The Mothers of Jesus: A Service of Lessons & Carols
The First Sunday of Christmas
27 December 2020

This service of lessons and carols lifts up the women who prepared the way for, gave birth to, and proclaimed the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We remember and lament the suffering of these women due to the powers of this world. And we celebrate the incarnation of God's love for all humanity, bringing peace on earth and good will to all. The readings come from both the Old and New Testaments. The final reading is a portion of the assigned gospel of the day in both the Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary.

We share these stories today as a way of celebrating Christmas and also remembering the 50-40-10 ordination celebrations of the ELCA. All of the hymns are either written or translated by women, come from the African American Spiritual Tradition, or use a female scriptural voice.

To record or stream this service as is, a congregation will need both a Sundays & Seasons subscription as well as One License. If pre-recording to allow for all worship leaders a day of sabbath at the end of a tiring year, we encourage congregations to work together. Congregations may work together to provide the readings and music. Nancy Delaney will be recording hymn accompaniments in advance if you do not have access to a musician or if your musician will be on vacation.

If you use this resource, please let us know. May God be with you as your lead through Advent and Christmas!

+Peace,
Pastor Colleen Montgomery, Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
who was in the beginning,
who makes a dwelling among us,
who covers us with justice and mercy.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of goodness and lovingkindness,
we confess that we have sinned against you
and our neighbors.
We have turned away from your invitation to new life.
We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden.
In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins,
those we know and those known only to you,
for the sake of the one who came to live among us,
Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Hear the good news of peace and salvation!
God forgives us all our sins,
not through our own work,
but through ☩ Jesus Christ, made known to all people.
With all who come to the manger,
rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.
Amen.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit is with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Tamar (Genesis 38:12-30)

Tamar is the first grandmother listed in Matthew's genealogy (Matt 1:3). Tamar puts her own honor on the line because of her commitment to justice and social responsibility.

12 In course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died; when Judah's time of mourning
was over, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13
When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," 14 she put
off her widow's garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to
Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not
been given to him in marriage. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a prostitute, for
she had covered her face. 16 He went over to her at the roadside, and said, "Come, let me come
in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give
me, that you may come in to me?" 17 He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." And
she said, "Only if you give me a pledge, until you send it." 18 He said, "What pledge shall I give
you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and the staff that is in your hand." So he gave
them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 Then she got up and went away,
and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

20 When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to recover the pledge from the woman,
he could not find her. 21 He asked the townspeople, "Where is the temple prostitute who was at
Enaim by the wayside?" But they said, "No prostitute has been here." 22 So he returned to
Judah, and said, "I have not found her; moreover the townspeople said, 'No prostitute has been
here.'" 23 Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, otherwise we will be laughed at;
you see, I sent this kid, and you could not find her."

24 About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the
whore; moreover she is pregnant as a result of whoredom." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and
let her be burned." 25 As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "It was
the owner of these who made me pregnant." And she said, "Take note, please, whose these
are, the signet and the cord and the staff." 26 Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is
more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not lie with her
again.

[27] When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. [28] While she was in labor, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and bound on his hand a crimson thread, saying, "This one came out first." [29] But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore he was named Perez. 30 Afterward his brother came out with the crimson thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.

Second Reading: Rahab (Joshua 6:22-25)

Rahab is the second grandmother of Jesus' genealogy (Matt 1:5). She is a resident of Jericho, a city under attack from the Israelites. She aided the Israelites and was faithful to God. She and her household are spared from the destruction of Jericho.

[22] Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." [23] So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—and set them outside the camp of Israel. [24] They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. [25] But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Hymn ELW 276 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Third Reading: Ruth (Ruth 4:13-22)

Ruth is the third grandmother of Jesus listed (Matt 1:5). A Moabite and a widow, she came into the land of Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi. She works to provide food for them by gleaning. She secures even more stability for them through her budding relationship with Boaz.

[13] So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. [14] Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! [15] He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." [16] Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. [17] The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

[18] Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, [19] Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, [20] Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, 21 Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, [22] Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.

Fourth Reading: Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:15-25)
Bathsheba is the fourth and final grandmother of Jesus, though she is not listed by name. In Matthew 1:6 she is identified by the name of her first husband, Uriah. King David plotted and killed Uriah so that he could take Bathsheba. Both David and Bathsheba suffer because of David's sin.

The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. [16] David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. [17] The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. [18] On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, "While the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us; how then can we tell him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." [19] But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, he perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead."

[20] Then David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the Lord, and worshiped; he then went to his own house; and when he asked, they set food before him and he ate. [21] Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but when the child died, you rose and ate food." [22] He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me, and the child may live.' [23] But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

[24] Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The Lord loved him, [25] and sent a message by the prophet Nathan; so he named him Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

Hymn: ELW 272 Lo, How Rose E'er Blooming

Fifth Reading: Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25)

In the gospel of Luke, Elizabeth is a cousin of Mary. She experiences a great reversal with a miraculous pregnancy. Her story is a forerunner of Mary's, just as her son (John the Baptist) is a forerunner of Jesus.

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. [6] Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. [7] But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

[8] Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. [10] Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. [11] Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. [12] When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. [13] But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. [14] You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15] for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. [16] He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. [17] With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." [18] Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." [19] The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. [20] But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

[21] Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. [22] When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. [23] When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

[24] After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, [25] "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

Sixth Reading: Mary (Luke 1: 26-38)

Luke shares the largest portion of the story of Mary the mother of Jesus. Here we read her encounter with an angel, where she learns of her miraculous pregnancy. In the hymn following, we sing Mary's own words to Elizabeth in their encounter in Luke 2.

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, [27] to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. [30] The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. [32] He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. [33] He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." [34] Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. [36] And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Hymn ELW 251 My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

Seventh Reading: Mothers of the Innocents (Matthew 2:16-18)

The wise men who seek the newborn king seek him first in Jerusalem. Their inquiries frighten King Herod and he acts to preserve his power. Many mothers weep because of his fear. Though Jesus' life is preserved (his family had fled to Egypt), his mother too will weep one day at the death of her son.

[16] When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. [17] Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

[18] "A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

Eighth Reading: Anna (Luke 2:36-38)

Luke does not provide many details about Anna. We do not know if she had any children of her own. However, she recognizes Jesus as the Son of God and proclaims that redemption has arrived!

[36] There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, [37] then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. [38] At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Hymn ELW 290 Go Tell it on the Mountain

APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. Strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

All creation is holy to you, O God. You cause the earth to bring forth its shoots and gardens to spring up. Protect hibernating animals and frozen lands that wait earnestly for longer days of awakening and growth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Send the spirit of your Son into our hearts, O God. Come quickly to hearts that race with fear, hearts that break with grief, and hearts that long for wholeness especially those suffering from COVID-19 and those we name aloud or in our hearts now. Reveal your power to heal and to save. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Adopt us into your family, O God. Bless our elders with the peace and joy of Simeon and Anna. Strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, company, or health care. Connect young and old across generations. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word. For all your saints, we give you thanks. Prepare our salvation in the sight of all your witnesses of every time and place. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us with your word, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day ☩ through the Word made flesh.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

Thanks be to God

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