



The Gift:
Christmas Day

CHRIST'S *presence and promise*

You can read this liturgy as a personal devotional or as a time of gathering and centering as a family. You can read it before you open presents, after gifts are exchanged or before a family meal. However you choose to use it, we offer it as a blessing. Merry Christmas.

Gathering (From “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” by Charles Wesley)

One: Hark! The herald angels sing/ “Glory to the newborn King;

Group: Peace on earth, and mercy mild/ God and sinners reconciled!”

One: Joyful, all ye nations rise/ Join the triumph of the skies;

Group: With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

[Light a candle as a representation of Emmanuel, God-with-us.]

God, we have waited for you. In Advent, we have mourned that the world is not as it should be. But today – on Christmas day – we get to live lavishly into a word of “joy.”

God sees us. God loves us. God comes to us.

Lord, this has been a season of high expectations we have created for ourselves. We want the perfect Christmas memory. We want to give the just-right gift. We want a showstopping dinner. We don't want to be alone. We set all that aside now so that we can simply be still, so that we can be here and remember:

God sees us. God loves us. God comes to us.

We rejoice that you came to earth, compassionate God, that you might know us, that you might save us from ourselves. We know that you are the source of love and light. And so, with gratitude, we name those things that bring us joy.

[Name what has brought you joy recently.]

God sees us. God loves us. God comes to us.

As we sit by the Christmas tree today, we remember that joy doesn't mean the absence of pain. Rather, joy expands and encompasses sorrow. Joy is what happens when we are honest about our bruises and we help each other carry our heartbreak. We honor a vast understanding of joy today by naming the complexity of our joy: perhaps there are people missing from our Christmas celebrations; perhaps we are missing the noise and bustling of past Christmases; perhaps today's celebration marks a coming year of uncertainty. We name the sorrow we may carry today, knowing that you hear us.

[Name the burdens you carry.]

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Heavenly Guardian, the focus on presents this time of year can turn our attention inward: what do I want? What do I need? Yet, in your incarnation, you invite us into community with one another. You ask that we love our neighbor as we love God. And so, today, we pause to name those in our life who we love, who we struggle to love, who we do not even know...

[Share the names of those you wish to pray for: loved ones, opponents, strangers we encounter regularly, people on the other side of the world, etc.]

God sees us all. God loves us all. God comes to us all.

Christ our redeemer, our savior, you came to us that we might know love and freedom. What is there to say? Thank you. We are grateful beyond what we can express in words.

[Allow space for silent gratitude.]

God sees us. God loves us. God comes to us.

Compassionate God, as we leave this space of remembering, of naming, of gratitude, follow us through our day – whether it is a busy day full of family or a quiet day. Help us to embrace expansive joy. Help us to remember the story of your birth and all that it means to us today:

[Read the following verses from Luke 2:4-11 aloud. If you are in a group, take turns.]

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

God sees us. God loves us. God comes to us.

Written by Rose Schrott Taylor Presbyterian Outlook

