy of Glory for this mighty act of His.

The angels have been announcing this incarnational birth to us throughout the Advent season. They have been waiting from that first announcement to Zacharias the priest to sing our Lord's praises. We have been waiting since the First Sunday in Advent—since *Ad te levavi*—to sing the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Today, my friends, we get to sing it loud and clear. We get to hear its message ring in our ears. For our Lord + Jesus has taken His flesh upon Himself so that He might redeem us from sin and death.

It really is no wonder that the angels play an important role in welcoming the birth of the Savior of the world, because this is what angels do. The word "angel" is a Greek word. It literally means, "messenger." Their task is in their name. They are responsible for getting the word out about the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Their task is to tell people the good news that a Savior has been born for them. Their task is to announce to all men that the Lord God has become incarnate in our flesh. This is what angels do. This is what the messengers of the Lord are to do.

This is why we are gathered here today, because an angel, a messenger from the Lord, has told us all about the good news for men on earth. We have heard this message preached into our ears from the moment we have been brought to the Lord by the preaching of the Word. The preachers of the Savior of the world have proclaimed into our ears that we will have peace, because the One Who wins peace between us and the Lord God has come. He has offered up His innocent life as a ransom for our sins. We are now justified, that is, there is now peace between us and God, by clinging in faith to His work of redemption. Wherever the ministers of the Lord are sent to proclaim this good news, there His people hear about their Savior.

The shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, are the first to hear about our Savior's birth. After they went into Bethlehem and saw the events that had taken place, just

as the angel had told them, they in turn spread that good news to the surrounding countryside. Angels and shepherds proclaim the good news of a Savior born in our flesh for our redemption from sin and death. The ministers of today are both shepherds and angels. They both announce, and lead and defend the flock entrusted into their care. For they desire that all men may hear about the good news that has taken place on this day. Our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, has taken upon Himself our flesh, so that He might redeem us from sin and death.

The shepherds and angels also encourage us in our lives full of woe and misery as we wait patiently for the coming of our Lord. We have come through the season of Advent, a season of waiting for the Lord. Our lives in this life are an Advent, a waiting for the second coming of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ on the Last Day. We wait with patience for that Day. For on that Day, He will take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in heaven. But our Lord did not leave us without hope. For He has given us as a memorial, through the writing of the Evangelist St. Luke, the song of the angels, that we have waited patiently to sing, the *Gloria in Excelsis*. This song reminds us when we sing it of the choir of angels who sang it at our Lord's birth. It reminds us that we have peace with the Lord God, because He has paid the penalty of our sins.

This song is a foreshadowing of the songs that we will sing in Heaven. This song is our rehearsal for when we will join with that angel host in Heaven and sing not only this song, but all the songs of praise that belong alone to our Lord God. We will join our voices to the voices of all the saints who have gone before us in the faith. Our singing of this song anticipates the singing of it in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks for the angels and shepherds who have announced to us the birth and coming of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. Let us join our voices in song, and sing of all the wonderful things that He has done for us. For our Lord God has taken upon Himself our flesh so that He might redeem us from sin and death. For this He deserves eternal praise and thanks. He deserves eternally for us to sing, the song we have been waiting to sing, the *Gloria in Excelsis*: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased." In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*