



Community CRC

Oakdale

CHRISTMASTIME

INCARNATION

JOHN 1:14

12-24-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect

Love is always bestowed as a gift - freely, willingly and without expectation. We don't love to be loved; we love to love. Leo Buscaglia

Song – Agnus Dei -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSMctGQPlg8>

Alleluia, Alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia, Alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia

Holy, Holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

You are Holy, Holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

Amen

Alleluia, Alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia, Alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia

Holy, Holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

You are Holy, Holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

You are Holy, Holy



*Are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb*

Welcome

Merry Christmas Eve! We gather for one reason – to worship. And as the song we just sung declares, Jesus of Nazareth, the Spotless Lamb – He is worthy of our worship. He is worthy because he is holy. He is worthy because he is Lord God Almighty. He is worthy because he has come and saved his creation. He is worthy because he reigns, now. The words “alleluia” and “hallelujah” come to us from the same Hebrew word but by different routes. The former through Latin and latter via Greek. Both words mean the same thing: to engage in joyous songs of praise and boasting to God. So it is completely appropriate to sing the words, “Alleluia” to Jesus of Nazareth, the God-Man. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth that we celebrate tonight is a magical, mystical, mysterious and miraculous reality. May the flame of praise to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit be stoked to new heights as we engage with the history altering, life changing and worship inspiring historical event of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Call to Worship – Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7

Our call to worship is a prophetic call from the Old Testament past to the New Testament future regarding the birth of Jesus of Nazareth – the Messiah. Note all the descriptors of who Jesus is and what he has done. At the end of this responsive reading, share one descriptor that grabbed your attention and why it stands out for you this evening.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This evening we are emphasizing giving and gift. This next song reiterates the phrase, “Love has come to show the way.” Let us continue our worship this evening knowing that we serve a sending God, a giving God, a God who is not an absentee God but one who is active with his creation by being for his creation in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Love has come and Love showing us the way.

Song – Love Has Come -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJSDciq5qo>

*With one voice the Angels sing;
Songs that make creation ring
Prophets hear and call us to
Live in spirit and in truth*



*Father Yahweh, Elohim;
Voice of thunder, spirit wind
Breathe on me your very life;
Grace will make the darkness bright
Word of God enthroned
Dwell in us forevermore;
Love has come to show the way
Hallelujah, peace be with us
Love has come to show the way
God of covenant divine
Lead us to the end of time
Beyond sorrow, beyond fear;
Beyond pride and earthly tears
Word of God enthroned
Dwell in us forevermore;
Love has come to show the way
Hallelujah, peace be with us
Love has come to show the way
Keeper of the sacrifice
Manifest in Jesus Christ
Born to die and wake the dead
As we hunger, keep us fed
Now salvation has come
In the New Jerusalem
Dancers dance and singers roar;
Proclaiming Jesus Christ is Lord
Word of God enthroned
Dwell in us forevermore;
Love has come to show the way
Halleluiah, peace be with us
Love has come to show the way*

The love of God has come in person! His name is Jesus because he “will save his people.” This next song declares this saving work of Jesus, the King of glory and the “unfathomableness” of God leaving his throne to a manger and for sinners. Yes, rejoice for love and hope and peace and joy has come!

Song – This Is Jesus -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nLhdBL0eow>

*Night of wonder
Still and silent
Heaven's brilliance from above
Light of glory*



*Pierced the darkness
Mercy pierced my heart with love*

*This is Jesus
King of glory
Here to rescue from the fall
Son of God who
Comes to save us
Prince of peace and Lord of all
Oh the mystery
Who could fathom
God would leave His Holy throne
For a manger
For a sinner
For us all to be His own*

*This is Jesus
King of glory
Here to rescue from the fall
Son of God who
Comes to save us
Prince of peace and Lord of all*

*Rejoice He is with us
Rejoice Hope is here
Rejoice He is with us
Rejoice Hope is here
Rejoice He is with us
Rejoice Hope is here
Rejoice He is with us
Rejoice Hope is here*

*This is Jesus
King of glory
Here to rescue from the fall
Son of God who
Comes to save us
Prince of peace and Lord of all
For the hearts so
Prone to wander
For these feet so quick to flee
God is here and
Love is reaching
For the lost and least of these*

Christ Candle – Christ Candle



Light the single Christ candle at this time and remember the advent four: hope, peace, joy, love.

Emmanuel, God with us, a promise kept, a child. By definition, a baby is dependent on adults for everything—food, shelter, protection, and love. A baby is unable to use logic and reason. It needs constant attention.

But the baby Jesus—this child created the world. This child existed before anything or anyone. This child was God.

Imagine: he's the creator of the world and suddenly he feels cold and hunger. Imagine: becoming human was not a twist of fate, or a punishment from a higher being; it was a choice. God chose to give up much—to become little—to gain the unmeasurable.

This child was a King. A King in a dirty stable, wrapped in rags—but a King with a plan. This child would bring hope because he was hope. Not just a wish, but the confidence that God would defeat Satan, that He would win over evil.

This child would bring peace, even in the midst of great suffering and trials—a peace that assures his followers that he is in control even when it feels like nobody is.

This child would bring love—He is Love—a love that would never be taken away, a love that is beyond our understanding. And this child would bring joy, for he would deliver us.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light.

Song – Is He Worthy -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c6pl6CaiD0>

Do you feel the world is broken? (We do)

Do you feel the shadows deepen? (We do)

But do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through? (We do)

Do you wish that you could see it all made new? (We do)

Is all creation groaning? (It is)

Is a new creation coming? (It is)

Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? (It is)

Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? (It is)

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?

Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?

The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave

He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave

Is He worthy? Is He worthy

Of all blessing and honor and glory?

Is He worthy of this?

He is

Does the Father truly love us? (He does)

Does the Spirit move among us? (He does)

And does Jesus, our Messiah, hold forever those He loves? (He does)

Does our God intend to dwell again with us? (He does)

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?



*Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
From every people and tribe (People and tribe)
Every nation and tongue (Every nation and tongue)
He has made us a kingdom and priests to God
To reign with the Son
Is He worthy? Is He worthy
Of all blessing and honor and glory?
Is He worthy? Is He worthy?
Is He worthy of this?
He is, He is
Is He worthy? Is He worthy?
He is, He is
He is worthy, He is worthy
He is*

Scripture Reading – Luke 2:1-20

Ah yes! Jesus is worthy! This evening, we are focusing on his worthiness in relation to his birth or incarnation. Incarnation simply means, “becoming flesh”. Theologically, it means God becoming flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. You’re invited to read the story of the birth of Jesus in an “Ignatian” kind of way this evening. This way places yourself in the story as a participant and witness to what is going on. You can see, smell, hear and feel the various elements of the scene as it unfolds. Maybe you even imagine what it might be like to be one of the characters in the scene. When you are finished reading, take a moment to reflect on what you “saw”, “smelled”, “heard” and/or “felt” and how that helps you better understand what happened.

Read Luke 2:1-20 now.

Song – God With Us -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udJiT-LMnIs>

*You've come
To bring peace
To be love
To be nearer to us
You've come
To bring life
To be light
To shine brighter in us
Oh Emmanuel God with us
Our Deliverer
You are Savior
In Your presence we find our strength
Over everything
Our redemption*



*God with us
You are God with us
You've come
To be hope
To this world
For Your honor and name
You've come
To take sin
To bear shame
And to conquer the grave
Emmanuel God With Us
Our Deliverer
You are Savior
In Your presence we find our strength
Over everything
Our redemption
God with us
You are God with us
You are here
You are holy
We are standing
In Your glory
Our Deliverer
You are Savior
In Your presence we find our strength
Over everything
Our redemption
God with us
You are God with us*

Centering Prayer – Luke 1: 46-55 – The Magnificat, Mary’s Song of Praise

Read these verses as a prayer. Remember the context of these words and notice how Mary beautifully models faithfulness through an earthy, raw, passionate and realistic head and heart response to the knowledge that she was chosen by God to be blessed as the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth.

Gospel Text: John 1:14

Our text is one verse. But it is one powerful and rich and deep and significant verse. Take a moment to read it three times. Normal speed the first time and then slower the next two times.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Gospel Homily – The Word Became Flesh

Gifts. We all love to receive gifts – especially the good gifts. You know, the ones that you didn’t think

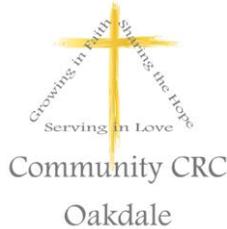


you would get because they were too big or too expensive or too unusual. But come Christmas, there it is! The gift you wanted but didn't think possible is yours! Or, the good gift that you didn't know you wanted until you received it and realized its value and worth. Yes, Christmas time is about gifts. Giving and receiving gifts and recognizing the gifts all around us every day – spouse, children, parents, singleness, house, clothes, food, drink, land, sky, new day, sun, stars and so, so much more that God has provided or gifted us with abilities and resources to get and have. Even your life, my life is a gift given by God. You and I did not earn our existence. It was given. Yes, Christmas time is a season about remembering, enacting and being shaped by gift receiving and giving. And all this is centered in and grounded on the glorious good gift of Jesus of Nazareth. All gifts find their meaning in this one gift. All gifts find their purpose in this one gift.

Jesus of Nazareth is God's greatest gift to us for it is God himself that is given! Ever since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for their own protection (so that they would not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in a state of sin and separation from God), humanity's communion with God has been broken, dysfunctional and in disrepair – not from God's end, but from ours. We did this. We made the mess. We caused the chaos and rebellion. We are guilty. But God doesn't abandon his most prized creation, humans to their self-chosen fate. He comes to them and promises Adam and Eve that things will not always be like this; that there will come a time when evil will be crushed and good will triumph over evil....I will remain for you even while you keep turning against me. This "for-ness" of God and the evil Crusher that he promised became known in the Old Testament as the Messiah – the one who would save God's people and rule over them as a benevolent and loving King; protecting and providing for them as his children and governing them as citizens so that they might flourish in his kingdom.

Many, many years pass by and God's people either forget about, belittle or distort God's promise of a Messiah so that when the day arrives, they miss it! They miss the glorious good Gift! Only a handful of shepherds nearby and a few men from the East and one jealous king know something major has taken place. And it's hard not to blame everyone else – I'd have probably missed it too. I mean, the evil crusher is gifted to humanity as a baby to a couple of no-names from the Podunk little town of Nazareth of which it was thought that "nothing good" could come from. Furthermore, he remains there for 30 years working with his earthly dad as a carpenter. Nobody notices. Nobody knows. But Mary has and Mary knows. She has pondered her son, Jesus and the promises made about him. She knows what happened was a miracle – she was a virgin and virgins can't get pregnant. But she does. She knows what happened to her was not ordinary nor was it something of minor importance but something massively significant.

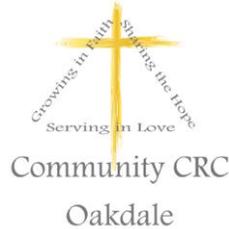
How significant? Well, it's literally impossible to overstate it. In fact, it really is impossible and beyond us to comprehend (know fully). All we can do is attempt to apprehend (know partially) some of its magnificence and then what to do with it – namely believe it and let it shape us and form us to respond to God in a biblically appropriate way that honors the magnificence of it. You see, God didn't just choose a child born to human parents to be the Messiah and anoint them with abilities and resources as everyone thought he was going to do. No. God had an infinitely more wonderful and surprising and fantastical reality in mind. He would send himself. More specifically, He would send the second person



of the Trinity, the Logos, the eternal Word of God. And, this would not happen in a way that we can fully comprehend. He was not going to attach himself to humanity or absorb some humanity into him. No. He would mutually indwell and actively participate with humanity “without ceasing to be God or distorting humanity in any way” (Myk Habets). The councils early in church history that spent decades and even centuries to work out the precise definitions and doctrines of God as closest and truest to Scripture describe God as fully God and fully human. This is beyond us. The math does not add up. 100% God and 100% human and not 50% divinity and 50% humanity as we might expect.

Now, what’s even more astounding is not the math but what actually took place. We cannot miss this. We dare not miss this! Divinity and humanity came together in a way that had never been seen or done before. Jesus of Nazareth is both God and man. He is both Creator and creation. He is both uncreated and created. He is both infinite and finite. He is both Giver and Gift!! That which is invulnerable also became vulnerable. That which is omnipotent also became weak. That which is omnipresent also became localized. That which is omniscient also became unknowledgeable. That which is immortal also became mortal. The act of God uniting himself with creation, with carbon and calcium and kidneys and collar bones reveals God’s supernatural love and care for his creation, both the cosmos and its creatures, especially you and I. It also, permanently and forever unites God with us in this unique way in and through Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth is human forever (and divine too!). In essence, God fully assumed that which he would fully save. He is what we will become (not a God, but godlike, reaching our full potential, our telos in him. Indeed, what we gained in Jesus Christ is far more than what we lost in Adam – Thomas Torrance). Jesus of Nazareth entered into the very mess and chaos and darkness and suffering and rebellion that humanity had created and took it upon himself in the most tangible and real way that he possibly could. No other religion claims this for their (false) god. Only Christianity makes the bold claim that God gifted himself by becoming one of us in order to save us. God has done the most profound, the most loving, the most humble, the most generous, the most merciful, the most gracious and the most giving thing he could possibly do by taking on flesh (incarnation) and becoming one of us without ceasing to be God. The baby Jesus is all this. And this might be the most ironic thing of the incarnation – it was gloriously ordinary! There is literally nothing more ordinary than childbirth. Yet, this was the most extraordinary childbirth ever!

Our text says that John (and the other disciples) saw Jesus’ glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. They saw because Jesus Christ reveals. John mentions three things that Jesus of Nazareth revealed to them: his glory, his grace and his truth. Jesus of Nazareth is God’s sent gift of glory. Glory is majesty, splendor, grandeur, fame, renown and magnificence. Glory is a big deal in the Bible and therefore it is a big deal to us. In fact, one way to sum up the Bible is by saying God’s glory is the goal of all things (John Piper). God’s glory in the Bible is most associated with his holiness – his otherness, his perfectness, his sacredness, his supernaturalness, his divinity. It reveals the difference between us and him. However, the glory of God as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth shows us that God’s glory makes room for humanity. While he shares his glory with no one (Isaiah 42:8) he makes room for us in Christ to abide in it and to experience it without being destroyed. In reveling in his glory, we find our glory. In faithfully following Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we acknowledge and rejoice in his glory and in that we discover our glory. Why? Because that is what we were designed for as God’s image bearers. We were designed to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7). Our glory is not in ourselves but



that we know God and his glory (because he first knew and loved us). Jesus both reveals the glory of God to us and he shows us what the glory of humanity is through his perfect and faithful obedience to the Father. Thus, his ordinary, every day life as a carpenter is just as glorious as his death and resurrection. In fact, there is no part of Jesus Christ and his life that is not glorious or praiseworthy. This is the significance of the incarnation.

Jesus of Nazareth is God's sent gift of grace. The glory of God is seen brightly and clearly in the gracious sending of his one and only Son to save us from our sins, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation. He didn't have to. It was a choice of love. Grace by definition is gift. It is given freely and not earned. It is given out of love for another as an act of utmost care. Jesus reveals God's glorious, saving grace. Jesus is God's glorious, saving grace! Jesus of Nazareth is God's gift of grace that saves us. His perfect robe of righteousness he earned by living a perfect life of obedience to the Father, is graciously given to us as he takes on our sins in order to condemn sin in the flesh forever (Romans 8:3). Jesus gives to us that which he has earned and has taken from us that which he did not. That is grace. In Christ sins are forgiven, wounds are healed, divisions bridged, hostility overcome, death conquered. That is grace. That grace of God as demonstrated and revealed through the giving of Jesus Christ as the gift par excellence displays the glory of God for us today. This is the significance of the incarnation.

Jesus of Nazareth is God's sent gift of truth. God cannot lie and there is no deception in him (Hebrews 6:18, 1 Peter 2:22, John 14:5). Everything he says and does is right, is righteous and just and good. He makes no errors. He makes no mistakes. He cannot be tricked or fooled. He cannot be deceived. All deception and lies are not of God but of sin, evil and the Devil, the father of lies (John 8:44). In a world today that is full of fake news, misinformation and misleading information, spin and twisted data, its difficult to identify and know truth. We dismiss easily. May we not do this with Scripture or the words of Jesus, the revealer of truth. In fact, Jesus himself says that he is the way and the life and the truth (John 14:6). Jesus is truth. It's his identity. It is what defines him. Think about it. Truth is reality. That is, what is real is true. God speaks and reality happens. God speaks and worlds come into existence. God speaks and dead people arise. God speaks and the storm and waves and wind dissipate. God speaks and the sick and demon possessed are instantly healed. God speaks and reality happens. The incarnation speaks to the reality of God's love and his integrity in keeping his promises. The promised evil crusher has been sent as gift in Jesus of Nazareth. And he does crush evil with his victory over sin and death. Truth prevails. Lies and deceit don't. Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?" Jesus doesn't respond because Pilate is looking at truth and he can't see it. Can you? Can you see the magnificent truth of God's love for his world to such a degree that he sends his one and only Son to save it; that if anyone believes in him, they will not perish but have eternal life? This is the significance of the incarnation.

The incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth disrupts the status quo. It forever changes God's relationship with creation. It's worth and significance and value as a truth of scripture and a shaping force in our lives is substantial. In conclusion, may the words of the Apostle Paul to the disciples of Jesus in Philippi, serve as one way in which we can respond to the glorious good news of God's sent Gift of Jesus Christ: "Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no



matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion. Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father (The Message, Philippians 2:1-11).

Song – O Come All Ye Faithful -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5REiBhZyJZg>

*Oh, come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold him
Born the King of angels
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Christ, the Lord!*

*Sing, choirs of angels
Sing in exultation
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God
Glory in the highest
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Christ, the Lord!*

*Yea, Lord, we greet thee
Born this happy morning
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Oh, come, let us adore him
Christ, the Lord!*

Song – Hark The Herald Angels Sing -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P97yj-f4sc&feature=emb_logo

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,*



*Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

*Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord:
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel.
Hark the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

*Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings:
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth;
Born to give them second birth.
Hark the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

Song – King Of Kings -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of5lCFWiEpg>

*In the darkness, we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the Word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross*



*For even in Your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake You died
Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings
And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored
And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me, ohh
Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings
Praise forever to the King of Kings*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus:

We'll close with a collect (prayer) from the Anglican Church:

To a troubled world,

Peace from Christ.

To a searching world,

Love from Christ.

To a waiting world,

Hope from Christ.

May the incarnation of God profoundly affect you – the way you think and feel about Jesus of Nazareth and how to respond to him with worshipful obedience. Merry Christmas!