

**HYMNS:** 24 741 634 29 25 629

**INTROIT:** Psalm 110:1-4

The LORD has said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet!"

The LORD will send forth Your mighty sceptre from Zion. Rule in the middle of Your enemies!

Your people will be volunteers in the day of Your armed power. In holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn, the dew of Your youth belongs to You.

The LORD has sworn an oath and will not relent: "You are a priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek."

**COLLECT:** O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that, as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

**READINGS:** Isaiah 7:10-14 A promise that a Virgin will have a Child  
1 John 4:7-16 The love of Christians is motivated by God's love to them  
Matthew 1:18-25 The announcement of Jesus' birth to Joseph

### Isaiah 7:10-14

<sup>10</sup> The LORD spoke again to Ahaz: <sup>11</sup> "Claim a miraculous sign for yourself from the LORD, your God! Make the request a deep one or make it high up above!"

<sup>12</sup> However, Ahaz answered, "I shall not ask for one. I shall not put the LORD to the test."

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah said: "Listen now, family of David! Is it too little for you to exhaust the patience of men, that you also exhaust the patience of my God? <sup>14</sup> Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a miraculous sign: **Look! The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a Son and will call His name 'Immanuel.'**

## 1 John 4:7-16

<sup>7</sup> Dearly loved people, let us love one another! For love comes from God, and everyone who loves has been given birth by God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> The one who does not love has not known God, because God is Love. <sup>9</sup> This is how God has shown His love among us: He has sent His only Son into the world that we may live through Him. <sup>10</sup> This is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and has sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dearly loved people, since that is how God has loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love has been brought to maturity in us. <sup>13</sup> This is how we know that we remain in Him, and He in us: He has given us His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> We have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Saviour of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he remains in God. <sup>16</sup> We have also known and have believed the love that God has for us. God is Love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

## Matthew 1:18-25

<sup>18</sup> This is how Jesus Christ was born. His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. However, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph, her husband, was an honourable man and, because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her secretly. <sup>20</sup> After Joseph had thought about it, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home with you! For what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him ‘Jesus’! For He will save His people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> All this happened to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> **“Look! The virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and they will name Him ‘Immanuel’”** (which is translated, **“God-With-Us”**).

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did what the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He took Mary home as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but did not have relations with her until she gave birth to a Son. Joseph gave Him the name “Jesus.”

**JESUS... IMMANUEL... GOD WITH US**  
**Sermon for Christmas Eve 2022**  
**Matthew 1:18-25**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Matthew 1:18-25: **This is how Jesus Christ was born. His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. However, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.** <sup>19</sup> **Joseph, her husband, was an honourable man and, because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her secretly.** <sup>20</sup> **After Joseph had thought about it, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home with you! For what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.** <sup>21</sup> **She will give birth to a son, and you shall name Him ‘Jesus’! For He will save His people from their sins.”**

<sup>22</sup> **All this happened to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:** <sup>23</sup> **“Look! The virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and they will name Him ‘Immanuel’” (which is translated, “God-With-Us”).** <sup>24</sup> **When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did what the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He took Mary home as his wife,** <sup>25</sup> **but did not have relations with her until she gave birth to a Son. Joseph gave Him the name “Jesus.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

There are two well-known Josephs in the Bible. There is Joseph, the Son of Jacob, who was sold into slavery in Egypt and rose to power as the second in command over all of Egypt, and then there is the Joseph in tonight’s Gospel - the one who became the guardian of Jesus. As we think of these Josephs, it’s interesting to compare the two.

One of the interesting things about both Josephs is that God entirely changed their lives using dreams. From the time when he saw his brothers' sheaves bow<sup>1</sup> to his until the day that he interpreted the dream of Pharaoh<sup>2</sup>, Joseph, the son of Jacob, seemed to have a life that was ruled by dreams. Now, in tonight's Gospel, it seems as though Joseph, the guardian of Jesus, was to receive guidance from God through dreams as well - two different men who share the name Joseph - two different men who receive special messages in dreams from God.

The dream in tonight's Gospel saved Joseph from a real-life nightmare. **“Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. However, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”** According to Jewish custom, betrothal was a legally binding relationship, the first stage of marriage. It is likely that Joseph and Mary had spoken vows of marriage in the presence of witnesses, and they were regarded as husband and wife. However, according to the custom of the time, the marriage celebration would follow some months later, and only then would the bride and groom begin their life together as one flesh. Common sense, based on the evidence at hand, indicated that Joseph's wife was pregnant by another man. Now, you and I know that Mary was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. As far as her pregnancy was concerned, she had done nothing wrong. The only thing is *Joseph didn't know that*.

Mary was pregnant, and Joseph was not the Father. He could only conclude that she had been unfaithful to him. The penalty for such a crime was pretty clear. According to Leviticus 20:10, *“When anyone commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer, together with the adulteress, shall surely be put to death!”* The laws concerning sexual immorality recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy also states that the method of execution should be by stoning (22:22-24). Joseph had every right to be depressed, disappointed, offended, confused, and angry. We can only imagine the pain and disappointment he felt. What

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 37:7

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 41

was he to do? Matthew tells us. “**Joseph, her husband, was an honourable man and, because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her secretly.**” Mary, if pregnant by another man, should have been stoned. That Joseph intended to divorce her secretly shows that he affirmed the biblical condemnation of adultery as a sin. However, he gave no thought to capital punishment but showed the triumph of mercy – compassion - instead. Jesus would show similar compassion in the future when a woman who had been caught in adultery was brought before Him by the scribes and Pharisees. On that particular occasion, they said to Jesus, “*Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. In the Law Moses ordered us to stone such women. Now, what do You say?*” (John 8:4-5). What was Jesus’ response? “*The person who is without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her!*” (John 8:7). Joseph had expressed extraordinary compassion in deciding to divorce Mary secretly. He did not wish to seek revenge on her.

Anyhow, when Joseph fell asleep, “**an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream,**” and he received a message from God about the true identity of the Baby growing in Mary’s womb. He really was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was the long-expected Saviour. That’s why Joseph was to “**name Him ‘Jesus’! For He will save His people from their sins.**”

So it was that the dream changed Joseph. “**He took Mary home as his wife.**” Any doubts about Mary’s faithfulness were removed entirely. In their place, Joseph received the amazing good news that he would have the privilege of caring for God’s Son, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of the world! Joseph understood that this child was of the Holy Spirit, but he would raise Him *as his own*.

The beginning of tonight’s Gospel tells us about Joseph’s attitude when he did not know who Jesus was. By the end of the Gospel, Joseph knew exactly who Jesus was. God completely rearranged his life as a result. It is so important to know who Jesus is. We can learn a lot about who Jesus is from the message that the angel brought to Joseph in the dream.

First of all, Jesus is so different that He took on human flesh in a supernatural way. The angel of the dream told Joseph and us that the Holy

Spirit attended to the conception of Jesus. This information not only testifies to Mary's innocence but it also indicates that this is no ordinary Child. Ordinary children enter this world at the union of man and woman. This Child enters our world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then there is the name "Jesus." This is, of course, the English translation of the Greek. The Greek itself would be a translation of either Aramaic or Hebrew. If the angel spoke Aramaic to Joseph, then the name would be "Yeshua." If Hebrew, then the name would be "Yehoshua." Both of these names mean the same thing, "Yahweh, or the LORD, is salvation." Jesus was a fairly common name in those days, but this Jesus would be the only one who lived up to His name.

Jesus lived up to His name by dying. As the angel said, "**He will save His people from their sins.**" Jesus lived a life of perfection - a life of total innocence. In spite of this, Pontius Pilate sentenced Him to death by crucifixion. Jesus took our sins to the cross, and as He hung there, He paid for them all. In this way, He saved His people from their sins.

We know that He fulfilled the promise that the angel gave to Joseph because He did not stay dead but rose three days later. He then assured us of His eternal presence by ascending into heaven.

The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to close the account of the angel's visit to Joseph with a word from the prophet Isaiah. "**Look! The virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and they will name Him 'Immanuel.'**" Then, for those whose Hebrew is a little rusty, Matthew added an explanation. Immanuel means "**God-With-Us**." The title "Immanuel" means that God likes to be with His people. This Child would be God incarnate, the eternal God visibly among us in human flesh and blood.

Immanuel has to do with heaven. Too often, we think of heaven as this place that is far, far away. For many people, it is equivalent to the "Somewhere over the Rainbow" that Dorothy sings about in the "Wizard of Oz." These people believe that Jesus went away when He ascended into heaven and that He is no longer here, no longer with us. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Immanuel means “**God-With-Us.**” That means that God is intimately involved with every one of us. Since heaven exists wherever God exists, Immanuel means heaven is here with us now. That is what the advent of God coming into our flesh is all about. It is about God making it possible for us to be with Him both now in time and forever in eternity. Just as Jesus prayed in His High Priestly Prayer, “*I am not praying for these only but also for those who believe in Me through their Word,* <sup>21</sup> *that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You. Let them also be in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me!*” (John 17:20-21). Here Jesus spoke of the intimacy that He has with God the Father, and He prayed that we would share in that intimacy. Jesus wants us to be linked with Him and the Father.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “*For now we see dimly in a mirror but then we shall see face to face. Now I know only in part but then I shall know just as I am fully known*” (1 Corinthians 13:12). From these words we learn that we do not see the full reality of heaven here with us now. Nevertheless, in the name Immanuel, we have the promise that God is with us. He is here with His blessings.

At the beginning of tonight’s Gospel, Joseph did not understand who was in Mary’s womb. He felt cheated, but by the end of tonight’s Gospel, the angel had taught him who was in her womb. As a result, Joseph made it his business to watch over Jesus as his own.

Because the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to include this event in his account of the Gospel, we also learn who it is that lived in Mary’s womb. We learned that even the name “Jesus” means that He is our Saviour from sin. Through the name Immanuel, we also learned that Jesus is not just an infant, but He is also God. He is the God who is with us both now and forever. This is what Christmas is all about - it’s this little bundle of joy, born on this night, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and His name is “**Jesus... Immanuel... God-With-Us.**” Amen.

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

## PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

O God our Father, with happiness in our hearts we thank You that You have brought us again to this special night, when we can celebrate the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. We thank You for showing us its true meaning.

You promised a Saviour when Adam and Eve fell into sin; You repeated that promise many times in the Old Testament; and You kept Your promise when Jesus was born. We praise and thank You for keeping Your word and for remembering the needs of all sinful people like us. As we sing our Christmas carols and songs of praise grant that we may do so in faith and joy. Bless us all, young and old, as we sing, tell, and hear the glad story of Jesus' birth. May it make our faith in You stronger, and our love for You greater. Give us new peace and life through it. Help each one of us to know that Jesus forgives our sins, frees us from all evil, gives us the power to love You and to live for You, and makes us sure of eternal life in heaven. Let Jesus, and all that He gives us, be our real joy in our Christmas celebrations.

Grant that we, like the angels, may always sing Your praises. Grant that we, like the shepherds, may always believe Your Word, worship the Saviour, and spread the Good News, which is for all people. Grant that we, like Mary, may treasure the Christmas message, think deeply about it, and keep it in our hearts all through our lives. Grant that we, like the Wise Men, may follow the bright light of Your Word as it leads us to Jesus, and then offer Him whatever we can give with thankful and loving hearts.

Father in heaven, extend the rule of Jesus the Saviour in the hearts of people everywhere. Grant that many more may find the joy that we have found in Jesus our Saviour. Give us opportunities to share with others the Good News that Jesus was born, and died, and rose again for all people. Glory to You, our God in the highest, and may Your peace continue peace among people whom You favour. We pray this in the name of the Christ-child Jesus, our Saviour and our King. Amen.

## Jesus, the Son of God

Jesus became man as an act of love. He is still the God-man today and will be for all eternity. The state of humiliation at this time consisted in that Jesus did not fully make use of the powers that His human nature received from the divine nature. At the moment Jesus was conceived, He already possessed the fullness of the deity in that body which had been conceived (Col. 2:9). Yet during the period of gestation in Mary's womb, Jesus did not exercise those powers His human nature had received from the divine nature. Rather, He was cared for by His Father in heaven as He was nourished in the womb of Mary.

When Jesus was born, He again relied on others to take care of Him. Jesus relied on His heavenly Father to take care of Him. Psalm 22, a messianic psalm, tells us: "*You are the One who brought Me out of the womb, the One who made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. I have been cast on You from the womb. From My mother's womb You have been My God*" (Psalm 22:9-10). There are many who take Psalm 22 as a direct prophecy of the Messiah, and thus these words would be a description of the trust the Messiah had in His Father from little on. After Christ was born, Mary cared for Him. She "*wrapped him in cloths and placed Him in a manger*" (Luke 2:7). Luther expressed this well in his great Christmas hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

Ah, Lord, who hast created all,  
How weak art Thou, how poor and small,  
That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed  
Where ass and ox but lately fed.

When Jesus was 40 days old, He was taken to the temple, where the aged Simeon rejoiced to see Him. This Babe in arms looked helpless to the world, but Simeon recognised in Him the God-man sent to save us from our sins. When Herod threatened to kill the Christ Child, an angel warned Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-14). Joseph complied, and thus Jesus was spared the slaughter King Herod ordered for the babes of Bethlehem. Through all of this, Jesus possessed the properties His divine nature shares with His human nature. He just did not choose to make full or constant use of them.

We also need to note the importance of Christ's virgin birth. First of all, the Bible clearly teaches that Christ was born of a virgin. Isaiah

prophesied it (Is. 7:14). There has been much debate over whether the word Isaiah used to describe the Messiah's mother was a word that could mean either "virgin" or "unmarried woman" (*almah*). However, when Matthew repeats the prophecy in his account of Jesus' birth, he uses a Greek word for virgin (*parthenos*), which can only mean a woman who has had no sexual relations with a man. Besides all of this, Mary knew how babies were born. When the angel Gabriel told her that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, she responded, "*How will this be, since I am not living with a husband?*" (Luke 1:34).

All children are born with original sin (Ps. 51:5; John 3:6). But Jesus was born without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19; 3:18). His holy conception and birth atoned for our sinful conception and birth. This was part of His keeping God's will for us (Gal. 4:4-5).

Those who deny that Jesus was born of a virgin also deny the deity of Christ. If He were a man born from men, then He could not be true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. If Jesus were a man born from men, He would have had original sin and would not have been able to save Himself, much less anyone else. Those who deny the virgin birth of Christ jeopardise their salvation.

Those who maintain that they personally believe in the virgin birth but wouldn't make it a requirement for others are fools, for they are sticking their heads into the lion's mouth and asking him to take a bite. The devil is more than pleased to have people be indifferent to the teaching of Christ's virgin birth. He knows that the next step down the road is reasoning that virgin births don't happen, which leads to rejection of this important teaching of Scripture. The doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is clearly taught by the Bible. It is part of the confession of the early church in both the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. It is part of Luther's confession in his great Christmas hymn:

To you this night is born a child  
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;  
This little child, of lowly birth,  
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at [paziebell@gmail.com](mailto:paziebell@gmail.com) or to the church office at [ddaalc@gmail.com](mailto:ddaalc@gmail.com).

***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***



**WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

25 December Christmas	1 January 2023 Circumcision & Name of Jesus	8 January The Baptism of our Lord
<b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b> 7.30am LOWOOD HC 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am TMBA HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.15am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
<b>Christmas Day</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 11:1-8; John 1:1-14		
HYMNS: 627 33 633 (26 23 part 1 [& 2 if needed]) 34		
<b>1 January 2023</b>		
READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 552 36 277 (398 842) 512		

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at [www.aelc.org.au](http://www.aelc.org.au).

Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.

If there are any late changes to be made to divine services, these will be listed immediately on the website, and a text sent out to members.

*If you are unsure, please contact pastor.*