



The Longest Night
December 21, 2022

Longest Night: Blue Christmas Evening Prayer

While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. We come together seeking healing and room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these emotions often feel out of place during the holidays.

In the Northern Hemisphere, December 21 is the longest night, the winter solstice. It marks the shortest day of the year, the official start of winter. Tradition says that nature and all her creatures stop and hold their breath to see if the sun will turn back from its wanderings, if the days will lengthen and the earth will once again feel the sun's warmth. On this darkest day of the year, we come with our honest yearnings seeking the return of light and hope.

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG

In Silence We Wait

ACS #998



The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: "In si - lence we wait, in dark - ness you". The second staff contains the melody for the second line: "come to us; bring us your light." The melody is simple and contemplative, with a mix of quarter and eighth notes.

SILENT MEDITATION

DIALOG AND GREETING

The Spirit and the church cry out:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

All those who await his appearance pray:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The whole creation pleads:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

From the one who was, who is, and who is to come:

Grace and peace be with you all.

And also with you.

HYMN OF LIGHT: *Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory*

ELW #561

The assembly stands and turns to face the processional candle.

- 1 Joyous light of heav'nly glory,
loving glow of God's own face,
you who sing creation's story,
shine on ev'ry land and race.
Now as evening falls around us,
we shall raise our songs to you.
God of daybreak, God of shadows,
come and light our hearts anew.
- 2 In the stars that grace the darkness,
in the blazing sun of dawn,
in the light of peace and wisdom,
we can hear your quiet song.
Love that fills the night with wonder,
love that warms the weary soul,
love that bursts all chains asunder,
set us free and make us whole.
- 3 You who made the heaven's splendor,
ev'ry dancing star of night,
make us shine with gentle justice,
let us each reflect your light.
Mighty God of all creation,
gentle Christ who lights our way,
loving Spirit of salvation,
lead us on to endless day.

THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks...now and forever.
Amen.

The assembly is seated.

Silence.

RESPONSIVE PSALM: PSALM 27

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh — my adversaries and foes — they shall stumble and fall.

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.

One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.

Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

"Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up.

Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence.

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

PRAYER

Lord God, our light and our salvation, grant that your servants who seek your face in times of trouble may see your goodness in the land of the living, and that we may be set safely on the rock of our faith, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Silence.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

ELW #257, sts. 1-4

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
embracing all things far and nigh:
in strength and beauty come and stay;
teach us your will and guide our way. *Refrain*
- 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain*
- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*

SECOND READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

ELW #272, sts. 1-2

- 1 Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

- 2 Isaiah had foretold it,
the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Savior,
when half-spent was the night.

THIRD READING: Matthew 11:28-30

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

ELW #257, st. 5-7

- 5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,
O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you;
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

FOURTH READING: John 1:1-5, 14

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN:

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ELW #272, sts. 3-4

- 3 This flow'r, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendor
the darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us
and lightens ev'ry load.
- 4 O Savior, child of Mary,
who felt our human woe;
O Savior, king of glory,
who dost our weakness know:
bring us at length, we pray,
to the bright courts of heaven
and into endless day.

SERMON

Time for reflection follows.

GOSPEL CANTICLE

The assembly stands as the hymn is introduced.

The Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55

All

1., 3. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my
2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up -
spir - it re - joic - es in you. You have looked with love on your
lift - ed the hum - ble of heart. You have filled the hun - gry with
ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
won - drous things, and left the wealth - y no part.
Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,
strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the
strong is your jus - tice, strong your love, as you prom - ised to
D.C.
weak and low - ly one, hum - bling the proud of heart!
Sar - ah and A - bra - ham, kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

TANGIBLE PRAYER

1 In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.

2 Heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty,
Jesus Christ.

3 What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him—
give my heart.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

CANDLE LIGHTING HYMNS

As the light is shared remember: the lit candle is never tilted. The unlit candle is lifted up for lighting.

It Came upon the Midnight Clear ELW #282

- 1 It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heav'n's all-gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.
- 2 Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heav'nly music floats
o'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hov'ring wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

- 3 And you, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow:
look now, for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing;
oh, rest beside the weary road
and hear the angels sing!
- 4 For lo! The days are hast'ning on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and all the world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

***Away in a Manger* ELW #278**

- 1 Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- 2 The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
- 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

BLESSING

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.

Individual candles are extinguished. Please place candles in basket on the way out of sanctuary.



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