

January 3, 2016



www.riverofhopehutchinson.org
Worship on Sundays at 10:30am

Gathering

Music to Prepare Us for Worship

Gathering Songs “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” & “Jesus, What a Wonderful Child

Welcome, Worship Orientation 101, Connection Cards

No Longer Strangers Prayer

Blessed be God the Word, who came to his own and his own people did not accept him. It is in this way God glorifies the stranger.

O God, show us your image in all who we meet, especially those we call stranger or other. Show us that when we welcome them, we welcome you. Amen

Meet Someone New

We practice being Christians by extending our hand in friendship to people we may not know very well or at all. If we can't practice it here in worship, where else can we do it? Go ahead, make the first move. “Hi, my name is _____. You're new to me.” OR “Can I introduce myself to you?” are good ways to start.

Reprise of 2nd gathering song to gather everyone back together.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the community of the Holy Spirit is with you all.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray:

Joy to the world! Our Lord Jesus has come!

**We welcome you, little king. Dispel the darkness, reign in our hearts –
and reign in our world. Amen.**

Devotion #1 Mystery Children's 'Carol' Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

I have three brief devotions for you today revolving around a couple of our Christmas Carols or songs that are sung this time of year. This first devotion is truly an American classic that has been transported around the world, and it is especially beloved by children – so instead of a children's sermon – I've got a Children's Mystery Carol – and only children here can be the ones to guess what it is called. Wait until you hear some clues in this devotion, then raise your hand if you think you know the song. *(Don't shout it out – just raise your hand!)*

It was 1938 and the Great Depression was finally starting to wind down – a time in the United States where some people were finally starting to see some economic relief on the horizon – but not for Bob. Things were pretty tight and maybe even desperate for Bob who was trying to take care of his daughter and sick wife. His wife had been struggling with cancer for two years – now as they approached Christmas, the future looked bleak. His job in advertising for a store called Montgomery Wards just didn't pay very much. But at least he did have a job! But still, times were very, very tough.

One night, after hugging her very ill mommy, Bob's 4-year old daughter cuddled up to him and asked, "Why isn't my mommy like other kids' mommies?" How could he tell her about Evelyn – his wife, the 4-year old's mother – who was soon to die? How could he indeed tell her about life and death and that this is a difficult part of our experiences on this earth. Bob was at a loss for words, and emotions understandably choked him up.

On that cold Advent night, Bob May wanted his daughter to understand that there was still hope, despite all their sadness and suffering. And that being different than other kids doesn't mean you have to be ashamed. And no matter what happened, she would always be loved. Bob dreamed up a story for his 4-year old that used animals to describe what happens when you find your special place in this world.

I can't tell you the animal yet, because then you would guess this story too quickly. But let me just say that his daughter, Barbara, loved the story and made him tell each night leading up to Christmas. And with each telling, the plot got more elaborate. Now, Bob had next to no money, so for a gift for his wife and daughter, he used his artistic abilities to create a home-made book of his new story. Tragedy struck just before Christmas when his wife, Evelyn passed away, but still, through his tears, he finished the book for his daughter, who opened the present on Christmas morning and absolutely loved it.

Montgomery Wards held an employee party soon after that and some of Bob's co-workers asked him to bring the story and read it out loud to everyone. The people laughed, they applauded, they loved it, and demanded copies for themselves. The head of the company was there, and on the spot bought the rights for the story, reprinted it, and the next year, when kids came to visit Santa in the store, they were given free copies of Bob's new story, about an animal who didn't fit in, but then because of his special ability, found an important role to play on Christmas Eve. *(Do you know the song yet? Only kids should guess!)*

Six years later, over 6 million copies of the story had been given out and publishing houses were beating down the door to request permission to publish the story. In one of the most generous acts of corporate kindness, the chairman of Montgomery Wards gave back the rights to the story [*-- a story about a reindeer by the way*] – and Bob Mays sold it, making tons of money from the book. His brother-in-law, Johnny Marks, turned the story into a song. Bing Crosby was offered the song to record, but he passed. Same with Dinah Shore. A country singer named Gene Autry was offered the song, and he took home a copy of it and played it for his wife. Gene Autry didn't think much of it, but when his wife heard the lyric: "they wouldn't let poor "MM – MM- MM" play in any reindeer games, it broke her heart, and she insisted he record it. And – boom – you think the book was popular – the song outsold them all. It became the second best selling song of all time, behind only "White Christmas" on the charts.

Being different can be a blessing...and no matter who you are, you have a special role to play in life. That's a pretty good message for a children's song, and though it isn't so much a Christian song, it is a song born out of the hope, joy, and love in this wonderful season. And even a red-nosed reindeer can spread the hope of Christmas.

The Word

To the Narrator: please tell the congregation what their parts are before announcing the reading.

Reader: Reading from the book of Mark, chapter 1, verses 1-20

Narrator: The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

**ALL: “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:**

**‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”**

Narrator: John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed,

ALL: “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Narrator: In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven,

ALL: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Narrator: And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,

ALL: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Narrator: As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them,

ALL: “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

Narrator: And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Stay tuned for the continuing saga that is our story and God’s story.

Thanks be to God.

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

Mystery Devotion #2 Do You Hear What I Hear

{As with the children, now I'll share a devotion on another Christmas Carol – this one is a relatively modern Christmas song, maybe not sung for Christmas Eve worship services too much – but you likely have heard of this before. Guess it by raising your hand – and you may win a prize!}

This French man's name was 'Noel' and what a perfect name for someone who would become famous for writing a Christmas song. He was pressed into the Nazi army at the outset of World War 2, but escaped and join the French resistance. After the war he pursued a music career, and so it was that he wandered into a hotel lobby in New York City and was entranced to hear a woman named Gloria (another nice name for a Christmas music person, don't you think?) playing the piano. He was entranced, and though they were each shakey with each other's languages, they fell in love, and soon married. He was a lover of classical music, but she was a rock n roller (this was the mid fifties now), and yet their union was to make people stop, look, and listen.

Gloria was to pen a song that a teen idol took to the top of the charts in the early sixties – called “Goodbye Cruel World.” Meanwhile, Noel wanted to write a song that would make an impact somehow someday. He was seeing his native France getting embroiled in a war in Vietnam, plus the cold war pressures between his adopted United States of America verses the Soviet Union, when all along he had thought and prayed that the end of WW2 would have ended all of this kind of fighting forever. Noel slipped into a depression while having flashbacks of his own wartime experiences. To help himself, he wrote a poem about something that seemed to stand for peace in the purest form – a poem about Christmas. He made himself remember pastoral scenes from his childhood in France – calm fields, sheep grazing, the innocence of a newborn lamb. His poem told of peace that came to earth on that very first Christmas night.

Now his wife had written out some music for this poem, but accidentally had caused one extra note to be in the song, throwing off the lyrics in a strange way, so Noel had to add some words in key places. Instead of saying, “Said the boy to the king,” he now changed it to “Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king.” And instead of “Said the wind,” he now changed it to, “Said the night wind...” (Have you guessed this song yet?)

Also, Gloria wanted him to take out the line, “with a tail as big as a kite,” but Noel insisted on it, and he was right, for it became a favorite line for many of the people that loved this song. The Harry Simeone Chorale wanted to record this song – they had enjoyed a hit four years earlier with the Little Drummer Boy. But also at this time, The Chipmunks were riding the charts with their holiday music, so Noel and Gloria weren't quite sure how this new song of theirs would go over.

A song about the night wind, and little lambs and a star with a tail as big as a kite. Recorded by well over a hundred artists like Bing Crosby, Carrie Underwood, Bob Dylan, though the recording that was the biggest seller was by Robert Goulet and you can kind of hear his big baritone voice saying “pray for peace, people everywhere,” and in the song, it isn't a suggestion, it is a demand. Which is what the war-weary Noel Regney meant it to be.

So we'll sing “Do You Hear What I Hear” which was written around Thanksgiving time of 1962, around the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. You can't tell that it is an actual Christmas song until you get to the third verse, but after that, you truly realize you are straining to listen for the peace that the Christ child brings.

Devotion #3 Once in Royal David's City

Some Christmas songs tend to want to talk about sentimental holiday trimmings such as chestnuts roasting on an open fire: talking to Parson Brown while building a snowman in the meadow; or donning gay apparel in order to troll the ancient yuletide carol...fa la la la la la. Christian Christmas Carols try to move us beyond sentiment (though they can of course be quite sentimental for us such as singing Silent Night with candlelight at midnight) – but they try to move us past being warm and fuzzy and sentimental, as nice as that is. Move us toward something deeper. An understanding. A wisdom. A sense of theology, tied to Scripture, that helps us understand God and ourselves, and our need for salvation. These carols try to give us some degree of wisdom and teaching.

Carols, believe it or not, -- good carols – can add a wise voice into our lives. Look now for the one named “Once in Royal David's City.” Henry Gauntlett, as a little boy, absolutely loved to listen to the big pipe organ in his church in England. He lived next door, and so could often hear music emanating from the stone church, reverberating from the walls. A few times, his mother lost track of him, would go to search for him, then find him in the church, sitting in a pew, listening to the organist practice the music. His dad told him he'd give him a penny for copying complete compositions of the great masters of music, thinking that might occupy the boy for a while. A few days later, Henry produced 1000 handwritten songs which he had copied down and so his father had to reluctantly pay up.

When the church people held a fund raiser and purchased a brand new organ, they now wanted to find a top notch musician to play for them. Young Henry wanted the job, but they didn't want a nine-year old kid. They wanted somebody famous. He struck a deal with the priest, though, that if he could learn and play the full difficult liturgy, he could have the job. The youngster worked at it night and day until he had mastered the music and he played it – and true to the priest's word, he had to give the boy the job of church organist. He only improved over time until he himself authored hundreds of original hymns. Felix Mendelssohn worked with Gauntlett and pronounced him among the most talented musicians of his day. This carol that we now sing was set around 1850.

I note a few wise turns of the phrase in this wonderful old song – but especially in the third verse – “And he feeleth for our sadness, and he shareth in our gladness.” That's a way to help us understand and believe that God became incarnate for us so that he could truly abide with us, and know our sorrows and joys. A close-up God who wants to be in relationship with you.

The Feast

Prayers for the World

Each ends Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

A brief silence.

Offering

All that we have and all that we are comes from God. Let us give back to God in a spirit of generosity. There will be enough.

Please put your offering of gratitude to God in the plate as it passes by. Prayerfully consider giving a consistent financial gift to River of Hope so our community cannot just survive but thrive.

Offering Music

Setting the Table

As the kids help set the table, they make a circle around the table and lead the congregation in the table prayer written by Martin

Luther:

Let's pray: **Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. And let these gifts to us be blest. Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

The Lord is with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Words to Bless the Feast

On the night in which he was betrayed...

O God of resurrection and new life:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Bless this feast.

Grace our table with your presence. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

You are invited to join hands with those around you in prayer. If you are not the hand-holding type, then simply fold your hands in front of you or hang onto this bulletin as you pray.

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.

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.

Invitation to the Meal

You are welcome to this meal. If you hunger and thirst for grace and mercy that comes through Jesus Christ, then Christ has set this table just for you. Bring all that you are and all that you have to the table. You will be fed. You are forgiven. There is enough.

Communion Songs "Holy Child within the Manger" & "There's a Star in the East"

Prayer After Communion

Let us pray.

Loving God, thank you for the gift of grace received at this table. Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of the world in need. Draw us near to you through your body and blood, through your presence in this world here and now. Amen.

The Sending

Why does our church exist? What is our purpose? **We go out to transform lives through Jesus Christ.**

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

Sending Song "Feliz Navidad"

Go in peace – serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Music to Send You Out