

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

The joyful expectation of the Advent season gives way to the joy of the Lord Jesus' holy birth. Christmas comes upon the church as a time of festive joy as we hear of the wonderful new that the Savior has been born. Christmas day is one of three feasts in the liturgical year (The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, the other two are The Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord, and The Feast of Pentecost).

The Christmas Season lasts from Christmas Day (December 25th) to Epiphany (January 6th). The liturgical color is white, representing Christ, the light of the world. We celebrate the birth of the Sun of Righteousness.

Christmas is a time of joyful singing and giving thanks the Lord who has come in the flesh for us.

Special Days in the Christmas season include:

St Stephen, martyr (Dec. 26th)

St John, apostle, evangelist (Dec 27th)

The Holy Innocents, martyrs (Dec 28th)

The Circumcision and Name of Jesus (Jan 1st)

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

by A. Prudentius, +413

Tr J. Neale, 1818-1866 and H. Baker, 1821-1877

Hymn #98 The Lutheran Hymnal Text: 1 Tim. 3:16

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.

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

3. O ye heights of heaven, adore Him;
Angel hosts, His praises sing;
Powers, dominions, bow before Him
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert ring
Evermore and evermore.

4. This is He whom Heaven-taught singers
Sang of old with one accord;
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word.
Now He shines, the Long-expected;
Let creation praise its Lord
Evermore and evermore.

5. Christ, to Thee, with God the Father,
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
And unending praises be,
Honor, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory
Evermore and evermore. Amen.



· C · H · R · I · S · T · M · A · S ·

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among
us.**

- St. John 1:14

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new birth of Thine only begotten Son in the flesh may set us free, who are held in the old bondage under the yoke of sin; through Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

CHRISTMAS is the Church's celebration and feast of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary and His birth in a stable in Bethlehem. Christmas is a time of joy; God has kept His promises to Israel and all mankind to come to us (Immanuel means "God with us") and save us (Jesus means "God saves").



THE MAGNIFICANT

Mary's song in St Luke 1:46-55 wonderfully extols the great mystery of Christmas, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly estate of His maidservant." We rejoice because God has regarded us in our lowly state, and given us the gift of His only begotten Son.

God is love [1 John 4:8,16], and love always gives. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have a perfect and eternal love for one another. That love of the holy Trinity has spilled over into this creation.

God is always giving gifts to us, His creatures. God richly and daily provides us with all that we need to support this body and life: clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children. This God does out of pure fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

God is the giver of every good gift [James 1:17], and the gift of Christmas is the greatest gift of all. The Father gives us His own Son, wrapped in human flesh and blood, His Son who would die on the cross for the sins of the world.



THE GIFT

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," [St John 3:16]. Christmas is about giving gifts, but instead of focusing our attention on the gifts that we give to one another, the Scriptures point to the wonderful gift that God gives to us: His only-begotten Son. Christians give gifts to one another on Christmas as a joyful reflection of the Lord's generosity towards us.

If God had not given us His Son, we would be lost forever, damned to hell and the unimaginable torment of eternity apart from God. Praise be to God that He gave us His Son in order to save us. Jesus was born to go to the cross, to suffer the punishment that our own sins deserved, to die and to be resurrected on the third day.

Christmas is a celebration of the generosity of God, the God who gives us the gifts of life, salvation and the forgiveness of sins through the incarnation, birth, death and resurrection of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.



THE SHEPHERDS

God is the Shepherd of His people, our protector and guide [Psalm 23]. He often calls shepherds to lead His people (Moses, King David, the prophet Amos). Jesus Himself is the "Good Shepherd" that lays down His life for His sheep [St John 10:11]. It is no wonder that God sent the angelic hosts to the shepherds and called them to be the first witness of Jesus'

incarnation and birth.

The shepherds were privileged to hear the angelic preaching and singing, and following the angel's instructions, they looked with wonder and joy upon the baby Jesus. Then, the text tells us, they returned to their fields and their flocks, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." [St Luke 2:20] As the church celebrates Christmas we sing along with the angels, we look upon and taste the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and then we go our way, to work or home, confessing the glorious Christmas message as we go, "God became flesh, and dwelt among us." [St John 1:14]



To You

The first Christmas sermon is preached by the angels to the shepherds. It is good news for us as well. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." [St Luke 2:11] This message is more than an announcement of history; this wonderful birth is "to you." Christ came in the flesh not for Himself, but for you and I. His birth is like His life and death: for us and for our salvation. We rejoice that, as Isaiah preached, "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." [Isaiah 9:6]

This Child, who is the glory of God, comes to give us peace, as the angelic choirs sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth." [St Luke 2:14]