

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by.
Yet, in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above;
While mortals sleep the angels keep, Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together, Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.
3. How silently, how silently, The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts, The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels.

Refrain: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
2. God of God, Light of Light, Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's
womb; Very God, begotten, not created. *Refrain*
3. Sing, choirs of angels! Sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of
heaven above: 'Glory to God in the highest.' *Refrain*
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to
thee be all glory given; Word of the Father, Late in flesh appearing.
Refrain

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
December 23rd, 2018

Morning Service:

Luke 2: 21 – 35

The Consolation of Israel

1. Simeon Was Waiting for the Consolation of Israel (25-28).
2. Christmas Showed God Faithful to All His Promises (25-32).
3. Christmas Is Difficult; It Involves Piercing (34-35).

Christ is the consolation of Israel, God's people. We celebrate Him with Christmas—His coming and immanent return. It is to Christ that we cry and lift our songs of praise even in the midst of difficult life in this broken world. His coming has demonstrated His faithfulness. He can be trusted. Christ's resurrection makes certain the rising of all who are in Him. He is our consolation and security.

Evening Service:

Nehemiah 6: 1 – 7:3

Strengthen Our Hands

1. The Battle Often Gets Personal.
2. We See God's Faithful Progress in Scripture.
3. Christ Strengthened Our Hands by Piercing His.

Nehemiah understood both His own weakness and God's strength. We are called to faithfully use the strength Christ gives us to labor in our family business of bringing glory to the Father. How can we encourage one another to faithfulness in this calling?

Taking Gathered Worship Home

This is a busy week with Christmas and all that goes with it. Let us encourage you to make the time to include Christ in your celebrations of His birth. Spend time daily reading, studying, and meditating on His Word. Come to the Christmas Eve Service (Monday at 7pm).

Fourth Week of Advent—December 23-24 am

Please see the Advent Devotional Booklet for candle litany.

Read Aloud Matthew 2:1-6

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ ³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea for this is what has been written by the prophet:

⁶ ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’”

Sing *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (words on back).

Christmas Eve—December 24 pm

Read Aloud Luke 2:25-32

“And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ ‘Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A Light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’”

Come to the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7pm!

Christmas Day—Saturday (December 25-29)

Each day starting on Christmas, use the litany below for devotionals.

Read Aloud Luke 2:22-35

If time allows start at Luke 1:1

Discuss/Consider: What was Simeon waiting to see? Do we always get to see what we want? What had God specifically promised Him? What is His response to God’s faithfulness? How did the birth of Christ demonstrate God’s faithfulness? How does His coming bring about both falling and rising? What needs to be pierced? How can we celebrate together this glorious thing that God has done?

Sing: *O Come, All Ye Faithful* (words on back).

Pray: “Lord Jesus Christ, the prophets foretold Your coming, the poor longed to see You. The heavens celebrated Your birth; the apostles, the martyrs, the faithful saints through the ages have all repeated the songs of the angels declaring the wonder of Your birth. Your Church praises You today in every human language. Son of God, You humbled Yourself as a servant, raising us up to share in Your glory. We were in darkness and You have given us Light. We were hopeless and You have given us Hope. You have brought us peace and joy and strength that we could never know. Rightly do the angels praise You. Make us rejoice with them and one another at the wonder of Your birth and all that Your drawing near enabled You to do for us as the only Mediator between God and human beings. Amen.”

Act: How do you prepare for the day? Do you do more to prepare yourself against the cold than against the spiritual forces that seek to destroy you? Put on the spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:13-20) God has provided in Christ.