



# THE LIGHT OF *grace*

Glory: Shepherds

CHRISTMAS EVE



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A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

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Sermon by Michael Hoy. Service by Carol Geisler. Art and design: Jamie Wyatt. Arrangement of choral medley by Brendan Knorp. © 2023 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc., 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414. [www.creativecommunications.com](http://www.creativecommunications.com). All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Purchase of this service gives the purchaser the copyright release to use the material in any format for use in worship, including livestream. Creative Communications is not responsible for the change or removal of any links listed from other sites.



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## Glory: Shepherds

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### ABOUT “THE LIGHT OF GRACE: GLORY: SHEPHERDS”

On Christmas Eve, we celebrate with Scripture, song and candlelight that the true Light of Grace has come. Jesus Christ graces us with his life as a little baby boy. We welcome the Savior in this service as we go with the shepherds to greet God’s amazing grace in a manger and bring glory to him by spreading the word of his birth. Hymns include “Amazing Grace,” “Away in a Manger,” “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night.” Use with The Light of Grace series or alone.

Other coordinating resources are available. Call Creative Communications for the Parish at 1-800-325-9414, or visit us on the web at [creativecommunications.com](http://creativecommunications.com) for current pricing and availability.

Signature collection GRLSK

Complete collection GRCLK

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ Almighty God, your shining glory filled the night with light as an angel announced Jesus' birth to shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. The shepherds rejoiced to hear the good news and hurried to Bethlehem to see the newborn Messiah. On this wondrous night, we praise and glorify you for the gift of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and with the angels and all of the saints in every place we rejoice as we celebrate his birth. Hear our prayers and accept our praise in the name of Jesus. Amen.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *W ZLobie Lezy 447 447 4444 77*, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Infant holy, infant lowly,  
For his bed a cattle stall;  
Oxen lowing, little knowing  
Christ the child is Lord of all.  
Swiftly winging, angels singing,  
Bells are ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the child is Lord of all!  
Christ the child is Lord of all!

- The **Children’s Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*Needed: shepherd and sheep figures from a nativity scene or a picture of shepherds and sheep*

Ⓟ On the first Christmas night, shepherds were out in the fields near Bethlehem, watching over their flocks of sheep (*show shepherd and sheep figures*). Maybe they were talking or eating a meal together. They were alert for any robbers or wolves that might hurt their sheep. For them it was an ordinary night taking care of the sheep—at least it was ordinary at first. Then suddenly, it wasn’t dark anymore. The light of God’s glory, the light of his power and majesty, was shining around them. It must have been as light as day in the middle of the night! What did the shepherds think of that? (*Let children answer.*) The Bible tells us that the shepherds were scared. They must have wondered what was happening.

Then an angel told the shepherds that the Savior had been born in Bethlehem that night. That was good news for all people! How would the shepherds know which baby was the Savior? (*Let children answer.*) The shepherds would see a baby wrapped up in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. Then the sky was filled with angels praising God. The angels said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and saw baby Jesus. Then they told others about the wonderful news and returned to their sheep, praising God for his glory and grace.

The angels said, “Glory to God!” The shepherds gave God glory. What does it mean to give God glory? God is already glorious—he is majestic and powerful—but when we give God glory, we give him praise and thanks for everything he has done for us. We give God glory when we give him praise and thanks for sending Jesus to be our Savior. We can give God glory as we tell others about the wonderful things he does. On this Christmas Eve, we are in church to give God glory, to sing praise and to give thanks for the best gift of all, Jesus our Savior.

Let’s pray: Lord God, you are wonderful! We give thanks to you for the gift of Jesus, our Savior. Happy birthday, Jesus. Amen.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune W ZLobie Lezy 447 447 4444 77, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping  
 Vigil till the morning new  
 Saw the glory, heard the story,  
 Tidings of a Gospel true.  
 Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,  
 Praises voicing, greet the morrow:  
 Christ the child was born for you!  
 Christ the child was born for you!

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 7:10-14, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

- The **Epistle Reading**, 2 Corinthians 4:5-6, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- The **Gospel Reading, Part 1**, Luke 2:1-7, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune St. Louis 86 86 76 86, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

O little town of Bethlehem,  
 How still we see thee lie!  
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
 The silent stars go by;  
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
 The everlasting light.  
 The hopes and fears of all the years  
 Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And, gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the king  
And peace to all the earth!

- The **Gospel Reading, Part 2**, Luke 2:8-14, continues, spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Gloria 77 77 and refrain, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply,  
Echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heav'nly song?  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

- The **Gospel Reading, Part 3**, Luke 2:15-20, continues, spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Away in a Manger* 11 11 11, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
And take us to heaven to live with thee there.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor ¶ as narrator and two readers, ¶ and ¶, as shepherds:

¶ Each and every year on this Christmas Eve, we come to hear this wonderful story of the Nativity of our Lord. The story begins with a decree from Emperor Augustus that “all the world” should be registered. This registration is the reason that Mary and Joseph leave their home in Nazareth to go to the town of Bethlehem—the town where Joseph traces his family roots.

But there is so much more to come from this event in Bethlehem. Through Mary’s child who is born in Bethlehem, God’s light of grace will shine for “all the world” and “all the people,” even for all its worldly rulers. Indeed, God has a plan in mind that far exceeds the plans of worldly leaders.

The story we get to hear tonight is the story of the shepherds who were in the region of Bethlehem. Their story will witness this light of grace that shines for us all.

**I** *We were living in the fields,*

**II** *keeping watch over our flock by night.*

**P** The shepherds seem very much removed from the powers that be. Yet living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks was their job. It may not have been all that much of an exciting job. But there would be some excitement that would unfold for them this night.

That their story begins at night is important. Night implies darkness. The shepherds may not have reflected that deeply about the darkness of the night, but they would soon get a rude awakening as to how much they are in the dark—and we with them.

**I** *Then an angel of the Lord stood before us,*

**II** *and the glory of the Lord shone around us, and we were terrified.*

**P** The shepherds were not expecting any visitors. And they were certainly not expecting God to show up this night.

But how did the shepherds first react to this sight of the light of glory? They were terrified. And they were terrified because of their fear of God. Now such fear is appropriate, but it is hardly good news for any of us. For when this light shines not only upon us, but all around us, there is no place to hide.

We are all people who are held captive to the darkness of principalities and powers. But this darkness is not simply outside us, but within us—in our sin and our own darkness. And we do not—indeed, cannot—escape our captivity, our enslavement, to the darkness of our sin. When the light of God’s glory shines upon us and all around us, this darkness is exposed, laying bare the truth of our sins. We try so desperately to hide this, to cover it up, to glory in our own self-righteousness. Even Adam and Eve tried hiding in the bushes to escape notice and become exposed for their sin. We hide because we do not want to be seen as failures. And that is what we fear the most, that we will be exposed, even judged, as the sinners we truly are.

But the fact that God shows up, with his light of glory, is good news!

**I** *The angel said to us, “Do not be afraid;*

**II** *for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.”*

**P** The angel’s first words alleviate our fear: “Do not be afraid!” Those words are themselves already words of grace for us when we are exposed in our darkness. As the story of the