

✠ Holy Cross Lutheran Church ✠

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Pastor Mark Huston

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The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

December 28, 2025

Divine Service, Setting Four

As We Gather

To the rest of the world, we are simply people with a different faith, but we have an identity that is unique: We are God's children, calling out to Him, "Abba! Father!" As He did with our forebears, He remembers His covenant. Even when danger threatens, as it did for the holy family, He is with us to protect and guide us. In fact, we are not only God's children; with Jesus, His only-begotten Son, we are also heirs of the promise, which He kept for us. That is merry news indeed!

675 Oh, What Their Joy



1 Oh, what their joy and their glo - ry must be,
2 In new Je - ru - sa - lem joy shall be found,
3 We, where no trou - ble dis - trac - tion can bring,
△ 4 Now let us wor - ship our Lord and our King,



Those end - less Sab - baths the bless - ed ones see!
Bless - ings of peace shall for - ev - er a - bound;
Safe - ly the an - thems of Zi - on shall sing;
Joy - ful - ly rais - ing our voic - es to sing:



Crowns for the val - iant, to wea - ry ones rest;
Wish and ful - fill - ment are not sev - ered there,
While for Your grace, Lord, their voic - es of praise
Praise to the Fa - ther, and praise to the Son,



God shall be all, and in all ev - er blest.
Nor the things prayed for come short of the prayer.
Your bless - ed peo - ple shall ev - er - more raise.
Praise to the Spir - it, to God, Three in One.

Text: Peter Abelard, 1079–1142; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–66, alt.
Tune: Antiphoner, 1681, Paris
Text and tune: Public domain

Confession and Absolution

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Service of the Word

Introit

Psalm 31:1, 3, 5; antiphon: Revelation 7:14b

P These are the ones coming out of the great tribu- | lation.*
They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood | of the Lamb.

C In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be | put to shame; *
in your righteousness de- | liver me.

P For you are my rock and my | fortress; *
and for your name's sake you lead me and | guide me.

C Into your hand I commit my | spirit; *
you have redeemed me, O LORD, | faithful God.

C Glory be to the Father and | to the Son *
and to the Holy | Spirit;

as it was in the be- | ginning, *
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

P These are the ones coming out of the great tribu- | lation.*
They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood | of the Lamb.

Kyrie

LSB 204



C Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

Gloria in Excelsis

LSB 204



C 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;
2 To You, O sole-be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good-will from God in heav - en Pro - claimed at Je - sus' birth!
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor - shiped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,



Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n-ly King.
Where You in pow'r are seat-ed At God's right hand on high—
In God the Fa - ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

Text: Stephen P. Starke

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, the martyred innocents of Bethlehem showed forth Your praise not by speaking but by dying. Put to death in us all that is in conflict with Your will that our lives may bear witness to the faith we profess with our lips; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Jeremiah 31:15–17

R The Old Testament Reading is from Jeremiah, chapter 31.

¹⁵Thus says the LORD:

“A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.”

¹⁶Thus says the LORD:

“Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears,
for there is a reward for your work,
declares the LORD,
and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

¹⁷There is hope for your future,

declares the LORD,
and your children shall come back to their own country.”

- R** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Epistle

Revelation 14:1–5

- R** The Epistle is from Revelation, chapter 14.

¹Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.


- R** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Stand

Alleluia and Verse



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



C These things are writ-ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 2:13–18

- P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the second chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

¹³When [the wise men] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

Nicene Creed

C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.

764 When Aimless Violence Takes Those We Love



1 When aim - less vi - o - lence takes those we love,
 2 When pass - ing years rob sight and strength and mind
 3 Our faith may flick - er low, and hope grow dim,
 4 Be - cause Your Son knew ag - o - ny and loss,
 5 Through long grief - dark - ened days help us, dear Lord,



When ran - dom death strikes child - hood's prom - ise down,
 Yet fail to still a strong - ly beat - ing heart,
 Yet You, O God, are with us in our pain;
 Felt des - o - la - tion, grief and scorn and shame,
 To trust Your grace for cour - age to en - dure,



When wrench - ing loss be - comes our dai - ly bread,
 And grief be - comes the fab - ric of our days,
 You grieve with us and for us day by day,
 We know You will be with us, come what may,
 To rest our souls in Your sup - port - ing love,



We know, O God, You leave us not a - lone.
 Dear Lord, You do not stand from us a - part.
 And with us, shar - ing sor - row, will re - main.
 Your lov - ing pres - ence near, al - ways the same.
 And find our hope with - in Your mer - cy sure.

Text: Joy F. Patterson, 1931
 Tune: Alfred M. Smith, 1879-1971
 Text: © 1994, 1997 Hope Publishing Co. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110017219
 Tune: © 1990 Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City, N.J. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110017219

Sermon

Stand

Prayer of the Church

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, as the Holy Innocents suffered in the wake of Herod's rage, so do martyrs of all ages continue to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. Strengthen Your children who face trials and danger because of their faith in Christ. Preserve them from evil, and comfort the families of all who die in His name. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Blessed Lord, You have given us hope and established us in the peace of Christ, our Savior. Give Your Church boldness to speak the message of the cross and empty tomb without fear. Raise up faithful pastors to serve us in Your name, and call many to service in the Church here and throughout the world. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Father in heaven, You have honored and consecrated the home by the birth and life of Your beloved Son. Instill in Your people a godly love and reverence for their families, and enrich our lives together by Your Word and promise. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Lord God, You are the author of life. Protect life from its natural beginning to its natural end. Grant Your protection to the unborn and to mothers with child. Keep safe both mother and child during childbirth. Grant comfort and Your grace to those who suffer miscarriage or the death of a child. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Holy One of Israel, have mercy on our nation. Give us good and faithful rulers who will govern after Your good pleasure. Give us comfort and a right understanding of Your rule in this world, that we would not be deceived to think earthly powers will last forever, but have confidence in You alone. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O Lord, hear us for the sake of all who cry to You in their need. Heal the sick, relieve the suffering, comfort the mourning and guide the dying to peace in Christ [*especially* _____]. Restore them with Your abundant grace, and according to Your will deliver them from all their troubles. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious God, You sent Your Son into our flesh to share our human life, die our death and rise for our justification. As He comes to us again in His Sacrament, make us worthy homes for His saving presence. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O Lord, grant that we may remain steadfast and immovable in faith, and that we may endure to the day of Christ's coming. Reunite us with those who have gone before us and now rest from their labors, and grant that we may live in Your eternal presence and sing Your praise without end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

Offering

372 O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is sts. 1-2

Stand

956 Create in Me

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new
a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way
from Thy pres - ence; and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va - tion;
and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

Welcome to our Visitors

The Lord's Supper is celebrated at this congregation in the confession and glad confidence that, as He says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but His very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with Him and with one another. Our Lord invites to His table those who trust His words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as He forgives and loves us, that they may show forth His death until He comes.

Because those who eat and drink our Lord's body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the Sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor or an elder.

For further study, see Matthew 5:23f.; 10:32f.; 18:15–35; 26:26–29; and 1 Corinthians 11:17–34.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface

LSB 208

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

P It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Because He is now risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, all who believe in Him will overcome sin and death and will rise again to new life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

LSB 208

C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;
Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.
Sing ho - san-na in the high-est, sing ho-san - na to the Lord;
Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

- P** Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

By faith the saints of old held fast to Your promise of things hoped for though not yet seen, leaving an example and encouragement for us who walk now by faith and not by sight.

Grant that we may faithfully eat and drink this Holy Supper of Your Son's body and blood and in the union of His mystical body, the Church, be joined in unending praise with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses, Elijah, and all the faithful prophets; the blessed apostles and evangelists, the holy martyrs, and all the saints in glory who fought the good fight of faith before us.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

Lord's Prayer

- C** 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.

The Words of Our Lord

- P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."


In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pax Domini

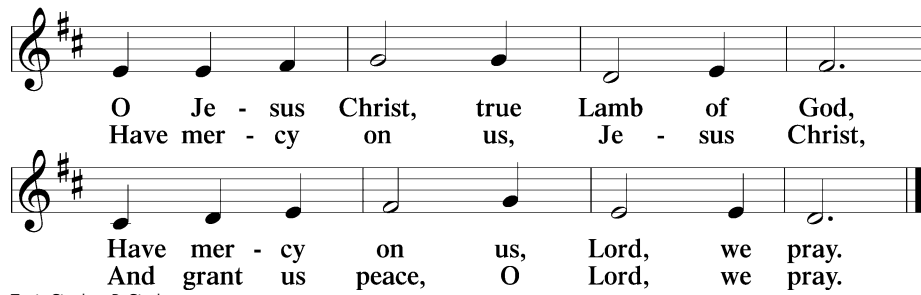
- P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C Amen.

Agnus Dei

LSB 210



C 1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
You take the sin of the world a - way;
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,
Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

Text: Stephen P. Starke

Sit

Distribution

941 We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God



1 We praise You and ac-knowl-edge You, O God, to be the Lord,
2 The band of the a - pos - tles in glo - ry sing Your praise;
3 You, Christ, are King of glo - ry, the ev - er - last - ing Son,
4 You sit in splen - did glo - ry, en - throned at God's right hand,
The Fa - ther ev - er - last - ing, by all the earth a - dored.
The fel - low - ship of proph - ets their death - less voic - es raise.
Yet You, with bound - less love, sought to res - cue ev - 'ry - one:
Up - hold - ing earth and heav - en by forc - es You com - mand.
To You all an - gel pow - ers cry a - loud, the heav - ens sing,
The mar - tyrs of Your king - dom, a great and no - ble throng,
You laid a - side Your glo - ry, were born of vir - gin's womb,
We know that You will come as our Judge that fi - nal day,
The cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim their prais - es to You bring:
Sing with the ho - ly Church through - out all the world this song:
Were cru - ci - fied for us and were placed in - to a tomb;
So help Your ser - vants You have re - deemed by blood, we pray;
"O ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
"O all - ma - jes - tic Fa - ther, Your true and on - ly Son,
Then by Your res - ur - rec - tion You won for us re - priev - e—
May we with saints be num - bered where prais - es nev - er end,
Your maj - es - ty and glo - ry fill the heav - ens and the earth!"
And Ho - ly Spir - it, Com - fort - er— for - ev - er Three in One!"
You o - pened heav - en's king - dom to all who would be - lieve.
In glo - ry ev - er - last - ing. A - men, O Lord, a - men!

Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955

Tune: Gustav Holst, 1874-1934, alt.

Text: © 1999 Stephen P. Starke, admin. Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110017219

Tune: Public domain

399 The Star Proclaims the King Is Here



1 The star pro - claims the King is here; But, Her - od,
 2 The east - ern sa - ges saw from far And fol - lowed
 3 With - in the Jor - dan's sa - cred flood The heav'n - ly
 4 And oh, what mir - a - cle di - vine, When wa - ter
 △ 5 For this Thy glad e - piph - a - ny All glo - ry,



why this sense - less fear? For He who of - fers heav'n - ly
 on His guid - ing star; And, led by light, to light they
 Lamb in meek - ness stood That He, of whom no sin was
 red - dened in - to wine! He spoke the word, and forth it
 Je - sus, be to Thee, Whom with the Fa - ther we a -



birth Seeks not the king - doms of this earth.
 trod And by their gifts con - fessed their God.
 known, Might cleanse His peo - ple from their own.
 flowed In streams that na - ture ne'er be - stowed.
 dore, And Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er - more.

Text: Coelius Sedulius, 5th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-66, alt.
 Tune: Geistliche Lieder aufs new gebessert, 1535, Wittenberg, ed. Joseph Klug
 Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

Nunc Dimittis

LSB 211



1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
 2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All



part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
 glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the



glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:
 Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;



A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -
 For as in the be - gin - ning, Is



to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
 now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -



peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
 sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Post-Communion Collect

P Let us pray.

O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent Your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus

LSB 212

P Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen.

517 By All Your Saints in Warfare

sts. 1, 9, 3

1 By all Your saints in war - fare, For
2 All praise for in - fant mar - tyrs, Whom
△ 3 Then let us praise the Fa - ther And

all Your saints at rest, Your ho - ly name, O
Your mys - te - rious love Called ear - ly from their
wor - ship God the Son And sing to God the

Je - sus, For - ev - er - more be blest! For
war - fare To share Your home a - bove. O
Spir - it, E - ter - nal Three in One, Till

You have won the bat - tle That they might wear the
Ra - chel, cease your weep - ing; They rest from earth - ly
all the ran - somed num - ber Fall down be - fore the

crown; And now they shine in glo - ry
cares! Lord, grant us crowns as bril - liant
throne, As - crib - ing pow'r and glo - ry

Re - flect - ed from Your throne.
And faith as sure as theirs.
And praise to God a - lone.

Text: Horatio Bolton Nelson, 1823-1913, alt.
Tune: English; coll. and arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958
Text: Public domain
Tune: Public domain

Announcements

Adult Sunday School is at **9am** on Sunday mornings studying our Lutheran identity.

The **Flowers** that beautify our altar this morning are given to God's glory.

The **Ladies Bible Study** meets next Wednesday **Dec 31** at **10am** studying the Proverbs.

Church Council next meeting is **Jan 11** at **8am**.

The next **Men's Breakfast and Bible Study** is Sat. **Jan 10** at **9am**.

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Four from Lutheran Service Book

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