



**Christmas Lessons and Carols
with Reflections from Martin Luther**

Gathering Song - Once in Royal David's City - ELW 269

Opening Dialogue

A: Come! Look upon the baby Jesus, cradled in the arms of his mother.

C: Seeing this wondrous sight, may our hearts be comforted and our spirits filled with peace.

A: Come! Listen to choirs of angels announcing good news to all people.

C: Hearing this marvelous song, may we too sing: Glory to God in the highest!

A: Come! Receive this ancient story in your heart, not as history but as a gift.

C: Opening our hearts to this great mystery, may Christ be born in us today.

Greeting

L: 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

A: Shine into our hearts the light of your wisdom, O God, and open our minds to the knowledge of your word,

C: that in all things we may think and act according to your good will and may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ,

A: who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

First Reading - Luke 2:1-7

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

Reflection - Luther's reflections on the birth of Jesus

Carol - Infant Holy, Infant Lowly - ELW 276

Second Reading - Luke 2:8-16

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in

bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Reflection - Luther's reflections on the shepherds and angels

Carol - Go Tell It on the Mountain ELW 290

Third Reading - Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reflection Luther's reflections on Herod and the wise men

Carol - As with Gladness Men of Old - ELW 302

Fourth Reading John 1:1-5, 14-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Reflection Luther's reflections on the Word made flesh

Carol - Love Has Come - ELW 292

Prayers of Intercession

L: Filled with good news of great joy, let us offer our prayers for the church, the earth, and all people.

A brief silence.

A: For those who teach and those who learn, we pray. Bless the education ministries of your church. Guide Sunday school teachers, college and seminary professors, and Bible study leaders in our ongoing faith formation and curiosity. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

A: For the thriving of creation, we pray. Protect the habitats of pangolins and porcupines, penguins and parrots, and all wild animals and creeping things. Increase our knowledge of the natural world and the care of its inhabitants. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

A: For the nations of the world, we pray. Raise up rulers who lead with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Let your peace rule in their hearts and in all lands. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

A: For the well-being of your people, we pray. Keep watch over all who travel this holiday season. Accompany those who are alone or ill (*especially*). Console parents and children whose relationships are strained or severed. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

A: For the ministry of this place, we pray. Let the word of Christ dwell among us. In times of conflict, clothe us in love and move us to forgiveness. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

A: For your holy, beloved, and chosen ones of every time and place, we give thanks. Draw us all into everlasting praise and joy. God of grace,

C: receive our prayer.

L: We commend these prayers to you, O God, trusting your grace made known to all, through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

Offering Song – Angels, From the Realms of Glory – ELW 275

Offertory Prayer

A God of heaven and earth, from the beginning, you have called forth life, in which you take delight.

C: The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy. Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty, that we may join the chorus of creation to tell of your salvation from day to day. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Communion

Post Communion Blessing

L: Now may the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

C: Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

A: Merciful God, we thank you for Jesus, who is our heavenly food.

C: Strengthened by this goodness, send us forth to announce your peace, comfort the afflicted, and share the good news of great joy. Amen.

Blessing

L: May the Word that Mary brought to birth carry you into new and abundant life.

May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms enfold you with love and strength.

May the Word that angels proclaimed in song bring harmony to our world.

And the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

C: Amen.

Sending Song - Good Christian friends, rejoice - ELW 288

Dismissal

A: Glory to God in the highest!

C: And peace to God's people on earth!

A: Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

C: Thanks be to God.