

December 24th, 2022



**7pm - Hybrid Worship**  
**Lutheran Church of the Living Christ**

*“If you came to this place expecting a tame story, you came to the wrong place. If you came for a story that does not threaten you, you came for a different story than the one we tell. If you came to hear of the coming of a God who only showed up so that you could have a nice day with your loved ones, then you came for a God whom we do not worship here...”*

*Too often we expect the childrens’ Christmas pageant; we expect “the Little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay;” we expect a silent night. While these images are comforting and beautiful, they do little to touch the world-shattering reality that is the Nativity of our Lord. Birth is always messy; having a baby in the same area the livestock are kept ratchets up the mess; bring in some shepherds for good measure and things are going to get even more chaotic.*

*What did you expect? A sanitized birthing room attended by only the best medical team around? Absolute silence from a newborn? We picture this birth as some sort of painless, sweat-free, quiet, bodily fluid free miracle. But it’s not...that is not how any of this works. God crashes into this world in the very real, very messy, very labor-filled, very HUMAN way of birth. God is with us, enfleshed, incarnate. What did you expect?*

## Welcome to Lutheran Church of the Living Christ

### Welcome!

If you came as a guest today, we hope you leave as a friend. May this worship service surround you with the love of God through Christ and fill you with the Holy Spirit.

### Invitation to Communion

We welcome all to commune at LCLC. It is not our table, nor this congregation's table, nor our denomination's table. It is the table of Jesus Christ. By his invitation there is a place for everyone. We believe that Jesus is present in the bread and wine that forgives sin, nourishes faith, and calls us to be witnesses to the gospel.

### Notes about our worship service

Guidance is printed in *italics* throughout. "P" indicates the speaking part of the presiding minister; "L" indicates a speaking part of a lay leader; "C" and parts in **boldface** indicate speaking parts of the whole congregation. You may also follow along with the service by looking at the screen in the front of the sanctuary.

Liturgical pieces are set to familiar Christmas tunes. This liturgy is provided by the Eastern Missouri Conference of the Central States Synod.

Please be mindful of others' comfort with touch. Ask before giving a handshake or hug.

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**PRELUDE** *"Still, Still, Still"* by Paul Manz

**CHORAL PRELUDE**

**WELCOME**

*The assembly is invited to stand as worship begins.*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*Written by Roddy Hamilton*

P: When all has gone quiet  
and the world begins to sleep  
cooied in and snug  
beneath a blanket of frost

L: When the universe holds its breath  
and angels begin to stretch their wings  
and stars begin to slide  
into constellations of hope

**C: When music seems to hang in the air  
and creation hums its own carol  
about the longing for light  
and birth again from wintertime**

P: Then the waiting ones gather  
to listen to these rumours  
and whisper about the birth  
of a child made all of light

L: And together pass the word  
that soon and very soon  
advent will slip into sign  
and waiting into birth

**C: So let us gather with ever beating hearts  
staying with Mary and Joseph  
wondering, laboring, longing, expecting  
the promise to break through the night**

## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

L: 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.

**C: We long for a light to guide us.**

*The first candle is lit.*

L: You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy.

**C: We long for God's joy in our lives.**

*The second candle is lit.*

L: For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

**C: We long to be relieved of all that we carry.**

*The third candle is lit.*

L: For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**C: We long for his coming among us.**

*The fourth candle is lit.*

L: He is named Emmanuel:  
God with us.  
In this tiny baby, this vulnerable child,  
we find our light, our joy, our comfort.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The final candle is lit.*

L: Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world!

**C: The light no shadows can overcome.**

OPENING HYMN - O Come, All Ye Faithful, ELW #283



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O  
 2 The high - est, most ho - ly, light of light e - ter - nal,  
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,  
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing;



come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;  
 born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes;  
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav - en a - bove!  
 Je - sus, to thee be . . . glo - ry giv'n!



come and be - hold him, born the king of an - gels:  
 Son of the Fa - ther now in flesh ap - pear - ing!  
 Glo - ry to God . . . in . . . the . . . high - est:  
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing:

*Refrain*



Ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus,  
 O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,



ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus Do - mi - num.  
 O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord!

**GREETING**

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

C: And also with you.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The people who were mired in shadows, the midnight dread of deadly expectation, have seen a great light! Unexpected dawn breaks into the shadows as a mother labors to bring new life. This great light has come, a gift from You, O God of hosts! Your son, born to Mary, shines in our world as a beacon of change. Shine on, that filled with the light of your love born to us our world may bend in the arch of justice. For in your coming we proclaim, "On earth peace among those whom God favors." Through Christ Jesus, born to us this day.

**C: Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## CHOIR ANTHEM

### FIRST READING - Isaiah 9:2-7

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!*

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.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,

as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors

and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>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.

L: Word of God, Word of life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 96**

L: Sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

**C: Sing to the Lord, bless the name of the Lord;  
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

L: Declare God's glory among the nations  
and God's wonders among all peoples.

**C: For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,  
more to be feared than all gods.**

L: As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;  
but you, O Lord, have made the heavens.

**C: Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;  
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

L: Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the Lord honor and power.

**C: Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the holy name;  
bring offerings and enter the courts of the Lord.**

L: Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;  
tremble before the Lord, all the earth.

**C: Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is king!  
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will give justice to  
the peoples with equity."**

L: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;  
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

**C: Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O Lord,  
for you come to judge the earth.**

L: You will give justice to the world with righteousness  
and the peoples with your truth.

*The assembly stands for the reading of the gospel.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (to the chorus of *The First Noel*)

Voice

A - le - lu - ia! A -

4

le - lu - ia! Pre - pare - us for Your -

8

com - ing, O Lord.

## GOSPEL READING - Luke 2:1-20

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"



<sup>15</sup>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." <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Following the reading the assembly is seated.*

## **CHOIR ANTHEM**

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

## **SERMON**

*The assembly is invited to stand.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY Hark the Herald Angels Sing, ELW #270**



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king;  
2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail the heav'n - born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."  
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God - head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!  
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king!"

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

*The prayers reflect the wideness of God's mercy – for the church and its ministry; for the well-being of creation; for peace & justice; for the poor, oppressed, & sick; for all who suffer; for the congregation; & for special concerns/occasions.*

With wonder and thanksgiving at Christ's expected coming, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole human family.

*A brief silence.*

Your infinite love is born to us this night. With choirs of angels the church proclaims the good news. Send us out as messengers of the hope that has come to all people. God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

You are pleased to dwell with your creatures and the whole earth sings for joy. Renew the splendor of creation from the smallest cell to the widest galaxies. Guide us to be wise stewards of your gifts for the sake of generations to come. God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

Your authority is over the nations. Break the rod of oppression in every land and free all people from fear. Bring peace where there is war, compassion where there is suffering, and healing where there is disease (*regions in crisis may be named*). God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

You cherish those who are most vulnerable. Protect infants and children, and bless those who care for them. Watch over women giving birth, attend the dying, and relieve any who are in pain (*especially*). Shelter refugee families and those who have no home. God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

Your lovingkindness embraces everyone in need. Help any for whom this season is lonely or joyless. Comfort those among us, or known to us, who are experiencing distress of body or mind, missing loved ones, or grieving (*especially*). God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

You welcome those who have died into the joyous light of glory. We give thanks for the saints of every time and place who have praised you with lives of faith and humility. Inspire us by their example to love you by serving others. God of great expectation, **hear our prayer.**

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we lift our prayers to God with great expectation. **Amen.**

## **SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P: The peace of Christ, God among us, be with you always. **C: And also with you.**  
*Share a sign of peace by waving, flashing a peace sign, or other form of **distanced** greeting.*

## OFFERING PRAYER

L: This night we celebrate the long-anticipated coming of peace and goodwill-

**C: For unto us is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

L: Wrapped in flesh, bound in cloth, the gift of the Christ child is the gift of life and love.

**C: This gift is beyond measure - beyond price.**

L: We therefore bring this offering, not as payment

**C: but as joyful thanksgiving for the Christ child. Amen.**

*Offering plates are located in the narthex and can be accessed before or after the worship service.*

*If you would like to give online, click the "Donate" tab on our website: [www.lc-livingchrist.org](http://www.lc-livingchrist.org)*

## COMMUNION LITURGY

*(to the tune of Of the Father's Love Begotten)*

**Largo**

Voice

L: The - Lord - be with you. C: And al - so with you.

3

L: Lift up your hearts . C: We lift them to the Lord. L: Let us give thanks to the Lord.

5

to the Lord our God. C: It is right to give God praise.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a voice part, set in a 7/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Largo'. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: 'L: The - Lord - be with you. C: And al - so with you.' The second staff starts with a measure rest of 3 measures, then continues with the lyrics: 'L: Lift up your hearts . C: We lift them to the Lord. L: Let us give thanks to the Lord.' The third staff starts with a measure rest of 5 measures, then continues with the lyrics: 'to the Lord our God. C: It is right to give God praise.' The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. There are several fermatas (breve marks) over the notes 'you', 'Lord', 'Lord', and 'praise'.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth, the hosts of heaven and all creation, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

*(to the tune of In the Bleak Midwinter)*

Voice

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, God of pow'r and might. Heav'n and earth are

6

full of Your glo - ry, O Lord. Bless - ed is the one who comes in the Lord's name. Ho -

14

san - na in the high - est

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a voice part, set in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, God of pow'r and might. Heav'n and earth are full of Your glo - ry, O Lord. Bless - ed is the one who comes in the Lord's name. Ho - san - na in the high - est'. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, God of pow'r and might. Heav'n and earth are'. The second staff starts with a measure rest of 6 measures, then continues with the lyrics: 'full of Your glo - ry, O Lord. Bless - ed is the one who comes in the Lord's name. Ho -'. The third staff starts with a measure rest of 14 measures, then continues with the lyrics: 'san - na in the high - est'. The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. There are several fermatas (breve marks) over the notes 'ly', 'name', and 'est'.

Illuminating God, source of creation, our salvation and our hope, we praise you for your creative labor of life and love. When we strayed from your path, you spoke to us through unexpected prophets: Isaiah envisioned a blossoming desert; Mary proclaimed a world turned upside down; John the Baptist cried out for repentance. At this expectant hour, your Son Jesus came to bring us extraordinary love and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life among us, his death as one of us, and his resurrection, the first of all of us, we anticipate his coming in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us and on this meal we share: that we may work for justice, build hope for your already but not yet reign, and share the anticipated love and joy of your Son. All glory and honor is yours, in your holy creation, both now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught us.

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

#### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace. Ponder the great mystery.

**C: Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**LAMB OF GOD** (to the tune of Cradle Song)

Voice

O Christ thou Lamb of God you  
take a - way the sin of the world. Have  
mer - cy on us. O us. O Christ thou Lamb of  
God you take a - way the sin of the  
world. Grant us thy peace.

4  
8  
12  
16

1.  
2.

**DISTRIBUTION**

*Time is given for the sharing of bread and wine. You may come forward to receive communion at the altar or partake with prepackaged elements at your seat. However communion is given and received, we trust Jesus is present in the bread and cup we share as a gathered community.*

**DISTRIBUTION HYMN O Little Town of Bethlehem, ELW #279**



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!  
For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove  
How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!  
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;  
while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won-d'ring love.  
So God im-parts to hu - man hearts the bless-ings of his heav'n.  
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.  
O morn-ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,  
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,  
We hear the Christ-mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.  
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!  
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.  
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

*The assembly is invited to stand for the end of the service.*

### **BLESSING**

P: The body and blood of Jesus Christ strengthen you and fill you with peace.

**C: Amen.**

### **PRAYER**

P: Lord Jesus Christ, you came to us in an unexpected place—

**C: a tiny infant, lying in a feeding trough.**

P: Lord Jesus Christ, even now you have come to us in an unexpected place—

**C: in bread and wine, in communion shared.**

P: May your presence now be known in us,

**C: that we may proclaim to all the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

As the music begins, handheld candles will be lit and overhead lights will be dimmed.

**HYMN - Silent Night, Holy Night, ELW #281**



*Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,*  
 1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,  
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake  
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



*ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.*  
 all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.  
 at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,  
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,



*Hold - er Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher*  
 Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly  
 heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is  
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



*Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.*  
 peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!  
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

**BLESSING**

P: May the Word that Mary pondered fill you with hope.

**C: Amen.**

P: May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms enfold you with love.

**C: Amen.**

P: May the Word that angels proclaimed in song bring anticipated peace to our world.

**C: Amen.**



P: May the God + of Great Expectation be with you,  
that you may proclaim the good news of great joy:

C: **Unto us is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN - Joy to the World, ELW #267**



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

**DISMISSAL**

L: Go in peace. Know that Love has come.

C: **Love has come. Thanks be to God!**

**POSTLUDE**

**"There's A Song In The Air" arr. Darrell Archer**

*Thank you for joining us this night as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. May the fullness of God's grace and love surround you, that you may share it with all whom you encounter.*

### **Announcements**

1. There will be an in-person worship service tomorrow at our normal time of 9:15 am. This service **will be** available on Zoom.
2. On 1/1 we will worship at 9:15am and will be joined by Pr. Stephanie Doeschot.

### **Tonight's Worship Leadership**

**Preaching/Presiding:** Pastor Christopher Yanker

**Assisting Minister:** Angela Bennett

**Lector:** Jeanne Calderwood

**Children's Message:** Rod or Ann

**Zoom and Slides:** Laurie/Gary Brown

**Musicians:** David Eggers, Greg Ott

**Ushers:** Glen Albers and Ann Schultz

**Greeter:** Judy Holmes

## **What Are You Here For?** By Quinn G. Caldwell

If you came to this place expecting a tame story, you came to the wrong place.

If you came for a story that does not threaten you, you came for a different story than the one we tell.

If you came to hear of the coming of a God who only showed up so that you could have a nice day with your loved ones, then you came for a God whom we do not worship here.

For even a regular baby is not a tame thing. And goodness that cannot threaten complacency and evil is not much good at all, and a God who would choose to give up power and invincibility to become an infant for you, certainly didn't do it just you could have dinner.

But.

If you came because you think that unwed teenage mothers are some of the strongest people in the world.

If you came because you think that the kind of people who work third shift doing stuff you'd rather not do might attract an angel's attention before you, snoring comfortably in your bed, would.

If you came because you think there are wise men and women to be found among undocumented travelers from far lands and that they might be able to show you God.

If you came to hear a story of tyrants trembling while heaven comes to peasants.

If you came because you believe that God loves the animals as much as the people and so made them the first witnesses to the saving of the world.

If you came for a story of reversals that might end up reversing you.

If you came for a tale of adventure and bravery, where strong and gentle people win, and the powerful and violent go down to dust, where the rich lose their money but find their lives and the poor are raised up like kings.

If you came to be reminded that God loves you too much to leave you unchanged.

If you came to follow the light even if it blinds you.

If you came for salvation and not safety, then: ah, my friends, you are in the right place.

*Source: "All I Really Want: Readings for a Modern Christmas"*