

The Reporter

November & December 2019

The Reporter

Volume 17, Issue 11

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“Are We Ready?”

by Pastor Proeber

A number of years ago I shared a story with the congregation. It recounted the experiences of a young pastor. He was fresh out of the Seminary, and he wanted to do the best he could do to serve the Lord and the people of the congregation. Up to Advent he had done that. But now he was worried. What if I mess up? What I forget something? “What if” filled his mind.

This brought him to the study of an experienced and neighboring pastor. The young pastor explained his dilemma. “I know what you are going through, I was there myself,” replied the older gentleman. He continued, “This is what I found helpful. Since you are in the season of Advent, just say I’m coming. It will give you a moment to collect your thoughts and move on.”

It sounded like good advice, so the young pastor went on his way. Amazingly enough, he had to draw on the wisdom of the older pastor. Right in the middle of his first Advent sermon, his mind went completely blank. He immediately recalled the proposed remedy. So he said, “I’m coming!” Nothing happened. His heart began to sink. He must have done something incorrectly. So he took a step back in the pulpit and said more forcefully, “I’m coming!” Still nothing. Just as panic was about to set in, he thought, just one more time. So, he went back as far as he could, and as he came forward declaring with great conviction, “I’m coming,” he tripped. He went right over the pulpit and into the front row. Unfortunately his landing put him right into the lap of an elderly lady.

The young pastor was horrified and couldn’t apologize enough for his aerial display. The lady, quite cordially said, “That’s alright. I should have been ready. You told me three times you were coming.”

I like the story because of its unique humor. I also like the story because it conveys a valuable lesson. “I’m coming!” These were the words used by the prophets to tell of the Savior’s birth. Time and time again, generation after generation, the words were proclaimed. You would think people would have been prepared for the day when the promised Savior did come. Unfortunately, many were caught off-guard.

Life was challenging prior to the Savior’s coming, and there was no end of war. First, there were the Persians. Soon they were defeated by the Greeks. With the death of Alexander the Great, his kingdom was divided between the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Hasmoneans. This rapid change of power did not provide any stability because Judah was often viewed as a “buffer state.” Everyone wanted to control this small piece of Palestine because it offered a safe zone for defense. Eventually, Rome came into the picture. With its conquest and domination came some stability and semblance of peace.

Throughout this time of struggle and strife, the message of the coming Savior was

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ignored, corrupted, even silenced. The promise of a Savior soon transformed into a message of political rescue and freedom from earthly enemies. Consequently many were unprepared for Jesus' coming, and lost the blessings he came to bring.

It is an important reminder for us. With December we have begun the Season of Advent and soon Christmas. With this observation we hear the words of the Scriptures which prophecy, Jesus is coming. The question you and I need to ask is, are we ready?

It is an earnest, and possibly uncomfortable question because there is always a growing list of demands to tackle. In addition to all the preparations, there are the inconveniences and unexpected problems which add to even more frenzy at this time of year. Still, we need to ask, are we ready?

Like the lady in the story, who said, "I should have been ready," do we take the time to listen to the exhortations of the prophets who proclaim Jesus is coming? Maybe we do. Maybe we don't.

This time of year can be daunting. It can also be wearing. There is so much to plan and even more to do, and let's face it, time is precious. So at times we have to make the difficult decision, what don't I do? This is where our answer indicates what this time of year means to us.

Could we dispense with the lights and decorations outside the house? Could we forgo the Christmas tree? Could we possibly tell people, I can't make the party this year? Could we gently tell our family we would like to get together a day later? Could we decide we don't want to fight the frenzied mob searching for Christmas presents? We could, but do we? Now, some might be aghast to think I would even suggest the possibility of sacrificing any of these time honored traditions, but we do need to ask ourselves what is Christmas about? We have to exercise caution, because in the effort to make Christmas special, we just might lose what it actually is.

Now I'm not advocating any dramatic changes or radical sacrifices, but we do need to take a step back and remember what Christmas is. It is the time when God revealed his undeserved love to the world (John 3:16-17). It is the time when God took control of the world's stage and proclaimed, now is the time to do what I have promised (Luke 2:1-20). It is the time when Jesus came to be our Substitute and accomplish what was impossible for us to do (Galatians 4:4-7).

Advent and Christmas is not about the Lord saying, "I am coming some time in the future." Nor is about us being ready when we get around to it. It is about our Savior who said I have come to seek and to save the lost, and each of us being ready to receive him in joy. This needs to be foremost in our minds at this time of year. If we lose sight that Jesus came to rescue us through an undeserved act of love, we have lost more than the meaning of Christmas. We have lost our hold on eternal life.

A good suggestion to implement throughout your preparation is to ask yourself, "why am I doing what I do?" Another is, "how does this connect my life to Jesus in a richer and more vivid way? A final suggestion might be, plan some quiet time to read through the Christmas Gospel in Luke 2, or read through the Christmas hymns in Christian Worship.

Most important, don't let yourself be caught off guard like the lady who found the pastor in her lap. "I should have been ready, because you told me three times you were coming."



Pre-Thanksgiving Potluck!

by Al Todd



On Sunday night, November 24th, at 5:30 pm the members of Our Redeemer held their annual Thanksgiving celebration in the Fellowship Hall. It was a potluck affair with turkey, meatloaf, and all the usual side dishes plus wine, beer, soft drinks, and also dessert offerings.

Sonja Todd provided beautiful, unique decorations with a Thanksgiving theme. Eighteen guests trickled in around 5:30 pm and began to populate the buffet table with both main entrees (turkey, meatloaf) and several side dishes. We had to add a table extension to hold it all!

Pastor Proeber offered a Thanksgiving prayer for all the blessings God has graciously gifted to us, especially for Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior who “has redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.” (SC)

After the main meal, and during dessert, we sang a couple of verses from several hymns taken from the Thanksgiving portion of Christian Worship (“We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer,” “Now Thank We All Our God,” “Come You Thankful People Come”). They don’t call Lutherans the singing church for nothing!

Around 8:00 pm we said our good-byes with a few folks staying around to help with a little clean-up before we turned the lights out.

These events are good opportunities to invite your friends and family to meet church members, enjoy some fine food, and to be reminded, with thanks, of all the wonderful things God has done for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. To Him belong glory and honor and praise forever.

Feed your children, God most holy; comfort sinners poor and lowly.
 Jesus, Bread of Life from heaven, bless the food you here have given.
 As these gifts the body nourish, may our souls in graces flourish —
 Till with saints in heavenly splendor at your feast due thanks we render.

Christian Worship 616



Los Angeles Circuit Reformation Service

by Al Todd



St. Paul's First Lutheran Church in North Hollywood hosted, as usual, the annual joint Los Angeles Circuit Reformation service on Sunday, November 3, 2019.

A small contingency of saints from Our Redeemer attended. St. Paul's is about a 1.5 hour drive from Santa Barbara. If you leave a little early (in case there might be traffic on 101 - as we did) and you arrive earlier than planned (very little traffic this year), there is a Starbucks within walking distance of St. Paul's where you can purchase refreshments and relax before the service begins at 4:00 p.m. Parking can be a little bit of a challenge; however, parking along the main street and the side streets is always available.

This special service was prepared by our Pastor Proeber (who also serves as the Los Angeles Circuit pastor) and St. Paul's music director Karl Bauer. It included singing by the children of St. Paul's elementary school ("Standing on the Promises") as well as the Combined Circuit Adult Choir ("First Song of Isaiah"). This year we also enjoyed the St. Paul's School Handbell Choir.

Reverend Doctor Wade Johnston, who serves as the head of the Theology Department at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, provided the sermon "Buried to Rise." He reminded us that despite what you may hear about the demise of religion in general, religion is just as strong as ever because it is built into Man's nature by God. It is just channeled in different directions. Like our first parents Adam and Eve, we want to be our own gods as we try to "self-justify" our words and actions and live as if we are the "center of the universe". He pointed out that this leads to constant virtue signaling and the slavery of sin when God really wants us all to be the "free ones" through Christ Jesus who paid the price for the sins of the whole world to free us to love and serve God and our neighbor.

Note: Reverend Johnston was a former Roman Catholic who converted to Confessional Lutheranism, and pursued his doctorate in Reformation History in Europe before becoming a professor at WLC.

This year members of St. John's Lutheran Church (Tarzana) and Star of Bethlehem (Santa Maria) provided the after service meal. Unlike previous years the assigned churches had the meal catered (normally the assigned congregations prepare the meal in St. Paul's kitchen and serve it as we did in 2018). It was excellent Mexican food with tacos, rice, beans, chips and salsa, and fruit. There was also dessert and beverages.

The meal is always a good time for fellowship and meeting members of God's family from other congregations in the L.A. circuit. We left St. Paul's about 6:15 p.m. and traveled back to Santa Barbara. Plan to attend this service next year!

By **GRACE ALONE**; By **FAITH ALONE**; By **SCRIPTURE ALONE**; By **CHRIST ALONE!**

Reformation Movie & Pot-luck

by Al Todd



On Sunday, October 27th, ORLC hosted a Reformation Celebration. Twenty (20) people attended the event which included a pot luck dinner at 5:30 p.m. followed by the movie “The Impact of the Reformation Today.” After the movie, we gathered in the fellowship hall for desserts and discussion.

A buffet dinner was served in the Fellowship Hall and featured many entrees of traditional “German” food including brats, sauerkraut, potato salad, etc. We had some authentic German beer and of course some wine offerings and other beverages to suit just about any taste.

We viewed the movie “The Impact of the Reformation Today” which focused on the tremendous impact the Reformation had on virtually every aspect of western civilization. The movie featured interviews with Reformation experts primarily drawn from the Concordia college system and seminaries of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. I think it did a pretty good job of helping those of us who live in the west understand how what we live with today and often take for granted in politics, religion, arts, education, economy, music, family, and commerce, etc. were affected and profoundly changed by the results of biblical Reformation ideas about God and man. The movie was a product of Gateway Films and distributed by Vision Video.

After the movie, we all retired to the Fellowship Hall for desserts and discussion.

These events are great opportunities to invite interested friends and acquaintances to church to learn about our beliefs and meet congregation members in an informal setting.



“God Isn’t Broke”

Submitted by Al Todd

The most obvious beneficiaries of the financial gifts of Christians are their churches, schools, and charitable ministries. That’s where the gifts become visible.

But those are just the secondary recipients of our gifts. The more important intended beneficiary is God himself. Our gifts are given first to him. But it’s not that he needs our money. He isn’t broke: “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it” (Psalm 50:9-12).

This is a great paradox. The great Lord of all, Creator of the world’s gold and silver, opens his hands to receive our dimes. The serene Master of human history, self-sufficient and eternal, actually cares about our offerings and eagerly scrutinizes what we bring him. Why?

What do you give a God who has everything? Give him what only you possess—your heart. The amount of the gift, the actual money or goods that you let go of, is not for his heavenly balance sheet. It is a marker for you, so that you may put an emphasis on your words of worship and adoration.

The God who isn’t broke is so thrilled with your heart-gifts that he will soon give you back more than you first gave him.

Written by Pastor Mark Jeske, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

November and December Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

November

1 st	Sonja T.
7 th	Erle W. P.
10 th	Carl S.
16 th	Emmalee S.
22 nd	Jacob M.
24 th	Darby J.
30 th	Chad W.

December

1 st	Alan T.
12 th	Bill W.
23 rd	Barbara G.
25 th	Our Savior Jesus Christ!



Please Note

Through the month of December the process to update our Membership Directory will begin. There are a number of corrections and additions which need to be made. In order to have current information, take a look at the current record, then make any needed changes, particularly phone, cell phone, and email contact information.

Thanks!

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee continues to sponsor events to provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We hope these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of Grace we proclaim. Please plan to participate, and to serve!

December is full of various opportunities for service, Christian fellowship, worship, and offering invitations to people to come to know the Savior. Please note the opportunities, and share the good news!

Advent Worship continues on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Through the course of the four 9:30 am Sunday services we receive the invitation to "Sing Songs of Praise to God." These songs remind us of God's faithfulness in keeping his promises, God's commitment to have his Son born in Bethlehem, God's revelation of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, and God's glorious proclamation of peace through the angels. There are two mid-week services on December 4th and 18th. In these 7:00 pm services we receive an answer to the question, "Who is the Savior who Comes?" Through the Revelation of St. John, we learn he is the Alpha and Omega, as well as the Root and Offspring of David.

Ladies Christmas Fellowship and Cookie Exchange will be December 10th at 7:00 pm. Karolyn Hanna will host this enjoyable get-together. Please bring along 3 dozen cookies to exchange, plus either an hors d'oeuvres or an extra dozen cookies for snacking, and \$15 gift for the gift exchange.

Church Decorating, Chili dinner, and Caroling is December 15th starting at 2:00 pm. At 4:30 we will eat, and our first stop will be around 5:45 pm at Wood Glen Hall. We would like to add an extra stop or two, so please share your suggestions with Pastor Proeber. Sonja and Al Todd will host the fellowship after caroling.

Christmas Eve Worship will be December 24th at 7:00 pm. It is always a special service of Scripture, song, and music. This year the service will consider Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, and "What Were They Thinking?" Come and sing praises to your new born Savior, Jesus Christ. Also, take the opportunity to join with the shepherds in "telling people all the things they had heard and seen." The evening ends with our traditional fellowship hour.

Christmas Day Worship will be December 25th at 9:30 am. What a privilege it is to have a second opportunity to rejoice in the coming of God's Son and our Savior. While less involved than the previous evening's service, it still focuses our attention on Bethlehem and the great things our God has done to secure our rescue. Take the opportunity to come and faithfully praise Christ the Lord. Also, take the opportunity to invite someone you know to hear God's message of good news and great joy.



Serve the Lord with Gladness

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy to Carl Schueler, or email to Carl Schueler (cfs_home@hotmail.com)
or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thank You to Al Todd for his articles. In addition, Thank You to Sonja Todd for her pictures from Reformation and the Thanksgiving dinner. There is always a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will consider providing an article for the New Year. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber or Carl Schueler for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for December

Church Council	December 3rd at 7:00 pm
Committees	December 3rd at 8:00 pm, or as needed.
Outreach	January 14, 2020 at 7:00 pm

***Congregational Ministry, Budget Planning, and Annual Meeting
January 12, 2020 after the worship service.***

Notes & News for December

The regular schedule changes slightly for December because of the added worship services. Please note the information listed below. It is also printed on the December calendar.

Sunday School	Second and Fourth Sundays of December (8th and the 22nd)
Handbell practice	Monday evenings at 7:00 pm.
Choir practice	Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm.
Bible Class	Sunday mornings at 11:00 am. We recently completed "Dying to Live" this past Sunday. A new topic will start with December and lead us into the Scriptures to learn more about the great things God has done for us. Watch for more information in the Sunday worship folder. Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm will resume on January 8th at 7:00 pm, and will continue with the study of the Book of 1st Kings. In the last half of the book we see what a blessing good government is, and what happens when the Lord withdraws that blessing. It is always good to study the past to avoid the mistakes of the past in the future.

Devotional Corner

"The Beginning"

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *Mark 1:1*

There are some phrases used in the Bible which can quickly catch one's attention. One of those is "in the beginning." These are the very first words of the very first book of the Bible, and they explain how everything came to be. Similar words are used by Mark, but not in the context of creation. They are used to signal the beginning of God's work to rescue the lost.

Prior to the coming of Jesus into the world, God used promises to guide his people. He also used many visual helps which included a system of sacrifices. As people faithfully listened to the promises and offered their sacrifices, they expressed their trust in the Lord and what he would do for them.

Mark's record of the life of Jesus signals a dramatic change. He shifts the believer's focus away from the sacrifices and promises to their fulfillment. Mark announced the coming of Jesus and the good news of God's forgiveness and peace. It wasn't that the assurance of forgiveness and peace didn't exist prior to Jesus' coming, but now there was no mistaking what God had begun. Today, we need to rely on this precious proclamation to address our sin and guilt.

Where do we look when guilt gnaws at us? Where do we look when our conscience is seared by the blazing testimony of God's justice? Where do we look when our self-earned goodness leads only to despair? There is only one answer, and it is Jesus.

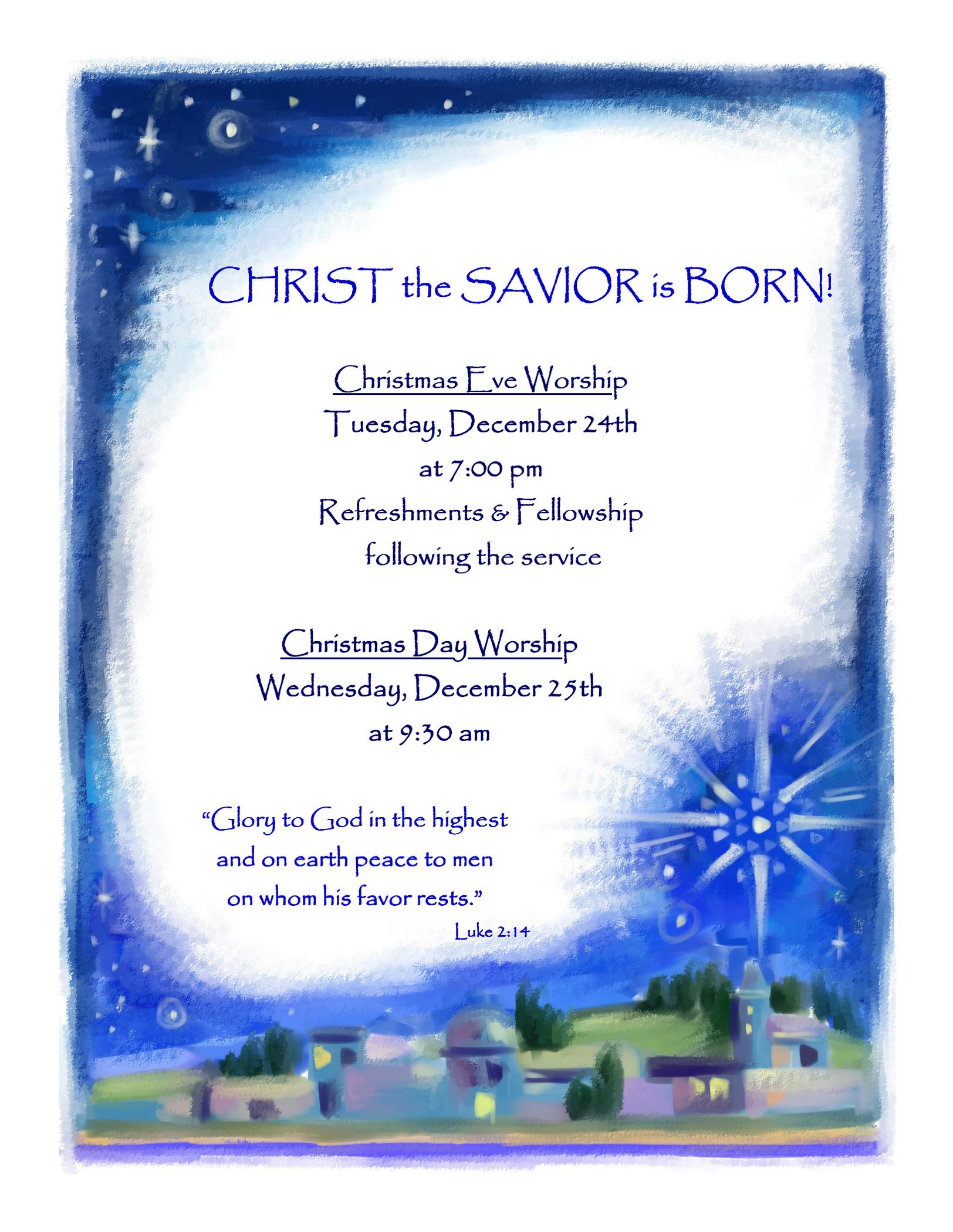
This is the answer Mark provides and proclaims. His words are the call to look at what God has done. With his gospel account he reveals what Jesus did from the beginning of his earthly ministry to the end of it. He reveals his humble coming and his faithfulness to his Father's will. He reveals his powerful acts of love and unsurpassed words of compassion. He also reveals his suffering, death and resurrection. This is the good news we long to hear, and desperately need to hear.

The beginning. These are very specific words and very descriptive words. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus is the beginning of our hope, our comfort, and our peace with God. It is also the beginning of our confidence of life in heaven.

Prayer

O dearest Lord, I thank you for sending Jesus into the world to be the Savior of all, and I thank you for revealing him to me as my Savior. Give me the faith I need to trust him in all things for this life and for the life to come. Amen.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."



CHRIST the SAVIOR is BORN!

Christmas Eve Worship
Tuesday, December 24th
at 7:00 pm
Refreshments & Fellowship
following the service

Christmas Day Worship
Wednesday, December 25th
at 9:30 am

“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to men
on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:14